

Groton Daily Independent

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Chicken Soup
for the Soul

“Is not this a true autumn day? Just the still melancholy that I love—that makes life and nature harmonize.”

GEORGE ELIOT

Friday, Sept. 23

Dress-up: Black & Gold Spirit Day.
School Breakfast: Cereal
School Lunch: Homecoming hotdogs, baked beans.
Senior Menu: Tuna noodle casserole, peas and carrots, swedish apple pie square, whole wheat bread.
1 p.m.: Homecoming Parade
TigerPalooza, 2:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. at GHS Gym.
FFA Serving Meal at Homecoming Football Game beginning at 5:30 p.m.
7 p.m.: Football hosts Sisseton
UMC: Newsletter Items Due

Saturday, Sept. 24

Youth Football at Britton Jamboree
11 a.m.: Girls Soccer hosts Tea Area with JV game to follow
7th/8th Grade Volleyball Tournament at Matchbox in Aberdeen
Common Cents Community Thrift Store Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 209 N Main.

Sunday, Sept. 25

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Wor-

ship Service at 10:45 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study 8:00 am. Worship (St. John's 9:00 am, Zion 11:00 am)

UMC: Conde worship, 8:30 p.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Worship, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday school after children's sermon during worship.

Emmanuel: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

NO OUTDOOR WATERING!

Effective immediately, no outdoor watering is permitted in the City of Groton until further notice. (About 4-6 weeks)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

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Groton beats Tiospa Zina in three sets

Groton Area's volleyball team defeated Tiospa Zina in three sets Thursday in Groton, 26-24, 25-19 and 25-10.

The first set had seven lead changes and the set was tied six times before the Tigers pulled out the extra point win. Groton Area held a 19-13 lead before the Wambdi staged a comeback and tie the set at 20 and then took a 21-20 lead. Groton got back on top, 22-21 and was at 24-22 before Tiospa Zina tied the set at 24. Groton Area would score the last two points for the win.

The second set was tied four times and there were four lead changes early in the set before pulling away for a 25-19 win. The Tigers increased the intensity in the third set and went for the 25-10 win.

Groton Area earned 51 of its 75 points for 68 percent. The Wambdi earned 27 of its 53 points for 51 percent.

Anna Fjeldheim had three kills, one ace serve and one assist. Laila Roberts had six ace serves. Sydney Leicht had 11 kills, nine digs and one ace serve. Carly Guthmiller had nine digs and two ace serves. Lydia Meier had two kills and one ace serve. Hollie Frost had three kills and one block. Elizabeth Fliehs had three ace serves, two kills, two blocks and 13 assists. Jerica Locke had seven digs. Aspen Johnson had nine kills. Jaedyn Penning had two kills and two ace serves.

The Wambdi scoring had Tayonna Quinn with one block and one kill, Maya Deutsch had two kills and one ace serve, Alexia Quinn had five kills, two blocks and one ace serve. Kennadee Bissonette had four kills and one block. Layne Flute had three kills and one block. Persayah Anderson had three kills, one block and one ace serve.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, with Justin Hanson and Ryan Tracy doing the play-by-play. The broadcast was sponsored by Bahr Spray Foam, John Sieh Agency, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Locke Electric, Dacotah Bank, SD Army National Guard, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc, Groton Area Chamber of Commerce

Preschool Developmental Screening

Groton Area Schools #06-6

Preschool Developmental Screening is for children ages 3-4 who reside in the Groton Area School District. The child needs to be 3 years of age before the screening date/day. This screening is not required to enter Kindergarten.

The screening consists of adaptive, personal/social, communicating/speaking, motor, and concepts skills. If you believe your child has difficulties in any of these areas please contact the school.

If your child is already receiving services or enrolled at Groton Elementary School they will not need to be screened. If your child has already been screened but you have concerns please contact the elementary school. If you are new to the district and have a child under the age of 5, we also ask you to contact the elementary school.

Screenings will be held on Friday, September 30 8:00-3:30. Information will be sent to families who have already been identified. Please contact Heidi Krueger at 605-397-2317 to schedule a screening time.

FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN STUDENTS

2nd Annual **Tiger-Palooza** & Pep Rally!



FUN games for ALL ages

- Basketball Sharp Shooter
- Golf Hot Shot
- Arm Wrestling
- Face Painting
- Photo Booth
- Toddler Area & MORE!

Tickets sold by glass doors/East entrance of Old Gym
\$5 for 10 tickets



Dunk Tank!

Don't miss your chance to DUNK one of these Groton School staff:

- Adam Franken
- Chelsea Hanson
- Kyle Gerlach
- Matt Locke
- Kris Kucker

Grillin' Cheeses & Praisin' Jesus!

Offering a variety of FOOD options this year!

Pep Rally featuring *Northern State University* **DRUM LINE!**



GHS FCS HOCO 2022

WHEN:

Friday Sept 23rd

2:30-4:15pm

Pep Rally

4:15-4:30

WHERE:

OLD GYM

Games, food & Pep Rally inside

Dunk tank in parking lot

WHY:

School SPIRIT!

And fundraiser for FCS Scholarship, activities, prizes, service projects, etc.

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ANOTHER JARK/WORLIE AUCTION



RETIREMENT CEMENT TOOLS & EQUIPMENT AUCTION

Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022
Sale Time: 10:00 AM

507 E. RR Ave, Groton, SD



SKID STEER – WHEEL LOADER

• **Mustang 2056 Turbo** w/2 speed Cab, AC/Heat, Hydr. Tach, 6' Bucket, 2302 hours, ('10) • **5' Mustang Skid Steer Bucket** (cement) • **Kobelco LK300A Wheel Loader** w/Bucket, Forks, 16.9-24 Tires, Eng. Overhauled 4084 hrs ago (\$23,000)– Runs/Works.

GUN SAFE - TOOLS – EQUIP – TANKS

- Safari 24 Gun Safe (NIB)
- Husqvarna FS309 Cement Saw -Nice
- Subaru Robin Ex17 Cement Saw
- DP-75ASB Diesel Generator (New)
- Wen 5500 Generator (New)!
- Screeds w/Honda & B&S Motors
- BNT-40 14.4v Lithium Rebar Cutter
- Honda Drive Motor w/Vibrating Cable & Water Pump
- Impala 30 ton Hydr. Press
- Mikasa MVC-88GH Packer (Honda)
- Wacker VPA1750 Packer (Honda)
- Wacker Power Float (Honda)
- DeWalt & Jet Table Saws
- Insulated Concrete Blankets
- 8 Sets of Scaffolding
- Bosch Elec. Jack Hammer
- Stihl TS 400 & TS 500 Cement Saws
- Weldmark 135+ Welder
- DP Air Compressor
- Older Floats, Packers & Screeds
- Hammer Drills
- Hand Tools, Trowels, Air Hose Reel
- 5/8" Rod (4', 8', 20')
- 4) 6"x6"x15' St. Tubes (1/4")
- 90) 4x8 Wall Forms
- 4' & 8' Corner Forms
- Newer 2' Forms
- Stakes & Wire Ties
- 2x4's, 2x6's, 2x10's,
- Several 2x12's (15' & 20')
- 500 gal. Propane Tank (needs valve)
- 500 gal. Diesel Tank (1/2 full)
- Lots of Hand Tools

TRACTOR – LOADER – SNOWMOBILE

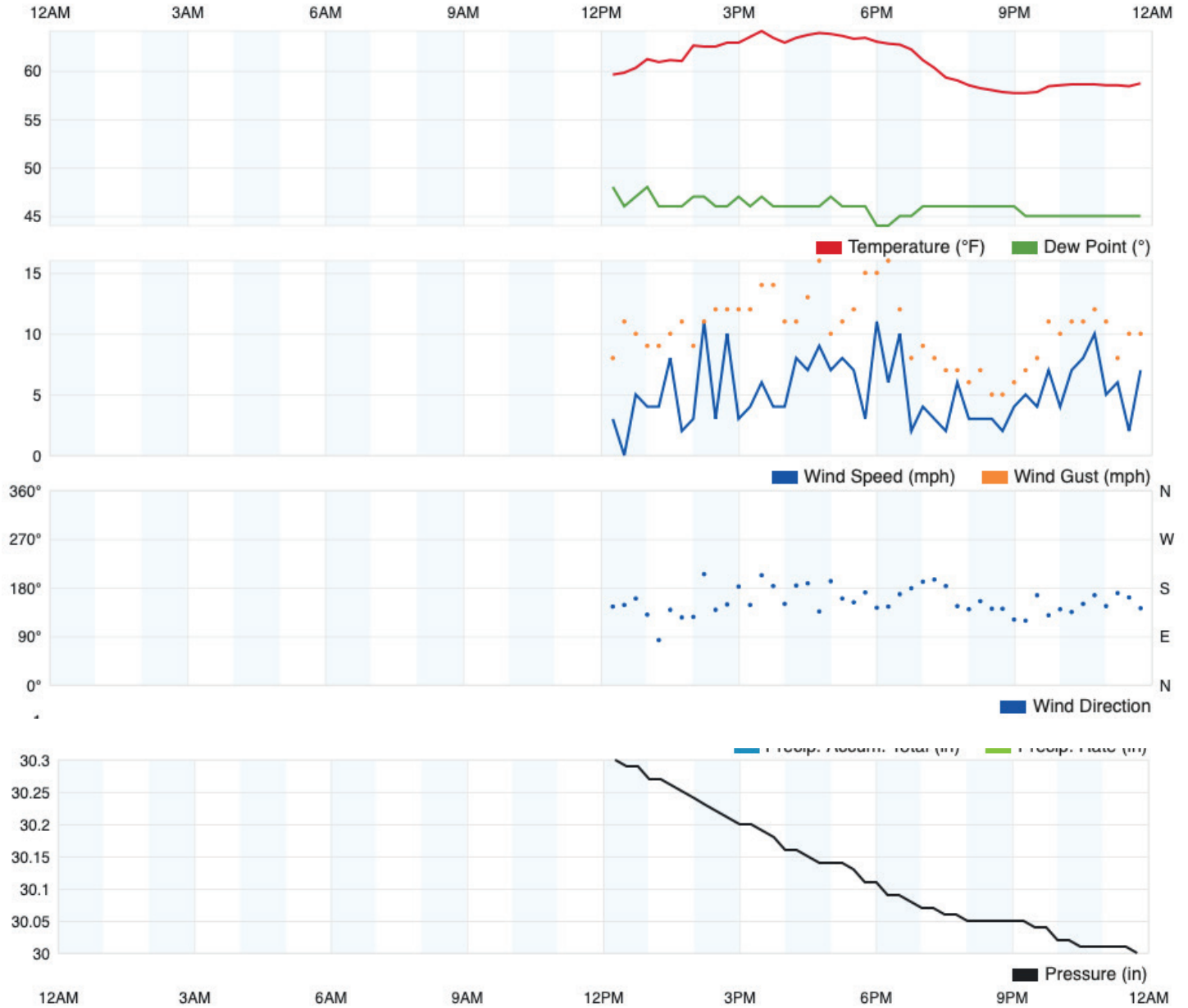
Case IH 50 CVT FWA Tractor w/L350 Loader, Bucket, Forks, 3 pt, PTO, 2 Hydr, 575 hours! • **Case IH BS172H 6' Snow Blower** (Nice) • **Case IH TLX180H 80" 3 pt. Tiller** • **Farm King 847 7' Leveler** • **Fimco 3 pt. Sprayer** w/ 50 gal. Tank, Folding Booms • **King Kutter 3 pt. 6' Disk** • **Field Svc Tank** • '08 **Polaris RMK 700 Snowmobile** w/155" Track/ 2 1/4" Lugs (all consigned)



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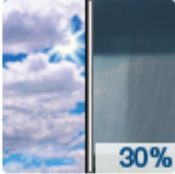




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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Partly Sunny then Chance Showers	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Decreasing Clouds	Sunny and Breezy
High: 68 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 72 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 68 °F



Weekend Forecast

September 23, 2022
2:17 AM



Today
*A few showers north & east.
Highs 58-77°*

Saturday
Partly Sunny, Highs 66-80°

Sunday
Mostly Sunny, Highs 63-75°

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Other than a few showers today, a dry and mild weekend is on tap for central and northeast South Dakota, as well as west central Minnesota.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 64 °F at 3:30 PM

Low Temp: 36 °F at 7:04 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 2:20 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 10 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 1935

Record Low: 22 in 2012

Average High: 72°F

Average Low: 44°F

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.53

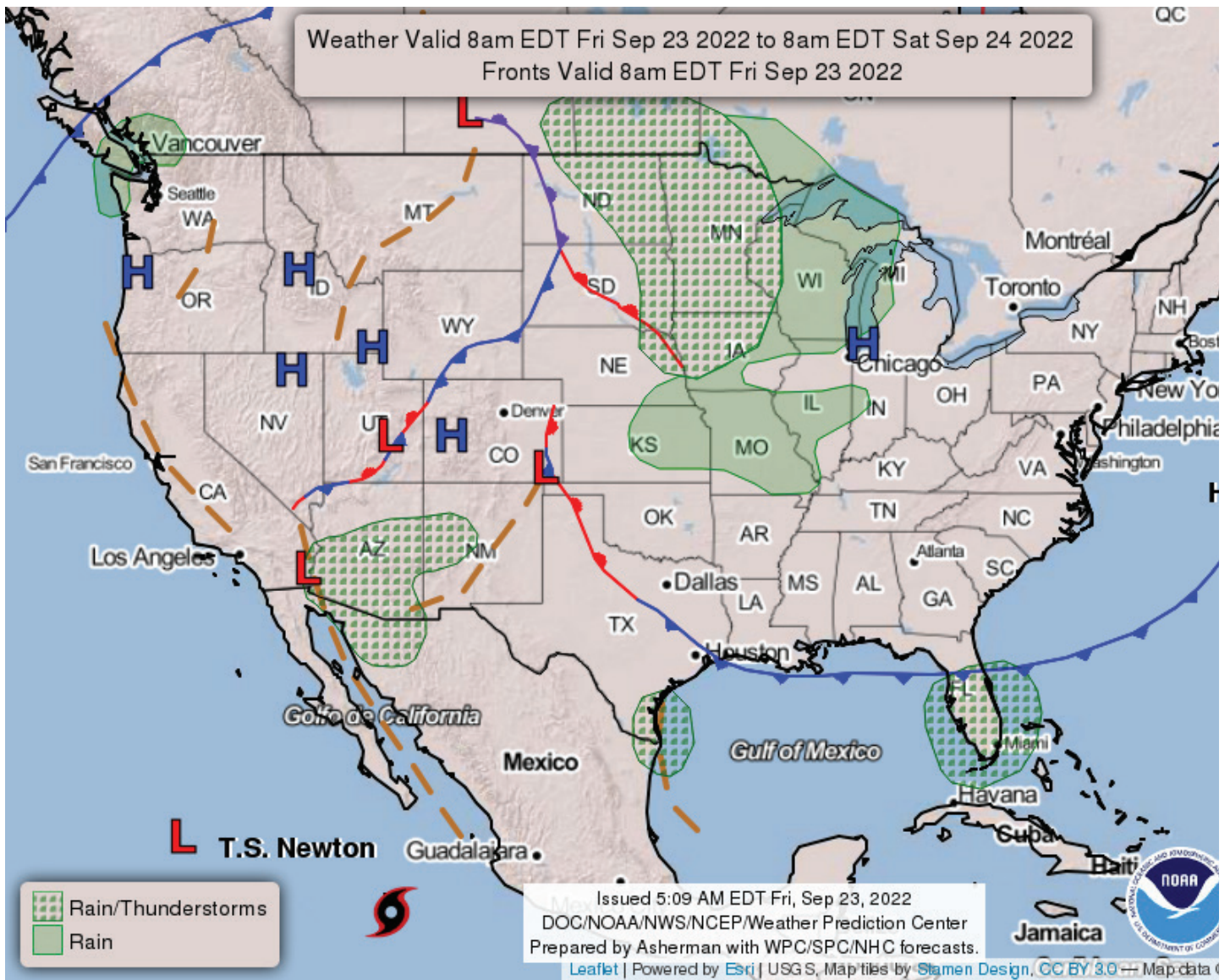
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.07

Average Precip to date: 17.87

Precip Year to Date: 16.05

Sunset Tonight: 7:29:46 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:20:47 AM



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Today in Weather History

September 23, 1984: Snow fell from the early morning to the late evening hours across northwest South Dakota bringing more than a foot of snow to some locations. Camp Crook in Harding County reported 14 inches. Amounts between six and twelve inches were common across Harding and Perkins Counties as well as parts of Meade and Butte Counties. Roads in these areas were slushy with icy bridges. The snow covered much of the western third of South Dakota with depths an inch or less.

September 23, 2004: A tornado touched down northeast of Browns Valley, MN during the late afternoon. This tornado traveled through a cornfield and a farmstead before dissipating. The tornado damaged several sheds and a trailer along with toppling a large grain bin. Another tornado touched down south and southwest of Rosholt in Roberts County in the late afternoon. This F2 tornado destroyed a house, a mobile home, and a travel trailer. The tornado also killed three cattle.

1551: The Grand Harbour at Valetta, Malta, was hit by a waterspout which then moved inland. This waterspout sunk four ships, killing at least 600 people. It should be noted, the year of the event could also be 1555, or 1556 as sources conflict.

1722: La Nouvelle-Orléans (New Orleans) was founded May 7, 1718, by the French Mississippi Company, under the direction of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, on land inhabited by the Chitimacha. Four years later, a hurricane destroys nearly every building in the village, including the only church and hospital.

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1975: On September 22, Hurricane Eloise intensified to attain Category 2 strength, and became a major hurricane of Category 3 status shortly after that as it turned towards the northeast. Several ships penetrated the storm's center during its passage through the Gulf. Hurricane Eloise continued to strengthen until it reached its peak winds of 125 mph and a minimum barometric pressure of about 955 mbar. It moved ashore along the Florida Panhandle near Panama City on September 23.

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Yuma, AZ, experienced their most severe thunderstorm of record. Strong thunderstorm winds, with unofficial gusts as high as 95 mph, reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Yuma got nearly as much rain in one hour as is normally received in an entire year. The storm total of 2.55 inches of rain was a record 24 hour total for July. Property damage due to flash flooding and high winds was in the millions. (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Wisconsin and northern Illinois to New England, with 103 reports of large hail and damaging winds through the day. Thunderstorms in Wisconsin produced hail three inches in diameter near Oshkosh, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Germantown. (The National Weather Summary)

2009: A massive dust storm swept 725 miles across the outback to engulf Sydney, New South Wales producing a red hue across the region from the 22nd through the 24th. Wind gusts topped 60 mph as the storm transported an estimated 5,000 metric tons of dust, spreading it into the southern region of Queensland.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WORDS THAT HARM – WORDS THAT HEAL

We often hear of damage done by those who “speak before they think.” Their damage is harmful, “piercing like a sword,” leaving broken hearts, troubled minds and sleepless nights as a result. I know of no one who has not been damaged, in one way or another, by careless words from calloused hearts.

Unfortunately, for some, speaking harshly is a way of life. Kindness does not reside within them.

People who destroy others with their words are not new. Solomon recognized the pain they caused others when he wrote, “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

“Reckless words” are words that come from resentful hearts and minds filled with evil thoughts. For whatever is in our hearts is there because we gave it a home. “Out of the abundance...” If it’s in there, we allow it to be there because we do not realize the damage it does to ourselves and others. And, it will remain there until we ask God, in humility and sincerity, to remove the rage.

And when He does, we can do great things for those hurt by the “reckless words” of others: we can bring them His healing. Imagine this wonderful opportunity that is available to us to take the healing grace of God to those who have been harmed by hatred and wounded by words.

“The tongue of the wise brings healing!” How? Heed what Paul said: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs” – God’s love through us.

Prayer: From our own experience, Father, we know the pain of “reckless words.” Help us to realize the power of our words and use them to help and heal others. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God’s grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God’s Word and we pray this good “seed” finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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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

Subscription Form

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Groton, SD 57445-0034

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www.397news.com

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Christian def. North Central Co-Op, 25-22, 23-25, 25-18, 25-22

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Sisseton, 25-12, 26-24, 25-16

Andes Central/Dakota Christian def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-19, 25-18, 24-26, 27-25

Arlington def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 25-20

Avon def. Colome, 25-14, 25-22, 19-25, 25-21

Baltic def. Parker, 25-9, 25-13, 25-14

Canistota def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-18, 25-22, 25-17

Chester def. Garretson, 25-23, 26-28, 25-21, 25-21

Clark/Willow Lake def. Deuel, 25-17, 19-25, 25-20, 25-18

Dell Rapids def. Flandreau, 25-19, 25-9, 25-17

Deubrook def. Estelline/Hendricks, 25-22, 16-25, 25-16, 25-22

Elk Point-Jefferson def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-13, 25-16, 25-19

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Colman-Egan, 3-1

Ellendale, N.D. def. Leola/Frederick, 25-16, 25-14, 25-16

Faith def. New Underwood, 25-19, 25-22, 25-15

Freeman def. Menno, 25-13, 25-17, 25-21

Great Plains Lutheran def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-14, 25-9, 25-18

Groton Area def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 26-24, 25-17, 25-10

Hamlin def. Webster, 25-8, 25-14, 25-11

Hanson def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-19, 25-16, 19-25, 25-22

Hill City def. Newell, 25-20, 25-15, 22-25, 25-23

Huron def. Brookings, 25-19, 25-23, 25-18

Ipswich def. Langford, 25-10, 25-14, 25-16

Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op def. Highmore-Harrold, 28-26, 25-21, 25-16

Jones County def. Todd County, 25-11, 25-7, 25-9

Madison def. Tri-Valley, 25-21, 25-20, 22-25, 25-16

McCook Central/Montrose def. Parkston, 25-13, 25-17, 25-18

Northwestern def. Waubay/Summit, 25-4, 25-4, 25-12

Oldham-Ramona/Rutland def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 21-25, 25-18, 25-21, 16-25, 15-10

Potter County def. Stanley County, 25-21, 25-23, 17-25, 25-13

Rapid City Christian def. St. Thomas More, 25-13, 25-19, 25-22

Rapid City Stevens def. Rapid City Central, 25-13, 25-12, 25-13

Redfield def. Milbank, 17-25, 25-15, 27-25, 23-25, 15-10

Scotland def. Marty Indian, 25-3, 25-20, 25-13

Sioux Falls Christian def. Dakota Valley, 25-15, 25-18, 25-21

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Brandon Valley, 20-25, 25-19, 25-11, 25-22

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Harrisburg, 25-13, 28-26, 25-22

St. Francis Indian def. Little Wound, 25-9, 21-25, 26-24, 25-22

Sully Buttes def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-12, 25-10, 25-14

Tri-State, N.D. def. Wilmot, 25-13, 25-18, 25-11

Viborg-Hurley def. Centerville, 25-11, 25-4, 25-11

Wagner def. Kimball/White Lake, 25-14, 25-12, 25-13

Wall def. White River, 17-25, 25-16, 25-18, 25-22

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Watertown def. Mitchell, 25-19, 22-25, 26-24, 25-17
West Central def. Lennox, 25-17, 22-25, 25-21, 25-19
Wolsey-Wessington def. James Valley Christian, 25-12, 25-17, 25-12
Bon Homme Triangular=
Bon Homme def. Chamberlain, 25-20, 25-15, 25-8
Burke def. Bon Homme, 18-25, 25-13, 25-19, 25-19
Burke def. Chamberlain, 25-5, 25-4, 25-15

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Woman gets 6 years in prison for damaging pipeline

By DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A federal judge sentenced an Arizona woman on Thursday to six years in prison for using a cutting torch to damage the Dakota Access pipeline in Iowa and setting fire to pipeline equipment in three counties in 2016 and 2017.

The judge also ordered Ruby Katherine Montoya, 32, to pay nearly \$3.2 million in restitution together with Jessica Reznicek, a woman who helped her.

Montoya pleaded guilty to conspiracy to damage an energy facility. She admitted to helping Reznicek and others damage the pipeline in several locations in Iowa.

"The sentence imposed today demonstrates that any crime of domestic terrorism will be aggressively investigated and prosecuted by the federal government," U.S. Attorney Richard D. Westphal said in a statement. He said the seriousness of the actions warranted a significant prison sentence and should deter others who might consider engaging in domestic terrorism.

Reznicek was sentenced to eight years in prison in June 2021 after pleading guilty to a similar charge. She appealed the sentence, but it was upheld by a federal appeals court in June.

Dakota Access, a subsidiary of Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, constructed the controversial \$3.8 billion, 1,168-mile pipeline that cuts through North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa, ending in Illinois.

Environmental groups opposed the pipeline, which they said risked an oil spill disaster. Some landowners also opposed the use of eminent domain to force farmers to allow its construction on their land, and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe fought the pipeline, claiming the environmental impact review was inadequate.

Montoya's attorney did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Louisiana police Lt. accused of paying for sex in S Dakota

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A Louisiana State Police lieutenant has been put on administrative leave after being arrested in South Dakota for allegedly paying a prostitute.

The 20-year department veteran was in Rapid City for a work-related conference when he was arrested about 3 a.m. Tuesday on the misdemeanor charge of "hiring for sexual activity," according to a state police news release.

State police said Thursday that they don't know whether the lieutenant has an attorney who could speak for him. He is assigned to the Transportation Safety Services/Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Section.

It's standard procedure to put officers being investigated on administrative leave with pay.

The news release said the sheriff's office in Pennington County, South Dakota, has turned the case over to the Pennington County States Attorney's Office.

AP Interview: Sudan ruling general won't run in elections

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sudan's ruling military general, who mounted a coup nearly a year ago, said he will not run in future elections for a civilian-led government, but offered no timeline on when a vote might

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happen in order for him to relinquish power.

Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan spoke with The Associated Press on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly on Thursday. It marked nearly one year after he mounted a coup that upended the Arabic-speaking African nation's short-lived transition to democracy after three decades of repressive rule by strongman Omar al-Bashir.

Asked if he would consider running in future elections, Burhan replied: "I don't think so." When pressed further, he said: "I do not have a desire to put myself forward (as a candidate) nor do I want to continue in this work."

Underpinning last year's coup were tensions that had been building between supporters of military rule and those who support civilian rule — with both sides frustrated by the country's worsening economic conditions.

Sudan has been mired in political turmoil for over three years. Its economy has teetered and inflation was expected to hit a staggering 245% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Since the coup last October, pro-democracy protesters have marched through the streets demanding the generals hand over power to civilians. They've denounced Burhan's takeover, which occurred when the military dissolved the transitional government of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok as well as the Sovereign Council, a power-sharing body of military officers and civilians that had been ruling Sudan since late 2019.

Troops have opened fire at protesters, killing some of the marchers and detaining hundreds. While no police or security forces have been convicted in the deaths, Burhan said around five or six are under investigation.

"No one killed protesters in the way that's being depicted," he said. "Protesters clashed with police, and the police dealt with them according to the law to protect public property."

Burhan said that once an elected government is in place, the armed forces would be another institution of that government rather than retain a higher status.

During the interview, Burhan said he wouldn't run in future elections. But he stopped short of giving a date for when elections will be held, despite previously saying a vote could be held in July 2023. Instead, he said the gridlock lies with political groups that need to agree on a date for the vote. He insisted the military had no role in that discussion.

"We are talking about political participation and widening that participation, whether that is Hamdok or someone else, this person will not succeed without a wide base to rule Sudan," Burhan said. "The only authority to rule is through elections, with no one imposing their will on another."

He also brushed aside strains within his own transitional government, denying there were any disagreements with the deputy chief of Sudan's ruling military council, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known by his nickname Hamedti. Local media over the past weeks reported disputes between the two generals. Dagalo has also acknowledged the failure of the October military's takeover.

Amid the political upheaval, millions of Sudanese are suffering from high prices and a currency that's dropped dramatically in value against the dollar. The ruling military leader blamed countries and institutions, which he did not name, for being behind Sudan's deteriorating economic situation.

Sudan is in the midst of a deepening food crisis caused by 'a cocktail of factors,' according to the country's World Food Program representative, Eddie Rowe, who spoke at a UN press conference on Friday.

Sudan has seen two years of poor harvests, a summer of devastating flooding and is struggling to access vital grain imports from eastern Europe following the war in Ukraine. In response to October's coup, many major UN donors have withdrawn funding from the country.

To help ease Sudan's crisis, Rowe called for lasting peace, a reliable government, and further international aid and support.

Following the coup, the Biden administration suspended \$700 million in financial assistance intended to support Sudan's transition to a fully civilian government. The State Department said the full aid package, which may have included other aid beyond the \$700 million, had been put on "pause" pending a review of developments in Khartoum.

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There are those "who promised to provide assistance to Sudan, but they did not honor their promises. There was much support from those external actors but regrettably this assistance seized for political purposes," Burhan said.

World opinion shifts against Russia as Ukraine worries grow

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The tide of international opinion appears to be decisively shifting against Russia, as a number of non-aligned countries are joining the United States and its allies in condemning Moscow's war in Ukraine and its threats to the principles of the international rules-based order.

Western officials have repeatedly said that Russia has become isolated since invading Ukraine in February. Until recently, though, that was largely wishful thinking. But on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, much of the international community spoke out against the conflict in a rare display of unity at the often fractured United Nations.

The tide had already appeared to be turning against Russian President Vladimir Putin even before Thursday's U.N. speeches. Chinese and Indian leaders had been critical of the war at a high-level summit last week in Uzbekistan. And then the U.N. General Assembly disregarded Russia's objections and voted overwhelmingly to allow Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to be the only leader to address the body remotely, instead of requiring him to appear in person.

That shift against Russia accelerated after Putin on Wednesday announced the mobilization of some additional 300,000 troops to Ukraine, signaling the unlikelihood of a quick end to the war. Putin also suggested that nuclear weapons may be an option. That followed an announcement of Russia's intention to hold independence referenda in several occupied Ukrainian regions with an eye toward possible annexation.

Those announcements came at the very moment that the General Assembly, considered the premier event in the global diplomatic calendar, was taking place in New York.

Numerous world leaders used their speeches on Tuesday and Wednesday to denounce Russia's war. That trend continued Thursday both in the assembly hall and at the usually deeply divided U.N. Security Council, where, one-by-one, virtually all of the 15 council members served up harsh criticism of Russia — a council member -- for aggravating several already severe global crises and imperiling the foundations of the world body.

The apparent shift in opinion offers some hope to Ukraine and its Western allies that increasing isolation will add pressure on Putin to negotiate a peace. But few are unduly optimistic. Putin has staked his legacy on the Ukraine war and few expect him to back down. And, Russia is hardly isolated. Many of its allies depend on it for energy, food and military assistance and are likely to stand by Putin regardless of what happens in Ukraine.

Still, it was striking to hear Russia's nominal friends like China and India, following up on last week's remarks, speak of grave concerns they have about the conflict and its impact on global food and energy shortages as well as threats to the concepts of sovereignty and territorial integrity that are enshrined in the U.N. Charter.

Brazil registered similar concerns. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa make up the so-called BRICS bloc of countries, which has often shunned or outright opposed Western initiatives and views on international relations.

Only one country, Belarus, a non-council member and Russia ally that was invited to participate, spoke in support of Russia, but also called for a quick end to the fighting, which it called a "tragedy."

"We hear a lot about the divisions among countries at the United Nations," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. "But recently, what's striking is the remarkable unity among member states when it comes to Russia's war on Ukraine. Leaders from countries developing and developed, big and small, North and South have spoken in the General Assembly about the consequences of the war and the need to end it."

"Even a number of nations that maintain close ties with Moscow have said publicly that they have serious questions and concerns about President Putin's ongoing invasion," Blinken said.

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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was careful not to condemn the war but said that China's firm stance is that "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected. The purposes of the principles of the U.N. Charter should be observed."

Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said "the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict is a matter of a profound concern for the international community." He called for accountability for atrocities and abuses committed in Ukraine. "If egregious attacks committed in broad daylight are left unpunished, this council must reflect on the signals we are sending on impunity. There must be consistency if we are to ensure credibility," he said.

And Brazilian Foreign Minister Carlos Alberto Franca said immediate efforts to end the war are critical. "The continuation of the hostilities endangers the lives of innocent civilians and jeopardizes the food and energy security of millions of families in other regions, especially in developing countries," he said. "The risks of escalation arising for the current dynamics of the conflict are simply too great, and its consequences for the world order unpredictable."

Foreign ministers and top officials from Albania, Britain, France, Ireland, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico and Norway delivered similar rebukes.

"Russia's actions are blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations," said Albanian Foreign Minister Olta Xhaka. "We all tried to prevent this conflict. We could not, but we must not fail to hold Russia accountable."

Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard called the invasion a "flagrant breach of international law" and Irish foreign minister Simon Coveney said: "If we fail to hold Russia accountable we send a message to large countries that they can prey on their neighbors with impunity."

Unsurprisingly, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was unapologetic and defensive at the same time and specifically targeted Zelenskyy. Citing a phrase often attributed to President Franklin Roosevelt, Lavrov called Zelenskyy "a bastard," but said Western leaders regarded him as "our bastard."

He repeated a long list of Russia's complaints about Ukraine and accused Western countries of using Ukraine for anti-Russia activities and policies.

"Everything I've said today simply confirms that the decision to conduct the special military operation was inevitable," Lavrov said, following Russian practice of not calling the invasion a war.

Russia has denied being isolated and the foreign ministry used social media to publicize a number of apparently cordial meetings that Lavrov has held with foreign minister colleagues at the UN in recent days.

Still, Blinken and his colleagues from other NATO nations seized on what they believe to be growing opposition to and impatience with Putin.

And, several speakers, including Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, pointed out that Lavrov skipped the meeting except for his speaking slot.

"I notice that Russian diplomats flee almost as quickly as Russian soldiers," Kuleba said, referring to Lavrov's hasty exit along with recent Russian troop retreats in Ukraine.

Hong Kong to end mandatory hotel quarantine for travelers

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's leader announced the city would no longer require incoming travelers to quarantine in designated hotels as it seeks to remain competitive and open up globally after nearly two years.

Incoming travelers will also no longer need a negative PCR test within 48 hours before boarding a plane to Hong Kong, the city's chief executive John Lee said Friday at a news conference. Instead, they will need to present a negative COVID-19 result from a rapid antigen test conducted within 24 hours before the flight.

The measures will come into effect Monday.

"While we can't control the trend of the epidemic, we must allow the maximum room to allow connectivity with the world so that we can have economic momentum and to reduce inconvenience to arriving travelers," said Lee, who also said that authorities will not roll back the measures announced Friday.

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He said that there must be a "balance between risks and economic growth."

From Monday, travelers into Hong Kong will have to undergo three days of home monitoring. If they test negative for COVID-19 after three days, they will be allowed into venues such as restaurants and bars. They must also undergo several mandatory PCR tests, including one on arrival, as well as on their second, fourth and sixth days in Hong Kong, coupled with daily antigen rapid tests every day for their first week.

Hong Kong's easing of travel curbs sparked a rush for flight bookings, with airline Cathay Pacific's website "experiencing high traffic" after the announcement was made. Visitors to the site had to wait in a virtual queue to enter.

The city's daily COVID-19 infections have fallen to below 6,000 cases a day, from over 10,000 daily cases early this month. A large majority are local infections.

For nearly two years, Hong Kong required overseas arrivals in the city to serve a period of mandatory quarantine in designated hotels. At one point, the city had among the world's longest quarantine periods at 21 days of mandatory isolation.

Neighboring Taiwan is expected to do the same next month. This leaves mainland China as one of the only places in the world that will still require travelers to quarantine on arrival.

Hong Kong has for most of the pandemic aligned with China's "zero-COVID" strategy.

Over the past 2 1/2 years, Hong Kong authorities have imposed strict social distancing measures and locked down residential buildings with confirmed COVID-19 infections to mass-test residents.

As the rest of the world reopened borders, businesses urged Hong Kong authorities to come up with an exit strategy to the pandemic in order to remain competitive amid a brain drain as tens of thousands of residents left the city.

Several companies also moved their offices to countries like Singapore as they sought relief from the city's restrictions.

Singapore had eased travel curbs and relaxed coronavirus restrictions months before Hong Kong, sparking concerns that Hong Kong may lose out in competitiveness as an international financial center and regional business hub.

Lee said authorities will keep monitoring the epidemic situation in Hong Kong to determine if further relaxation is possible, adding he was "optimistic" that the loosening of requirements will be welcomed by those who wish to enter Hong Kong.

"If there are positive developments as we progress ... there will be more room for us to do extra measures so that we can have more movement, more activities and more room for us to go about different (activities)," he said.

The easing of measures comes as Hong Kong prepares to hold several high-profile events, including the Rugby Sevens tournament in November and an international banking summit.

The Rugby Sevens is making a comeback in the city for the first time since the pandemic began. In a news conference Friday, organizers said that risk mitigation measures will be taken for the tournament, which includes making sure that all players and officials involved have at least two COVID-19 vaccinations.

Other measures taken include operating within a "competition bubble," which ensures that competing teams will be sequestered on arrival, during the tournament and until departure.

On arrival, teams will be transported directly from the airport to designated hotels and will have dedicated team transport and training venues.

Organizers said 10,000 Rugby Sevens tickets will go on sale to the public Sept. 28.

"The return of the Hong Kong Sevens means business is returning too. And I know we can't wait for both to fill the stands, and the streets and shops, restaurants and hopefully bars as well," said financial secretary Paul Chan at the Rugby Sevens news conference.

"The momentum will keep on building. And long beyond. There will be no stopping our many prestigious international events," Chan said.

The relaxation of travel requirements drew optimistic reactions from some residents in the city.

"I think (reopening) has to be step-by-step, it's positive," said Samuel Tsang, a Hong Kong resident.

However, there are others who believe that three days of monitoring for arrivals is still an inconvenient

measure.

"It's too late. Everybody else has opened up for such a long time," said Eva Leung.

"The economy has become like this, no one is coming," she said, adding that it's still a hassle, especially for business travelers who have to move around the city for work. "It's still not convenient."

'Crucial' vote could move Italy to right; many might boycott

By FRANCES D'EMILIO and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italians will vote on Sunday in what is being billed as a crucial election as Europe reels from repercussions of Russia's war in Ukraine. For the first time in Italy since the end of World War II, the election could propel a far-right leader into the premiership.

Soaring energy costs and quickly climbing prices for staples like bread — the consequences of Russia's invasion of breadbasket Ukraine — have pummeled many Italian families and businesses.

Against that bleak backdrop, Giorgia Meloni and her Brothers of Italy party — with neo-fascist roots and an agenda of God, homeland and Christian identity — appear to be the front-runners in Italy's parliamentary election.

They could be a test case for whether hard-right sentiment is gaining more traction in the 27-nation European Union. Recently, a right-wing party in Sweden surged in popularity by capitalizing on peoples' fears about crime.

Meloni's main alliance partner is right-wing League party leader Matteo Salvini, who blames crime on migrants. Salvini has long been a staunch ideological booster of right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland.

"Elections in the middle of a war, in the midst of an energy crisis and the dawn of what is likely to be an economic crisis ... almost by definition are crucial elections," said Nathalie Tocci, director of Rome-based think tank the International Affairs Institute.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who ordered Moscow's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, is gambling that "Europe will break" under the weight of economic and energy problems brought on by the war, Tocci told The Associated Press.

Salvini, who draws his voter base from business owners in Italy's north, has donned pro-Putin T-shirts in the past. Salvini has also questioned the wisdom of maintaining Western economic sanctions against Russia, saying they could hurt Italy's economic interests too much.

The publication of polls was halted 15 days before Sunday's vote, but before then they indicated Meloni's party would be the biggest vote-getter, just ahead of the center-left Democratic Party headed by former Premier Enrico Letta.

A campaign alliance linking Meloni to conservative allies Salvini and former Premier Silvio Berlusconi confers a clear advantage over Letta under Italy's complex system of divvying up seats in Parliament.

Letta had hoped in vain for a campaign alliance with the left-leaning populist 5-Star Movement, the largest party in the outgoing legislature.

While it is a fraught moment for Europe, Sunday's election could see modern Italy's lowest-ever turnout. The last election, in 2018, saw record-low turnout of 73%. Pollster Lorenzo Pregliasco says this time the percentage could drop to as low as 66%.

Pregliasco, who heads the YouTrend polling company, says Italy's last three different governing coalitions since the last election have left Italians "disaffected, disappointed. They don't see their vote as something that matters."

The outgoing government is headed by former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi. In early 2021, Italy's president tapped Draghi to form a unity government after the collapse of the second ruling coalition of 5-Star leader Giuseppe Conte.

In what Pregliasco called an "apparent paradox," polls indicate that "most Italians like Draghi and think his government did a good job." Yet Meloni, the sole major party leader to refuse to join Draghi's coalition, is polling the strongest.

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As Tocci put it, Meloni's party is so popular "simply because it's the new kid on the block." Draghi has said he doesn't want another term.

To Meloni's annoyance, criticism still dogs her that she hasn't made an unambiguous break with her party's roots in a neo-fascist movement founded by nostalgists for dictator Benito Mussolini after his regime's disastrous role in World War II. During the campaign, she declared that she is "no danger to democracy."

Some political analysts say worries about the fascist question aren't their main concern.

"I am afraid of incompetence, not the fascist threat," said Roberto D'Alimonte, a political science professor at LUISS, a private university in Rome. "She has not governed anything."

Meloni served as youth minister in Berlusconi's last government, which ended a decade ago.

Instead, her main right-wing coalition partner is worth worrying about, D'Alimonte told The AP.

"Salvini will be the troublemaker, not Meloni," he said. "It is not Meloni calling for the end of sanctions against Russia. It is Salvini. It is not Meloni calling for more debt or more deficit. It is Salvini."

But recent incidents have fed worries about Brothers of Italy.

A Brothers of Italy candidate in Sicily was suspended by his party after he posted phrases on social media showing appreciation for Hitler. Separately, a brother of one of Meloni's co-founders was spotted giving what appeared to be the fascist salute at a funeral for a relative. The brother denied that was what he was doing.

For years, the right wing has crusaded against unbridled immigration, after hundreds of thousands of migrants reached Italy's shores aboard smugglers' boats or vessels that rescued them in the Mediterranean Sea. Both Meloni and Salvini have thundered against what they see as an invasion of foreigners not sharing what they call Italy's "Christian" character.

Letta, who wants to facilitate citizenship for children of legal immigrants, has, too, played the fear card. In his party's campaign, ads on buses, half the image depicts a serious-looking Letta with his one-word motto, "Choose," with the other half featuring an ominous-looking image of Putin. Salvini and Berlusconi have both expressed admiration for the Russian leader. Meloni backs supplying arms so Ukraine can defend itself.

With energy bills as much as 10 times higher than a year ago, how to save workers' jobs ranks high among Italian voters' worries.

But perhaps with the exception of Salvini, who wants to revisit Italy's closed nuclear power plants, candidates haven't distinguished themselves in proposing solutions to the energy crisis. Nearly all are pushing for a EU cap on gas prices.

The perils of climate change haven't loomed large in the Italian campaign. Italy's tiny Greens party, a campaign partner of Letta, is forecast to capture barely a few seats in Parliament.

Moscow-held regions of Ukraine in 'sham' vote to join Russia

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Voting began Friday in Moscow-held regions of Ukraine on referendums to become part of Russia, Russian-backed officials there said.

The Kremlin-orchestrated referendums, which have been widely denounced by Ukraine and the West as shams without any legal force, are seen as a step toward annexing the territories by Russia.

The votes are being held in the Luhansk, Kherson and partly Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions.

The vote, which asks residents if they want their regions to be part of Russia, is certain to go Moscow's way. That would give Russia the pretext to claim that attempts by Ukrainian forces to regain control are attacks on Russia itself, dramatically escalating the seven-month war.

The referendums follow Russian President Vladimir Putin's order of a partial mobilization, which could add about 300,000 Russian troops to the fight. The balloting will continue for five days through Tuesday.

As the votes were getting underway in the occupied regions, Russian social media sites were full of dramatic scenes of tearful families bidding farewell to men departing from military mobilization centers. In cities across the vast country, men hugged their weeping family members before departing as part of

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the draft. Russian anti-war activists, in the meantime, planned more protests against the mobilization.

Election officials will be bringing ballots to people's homes and setting up makeshift polling stations near residential buildings during the first four days of the referendums, according to Russian-installed officials in the occupied regions, who cited safety reasons. Tuesday will be the only day when the voters will be invited to come to regular polls.

Polls also opened in Russia, where refugees from the occupied regions can cast their votes.

Denis Pushilin, separatist leader of Moscow-backed authorities in the Donetsk region, called the referendum on Friday "a historical milestone."

Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of Russia's lower house of parliament, the State Duma, addressed the occupied regions Friday in an online statement, saying: "If you decide to become part of the Russian Federation — we will support you."

Valentina Matviyenko, chair of Russia's upper parliament house, said that residents of the occupied regions were voting for "life or death" at the referendums.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy only briefly mentioned the "sham referenda" in his nightly address in which he switched from speaking in Ukrainian to Russian to directly tell Russian citizens they are being "thrown to their deaths."

"You are already accomplices in all these crimes, murders and torture of Ukrainians," he said. "Because you were silent. Because you are silent. And now it's time for you to choose. For men in Russia, this is a choice to die or live, to become a cripple or to preserve health. For women in Russia, the choice is to lose their husbands, sons, grandchildren forever, or still try to protect them from death, from war, from one person."

The voting takes place against the backdrop of incessant fighting in Ukraine, with Russian and Ukrainian forces exchanging fire as both sides refuse to concede ground.

On Friday morning, pro-Russia officials in the Zaporizhzhia region reported a loud blast in the center of Melitopol, a city that Moscow captured early on in the war. Official Vladimir Rogov didn't offer any details as to what caused the explosion and whether there was damage and casualties.

Moscow-backed authorities in the Donetsk region also accused Ukrainian forces of shelling the city of Donetsk, the region's capital, and the nearby city of Yasynuvata.

Ukrainian officials, in turn, reported new rounds of Russian shelling in various parts of the country. Vitaliy Kim, governor of the Mykolaiv region in southern Ukraine that borders the Kherson region, said explosions rang out in the city of Mykolaiv in the early hours of Friday.

Valentyn Reznichenko, governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region, said the Russians unleashed a barrage of shelling on Nikopol, a city across from the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, on Friday morning.

Turkey: Anti-LGBTQ display reflects nation's political shift

By ZEYNEP BILGINSOY and ROBERT BADENDIECK Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — The 25-year-old translator by day and trans drag performer by night felt overwhelming panic and anxiety when several thousand demonstrators gathered and marched Sunday in Turkey to demand a ban on what they consider gay propaganda and to outlaw LGBTQ organizations.

The Big Family Gathering march in the conservative heart of Istanbul attracted parents with children, nationalists, hard-line Islamists and conspiracy theorists. Turkey's media watchdog gave the event the government's blessing by including a promotional video that called LGBTQ people a "virus" in its list of public service announcements for broadcasters.

"We need to make all our defense against this LGBT. We need to get rid of it," said construction worker Mehmet Yalcin, 21, who attended the event wearing a black headband printed with Islam's testimony of faith. "We are sick of and truly uncomfortable that our children are being encouraged and pulled to this."

Seeing images from the gathering terrified Willie Ray, the drag performer who identifies as nonbinary,

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and Willie Ray's mother, who was in tears after talking to her child. The fear wasn't misplaced. The Europe branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association ranked Turkey second to last, ahead of only Azerbaijan, in its most recent 49-country legal equality index, saying LGBTQ people endured "countless hate crimes."

"I feel like I can be publicly lynched," Willie Ray said, describing the daily sense of dread that comes with living in Istanbul. The performer recalls leaving a nightclub still in makeup on New Year's Eve and hurrying to get to a taxi as strangers on the street called out slurs and "tried to hunt me, basically."

Sunday's march was the biggest anti-LGBTQ demonstration of its kind in Turkey, where civil rights for a community more commonly referred to here as LGBTI+ — lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other gender identities and sexual orientations — have been under assault in the years since an estimated 100,000 people celebrated Pride in Istanbul in 2014.

In a visible sign of the shift, the anti-LGBTQ march went ahead without any police interference. Conversely, LGBTQ groups have had their freedom to assemble severely curtailed since 2015, with officials citing both security and morality grounds.

Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the Pride march planned for that year. Government officials have since banned the event. Activists have tried to gather anyway, and more than 370 people were detained in Istanbul in June.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's views also have grown more stridently anti-LGBTQ over time. Before the 2002 election that brought the Justice and Development Party (AKP) he co-founded to power, a younger Erdogan said at a televised campaign event that he found mistreatment of gay people inhumane and legal protections for them in Turkey a "must."

"And now, 20 years into this, you have an entirely different president that seems to be mobilizing based on these dehumanizing, criminal approaches to the LGBTQ movement itself," said Mine Eder, a political science professor at Bogazici University in Istanbul.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu has called LGBTQ people "perverts." In 2020, Erdogan defended the head of religious affairs after he claimed homosexuality "brings disease and causes the generation to decay." While championing his long-held belief that the identities of women are rooted in motherhood and family, the Turkish leader last year urged people to dismiss what "lesbians schmesbians" say.

Turkey also withdrew from a European treaty protecting women against violence, after lobbying from conservative groups that claimed the treaty promoted homosexuality.

The country could become more unwelcoming for the LGBTQ community. The Unity in Ideas and Struggle Platform, the organizer of Sunday's event, said it plans to push for a law that would ban the alleged LGBTQ "propaganda" that the group maintains is pervasive on Netflix and social media, as well as in arts and sports. The platform's website states it also favors a ban on LGBTQ organizations.

"We are a Muslim country and we say no to this. Our statesmen and the other parties should all support this," said Betul Colak, who attended Sunday's gathering wearing a scarf with the Turkish flag.

Haunted by "the feeling that you can be attacked anytime," Willie Ray thinks it would be a "total catastrophe" if a ban on the LGBTQ organizations that provide visibility, psychological support and safe spaces were enacted.

Eder, the professor, said it would be "simply illegal" to close down LGBTQ civil society based on ideological, Islamic and conservative norms — even if Turkey's norms have indeed shifted to "using violent language, violent strategies and legalizing them."

The Social Policy, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association, a nongovernmental LGBTQ advocacy and outreach organization in Istanbul commonly known as SPoD, is among the LGBTQ groups that stopped posting their addresses online after receiving threatening calls.

"It's easy for a maniac to try and hurt us after all the hate speech from state officials," said SPoD lobbyist Ogulcan Yediveren, 27. "But these security concerns, this atmosphere of fear, doesn't stop us from work and instead reminds us every time how much we need to work."

Gay activist Umut Rojda Yildirim, who works as SPoD's lawyer, thinks the anti-LGBTQ sentiments on view Sunday aren't dominant across Turkish society, but that the minority expressing them seem "louder when

they have government funds, when they're supported by the government watchdog."

"You can just shut down an office, but I'm not going to disappear. My other colleagues aren't going to disappear. We'll be here no matter what," Yildirim said.

Alabama halts execution because of time, IV access concerns

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

ATMORE, Ala. (AP) — Alabama officials called off the Thursday lethal injection of a man convicted in a 1999 workplace shooting because of time concerns and trouble accessing the inmate's veins.

Alabama Corrections Commissioner John Hamm said the state halted the scheduled execution of Alan Miller after they determined they could not get the lethal injection underway before a midnight deadline. Prison officials made the decision at about 11:30 p.m. The last-minute reprieve came nearly three hours after a divided U.S. Supreme Court had cleared the way for the execution to begin.

"Due to time constraints resulting from the lateness of the court proceedings, the execution was called off once it was determined the condemned inmate's veins could not be accessed in accordance with our protocol before the expiration of the death warrant," Hamm said.

Hamm said "accessing the veins was taking a little bit longer than we anticipated." He did not know how long the team tried to establish a connection, but noted there are a number of procedures to be done before the team begins trying to connect the IV line.

Miller was returned to his regular cell at a south Alabama prison.

The aborted execution came after the state's July execution of Joe Nathan James took more than three hours to get underway after the state had difficulties establishing an intravenous line, leading to accusations that the execution was botched.

Miller, 57, was sentenced to death after being convicted of a 1999 workplace rampage in which he killed Terry Jarvis, Lee Holdbrooks and Scott Yancy.

"Despite the circumstances that led to the cancellation of this execution, nothing will change the fact that a jury heard the evidence of this case and made a decision," Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said in a statement. She added that three families are still grieving.

"We all know full well that Michael Holdbrooks, Terry Lee Jarvis and Christopher Scott Yancey did not choose to die by bullets to the chest. Tonight, my prayers are with the victims' families and loved ones as they are forced to continue reliving the pain of their loss," Ivey said.

An anti-death penalty group said the situation with Miller's attempted lethal injection sounded similar to other "botched" executions.

"It is hard to see how they can persist with this broken method of execution that keeps going catastrophically wrong, again and again. In its desperation to execute, Alabama is experimenting on prisoners behind closed doors — surely the definition of cruel and unusual punishment," Maya Foa, director of Reprieve US Forensic Justice Initiative, a human rights group opposed to the death penalty, said in a statement.

Prosecutors said Miller, a delivery truck driver, killed co-workers Holdbrooks and Yancy at a business in suburban Birmingham and then drove off to shoot former supervisor Jarvis at a business where Miller had previously worked. Each man was shot multiple times and Miller was captured after a highway chase.

Trial testimony indicated Miller believed the men were spreading rumors about him, including that he was gay. A psychiatrist hired by the defense found Miller suffered from severe mental illness and delusions but also said Miller's condition wasn't bad enough to use as a basis for an insanity defense under state law.

Justices in a 5-4 decision lifted an injunction — issued by a federal judge and left in place by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals — that had blocked Miller's execution from going forward. Miller's attorneys said the state lost the paperwork requesting his execution be carried out using nitrogen hypoxia, a method legally available to him but never before used in the U.S.

When Alabama approved nitrogen hypoxia as an execution method in 2018, state law gave inmates a brief window to designate it as their execution method. Miller testified that he turned in paperwork four years ago selecting nitrogen hypoxia as his execution method, putting the documents in a slot in his cell

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door at the Holman Correctional Facility for a prison worker to collect.

U.S. District Judge R. Austin Huffaker Jr. issued a preliminary injunction on Tuesday blocking the state from killing Miller by any means other than nitrogen hypoxia after finding it was "substantially likely" that Miller "submitted a timely election form even though the State says that it does not have any physical record of a form."

Nitrogen hypoxia is a proposed execution method in which death would be caused by forcing the inmate to breathe only nitrogen, depriving him or her of the oxygen needed to maintain bodily functions. Nitrogen hypoxia is authorized for executions in three states but none have attempted to put an inmate to death using the method. Alabama officials told the judge they are working to finalize the protocol.

Many states have struggled to buy execution drugs in recent years after U.S. and European pharmaceutical companies began blocking the use of their products in lethal injections. That has led some to seek alternate methods.

Inflation, unrest challenge Bangladesh's 'miracle economy'

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Standing in line to try to buy food, Rekha Begum is distraught. Like many others in Bangladesh, she is struggling to find affordable daily essentials like rice, lentils and onions.

"I went to two other places, but they told me they don't have supplies. Then I came here and stood at the end of the queue," said Begum, 60, as she waited for nearly two hours to buy what she needed from a truck selling food at subsidized prices in the capital, Dhaka.

Bangladesh's economic miracle is under severe strain as fuel price hikes amplify public frustrations over rising costs for food and other necessities. Fierce opposition criticism and small street protests have erupted in recent weeks, adding to pressures on the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which has sought help from the International Monetary Fund to safeguard the country's finances.

Experts say Bangladesh's predicament is nowhere nearly as severe as Sri Lanka's, where months' long unrest led its long-time president to flee the country and people are enduring outright shortages of food, fuel and medicines, spending days in queues for essentials. But it faces similar troubles: excessive spending on ambitious development projects, public anger over corruption and cronyism and a weakening trade balance.

Such trends are undermining Bangladesh's impressive progress, fueled largely by its success as a garment manufacturing hub, toward becoming a more affluent, middle-income country.

The government raised fuel prices by more than 50% last month to counter soaring costs due to high oil prices, triggering protests over the rising cost of living. That led authorities to order the subsidized sales of rice and other staples by government-appointed dealers.

The latest phase of the program, which began Sept. 1, should help about 50 million people, said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi.

"The government has taken a number of measures to reduce pressures on low-income earners. That is impacting the market and keeping prices of daily commodities competitive," he said.

The policies are a stopgap for bigger global and domestic challenges.

The war in Ukraine has pushed higher prices of many commodities at a time when they already were surging as demand recovered with a waning of the coronavirus pandemic. In the meantime, countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Laos — among many — have seen their currencies weaken against the dollar, adding to the costs for dollar-denominated imports of oil and other goods.

To ease the strain on public finances and foreign reserves, the authorities put a moratorium on big, new projects, cut office hours to save energy and imposed limits on imports of luxury goods and non-essential items, such as sedans and SUVs.

"The Bangladesh economy is facing strong headwinds and turbulence," said Ahmad Ahsan, an economist and director of the Dhaka-based Policy Research Institute, a thinktank. "Suddenly we are back to the era of rolling power cuts, with the taka and the forex reserves under pressure," he said.

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Millions of low-income Bangladeshis, like Begum, whose family of five can barely afford to eat fish or meat even once a month, still struggle to put food on the table.

Bangladesh has made huge strides in the past two decades in growing its economy and fighting poverty. Investments in garment manufacturing have provided jobs for tens of millions of workers, mostly women. Exports of apparel and related products account for more than 80% of its exports.

But with fuel costs so high, authorities shut diesel-run power plants that produced at least 6% of total production, cutting daily power generation by 1,500 megawatts and disrupting manufacturing.

Imports in the last fiscal year, ending in June, 2022, rose to \$84 billion, while exports have fluctuated, leaving a record current account deficit of \$17 billion.

More challenges are ahead.

Deadlines are fast approaching for repaying foreign loans related to at least 20 mega infrastructure projects, including the \$3.6 billion River Padma bridge built by China and a nuclear power plant mostly funded by Russia. Experts say Bangladesh needs to prepare for when repayment schedules ramp up between 2024 and 2026.

In July, in a move economists view as a precautionary measure, Bangladesh sought a \$4.5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, becoming the third country in South Asia to recently seek its help after Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Finance Minister A.H.M. Mustafa Kamal said that the government asked the IMF to begin formal negotiations on loans "for balance of payments and budgetary assistance." The IMF said it was working with Bangladesh to draw up a plan.

Bangladesh's foreign reserves have been falling, potentially undermining its ability to meet its loan obligations. By Wednesday they had dropped to \$36.9 billion from \$45.5 billion a year earlier, according to the central bank.

Usable foreign reserves would be about \$30 billion, said Zahid Hussain, a former chief economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

"I would not say this is a crisis situation. This is still enough to meet three months of imports, three and half months of imports. But it also means that ... you do not have a lot of room for maneuvering on the reserve front," he said.

Still, despite what some economists say is excessive spending on some costly projects, Bangladesh is better equipped to weather hard times than some other countries in the region.

Its farm sector — tea, rice and jute are major exports — is an effective "shock absorber," and its economy, four to five times larger than Sri Lanka's, is less vulnerable to outside calamities like a downturn in tourism.

The economy is forecast to grow at a 6.6% pace this fiscal year, according to the Asia Development Bank's latest forecast, and the country's total debt is still relatively small.

"I think in the current context, the most important difference between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh is the debt burden, particularly the external debt," said Hussain.

Bangladesh's external debt is under 20% of its gross domestic product, while Sri Lanka's was around 126% in the first quarter of 2022.

"So, we have some space. I mean debt as a source of stress on the macroeconomy is not much of a much problem yet," he said.

Waiting in a line to buy subsidized food, 48-year-old Mohammed Jamal said he was not feeling such leeway for his own family.

"It has become unbearable trying to maintain our standard of living," Jamal said. "Prices are just out of reach for the common people," he said. "It's tough living this way."

Millennials, assembled: At UN, younger leaders rise

By SALLY HO Associated Press

A young president at the U.N. General Assembly touted millennial status symbols like coffee, outdoor adventure and Bitcoin. Another admitted in front of the famous green marble that it was harder to gov-

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ern a country than to protest in its streets. A foreign minister, once shunned for having only a bachelor's degree, warned against indifference.

Shaped by the borderless internet, growing economic inequality and an increasingly dire climate crisis, the Generation Y cohort of presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers and other "excellencies" is making their mark at the largest gathering of world leaders.

This week at the United Nations offers a glimpse of the latest generation of leaders in power, as a critical mass of them – born generally between 1981 and 1996 – are coming to represent countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Some millennial leaders were making their debuts at the 77-year-old diplomatic institution built in the aftermath of WWII, while there were other notables who didn't show up but had already arrived on the world stage. Those include Kim Jong Un, who took over the reclusive North Korea in his 20s, and the 36-year-old Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin, who faced controversy recently for a video of her dancing at a private party that went viral.

Jennifer Sciubba, an author and political demographer affiliated with the Wilson Center, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, said many came into power buoyed by their generation's disaffection for the status quo, and in that sense millennials and baby boomers are echoes of each other. One stark difference: Life by most measures was getting better after WWII, yet many young people today don't harbor the same hope.

"A mistake would be to say, 'Younger generations, they're more liberal,' and therefore we'll see a turn to the left as these people come to the age of influence," Sciubba said "They're not monolithic. Dissatisfaction with the status quo — it can show up on either end of the political spectrum."

Sciubba also noted that it was merely a matter of time before the millennials took their place in the world order. She said the definition of generations are "arbitrary, shorthand for us to understand people." That's a truth evident on the U.N. stage, where differing ideologies from the same Gen Y were on full display.

On Tuesday during the first day of the General Assembly, two young presidents shattered that myth of the millennial monolith when they spoke of their contrasting plights.

There was the 36-year-old president of Chile, Gabriel Boric, who used his air time to lick his wounds after citizens overwhelmingly rejected a new progressive constitution he had championed.

"As a young person who was on the street protesting not very long ago, I can tell you that representing unrest is a lot easier than producing solutions," Boric said.

The failed proposal was set to replace a dictatorship-era constitution with a new charter that would have fundamentally changed the country to include gender equality, environmental protections and Indigenous rights. The stinging loss was not unexpected, with supporters blaming misinformation online for eroding support for it.

Chile's youngest-ever president said the lesson he learned was that democracy is humbling.

"With great humility, I wish to tell you today that a government can never feel defeated when the people speak," Boric said. "Because unlike in the past, when differences in Chile were settled through blood and fire, today, Chileans have agreed to face our challenges in a democratic fashion. And I'm telling you about this because I'm certain that one of the major challenges for humanity today is that of building democracies that really talk to and listen to citizens."

Meanwhile, the selfie-loving El Salvador President Nayib Bukele – his glamorous wife and young daughter in the audience – said wealthy countries should not interfere with developing nations trying to chart their own paths. His speech came just days after the 41-year-old was accused of pushing toward authoritarianism when he announced he would seek re-election despite a constitutional ban.

In thinly veiled language and metaphor, Bukele pushed back against criticism his administration has received from the United States and European Union for concentrating power and more recently suspending some constitutional rights under an ongoing six-month state of exception.

"Because while on paper we are free and sovereign and independent, we will not really be so until the powerful understand that we want to be their friends, that we admire them, that we respect them, that our doors are wide open to trade, for them to visit us, to build the best possible relations," said Bukele, whose current term ends in 2024. "But what they can't do is come to our house to give orders – not only

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because it's our house, but because it makes no sense to undo what we're doing."

Bukele, who is highly popular at home and on social media, later tweeted a video of his appearance on the conservative U.S. cable channel Fox News. The young president talked about his crackdown on powerful street gangs in which more than 50,000 people have been arrested. Recent polls have shown his actions have broad support even as human rights organizations within El Salvador and abroad say people are being arrested and jailed without evidence.

Rosario Diaz Garavito, the founder of The Millennials Movement, an NGO that works to engage young people in Latin America on the U.N.'s goals, said the diverging leaders both deftly disrupted the usual party politics at home and have proven to be among the most polarizing leaders in the region at a time when multilateralism should be embraced.

"We tend to go from the right wing to the left wing – all the time. And this is actually separating us," Diaz Garavito said. "They have shown they can think differently, in different ways, but we need to now be able to find common ground as a region."

Another thing united them: Neither wore a tie, opting for more casual attire to speak from the General Assembly podium, a place where virtually all male leaders stick to suits with ties or national dress.

As the first generation of digital natives, one constant theme in the political fortunes and misfortunes of millennial leaders emerged in the praise and peril of the internet and social media.

On Wednesday, Czech Republic Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský spoke at length about Russia's war on Ukraine, and he also lamented how online disinformation was plaguing society while urging for "digital humanism" and solutions to preserve human rights on the internet.

"A lie is not an opinion. For far too long, we have overlooked the spread of disinformation directed against our common values," Lipavský said. "Let us not forget the COVID-related disinformation. We had to learn the hard way when disinformation began to cost human lives."

Just last year, the 37-year-old faced opposition from the country's longtime president, who declared he didn't want to appoint Lipavsky because of Lipavsky's reserved attitude toward Israel.

What's more, he noted, the millennial leader had only a bachelor's degree.

Budd embraces Trump, abortion opposition in NC Senate race

By GARY D. ROBERTSON and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — In competitive races across the U.S., Republican candidates are distancing themselves from their party's most controversial policies and people — namely, abortion and former President Donald Trump — as Election Day approaches.

Not Ted Budd.

The North Carolina GOP Senate nominee is leaning into support for abortion restrictions and amity with the former Republican president as Democrats fight for an elusive victory in the Southern swing state.

Democratic optimism remains tempered given the state's recent red tilt, but Democratic officials believe Budd, a low-profile congressman who emerged as the GOP's Senate nominee largely because of Trump's backing, gives them a real chance at flipping a seat — and holding the balance of power in Washington — this fall.

Disregarding his critics, Budd is set to appear alongside Trump on Friday night at a rally in Wilmington. The Budd campaign was eager to welcome Trump when the former president's team called, according to adviser Jonathan Felts.

"Trump won North Carolina twice, and an in-person rally is helpful," Felts said, suggesting Trump would help drive turnout, especially "with unaffiliated and/or undecided voters concerned about the economy."

Others aren't so sure.

"The more Trump emerges, the more Trump is in the news, the better for Democrats," said David Holian, a political science professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Indeed, Trump remains overwhelmingly popular with Republican voters but is less appealing to the moderates and independents who often decide swing-state elections. Trump's national favorable ratings

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have been roughly even with, or worse than, President Joe Biden's in recent weeks.

Still, some North Carolina Democrats are far from confident in a state where they have suffered painful losses in recent years.

Democratic skepticism comes despite the apparent strength of their Senate nominee, former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley, who has a decided fundraising advantage, a record of outperforming other Democrats in statewide elections and a moderate message. She would be the state's first Black senator if elected.

Yet Beasley is also running against negative perceptions of her party.

Trump's rise has fueled a growing sense among some voters in North Carolina, along with those in many other states, that the national Democratic Party has lost touch with the daily struggles of the working class and similar voting blocs. The Democratic-controlled Congress' focus on climate change, for example, hasn't helped inspire voters like Talmage Layton, a 74-year-old farmer from Durham.

Layton said he doesn't know whether a North Carolina Democrat can make a difference on Capitol Hill in lowering gas prices or pushing back against climate change policies that other Democrats have embraced.

"That's not anything against Cheri Beasley," Layton said after a recent meeting with Beasley. "I'm a registered Democrat, and I would have no problem voting for a Democrat. But they've got to think about the little guy here."

Not long ago, it looked as if the Democratic Party was poised to take over North Carolina politics.

In 2008, Obama carried the state, becoming the first Democrat to do so since 1976, and Democrat Kay Hagan upset GOP Sen. Elizabeth Dole. Political experts predicted the Democratic Party would step to dominance as a result of increasing urbanization and out-of-state liberals moving in for tech jobs in the Raleigh-Durham and Charlotte regions.

But Republicans took over the state legislature for the first time in over 140 years following the 2010 election and retained it thanks to support from exurban and rural voters and favorably drawn districts. A decade later, Trump became a two-time North Carolina winner, though he won the 2020 election by just 1 percentage point.

While Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper managed to win reelection in 2020, Beasley was one of the party's casualties. She lost a bid to remain chief justice to a Republican rival by just 401 votes.

Her near-miss turned her into a rising candidate in the race to succeed retiring GOP Sen. Richard Burr.

In one sign of strength, Beasley has consistently raised more money than Budd. And she appears to be generating momentum by seizing on abortion to energize women and independents, relying on the same playbook Democrats have used elsewhere.

Budd, meanwhile, has been outspoken in his opposition to abortion. He co-sponsored a House version of a national 15-week abortion ban introduced by Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham that even Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell distanced himself from.

"My opponent has been in Congress for six years, and every opportunity he's had to vote for North Carolina, he's voted against us," Beasley charged after meeting with farmers at a produce market in Durham before Graham's bill introduction.

Meanwhile, Republicans in competitive elections in states like Iowa, Minnesota, Nevada and Arizona have distanced themselves from their rigid anti-abortion stances in recent weeks. Others have stripped their websites of references to Trump or his favorite talking points.

In Virginia, a Republican House candidate removed a Trump reference from her Twitter bio. In New Hampshire, Republican Senate nominee Don Bolduc abruptly reversed himself last week when asked about Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen. After spending much of the last year echoing Trump's lies, Bolduc told Fox News he had done more research and concluded, "The election was not stolen."

Meanwhile, Budd's campaign refused this week to say whether he would accept the 2022 election results, having already voted to block certification of the 2020 election.

Such positions will almost certainly appeal to Trump's base, but political operatives say Budd needs sizable support from moderate, independent voters to be successful. Unaffiliated voters this year surpassed

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Democrats to become the largest bloc of registered voters in the state.

"Regardless of what your faith background is, you're dealing with skyrocketing energy prices. You're dealing with high grocery costs. You're dealing with high crime. You're dealing with economic uncertainty," Budd said after speaking to pastors recently in Greenville. "And so I want to make life better for all North Carolinians and people in our country by the things that I support."

As Budd has struggled to keep pace with Beasley's fundraising, outside groups have come to his aid.

The McConnell-aligned Senate Leadership Fund and the National Republican Senatorial Committee have spent \$17.3 million combined on advertising opposing Beasley, according to Federal Election Commission filings. The Senate Majority Fund, which supports Democratic candidates, and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee have spent close to \$4 million in North Carolina while investing far more in high-profile contests in states like Pennsylvania and Arizona.

"We're committed to making sure voters continue seeing and hearing the truth about Ted Budd," Senate Majority Fund spokesperson Veronica Woo said.

An arm of the pro-abortion-rights EMILY's List announced this month spending \$2.7 million to criticize Budd on abortion as well.

During a recent stop at Perkins Orchard in Durham, Beasley chatted with farmers who gathered around picnic tables and near fresh pumpkins for sale. Some said afterward they were glad to see her interest in their plight.

Jason Lindsay, 34, a first-generation Black farmer from Rocky Mount, said he's been frustrated with the divisive political environment but is encouraged by Beasley.

"Her temperament here today gave me the first sign of hope that I've had in a long time," he said.

McCarthy unveils House GOP's big ideas, but challenges ahead

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

MONONGAHELA, Pa. (AP) — Republican leader Kevin McCarthy is heading to Pennsylvania on Friday to directly confront President Joe Biden and the party in power, unveiling a midterm election agenda with sweeping Trump-like promises despite the House GOP's sometimes spotty record of delivering and governing in Congress.

McCarthy, who is poised to seize the speaker's gavel if Republicans win control of the House in the fall, hopes to replicate the strategy former Speaker Newt Gingrich used to spark voter enthusiasm and sweep House control in a 1994 landslide.

The House GOP's "Commitment to America" gives a nod to that earlier era but updates it for Trump, with economic, border security and social policies to rouse the former president's deep well of supporters in often-forgotten regions like this rusty landscape outside Pittsburgh.

"We have a plan for a new direction for America," McCarthy told The Associated Press.

On Friday, the House Republican leader will stand with other lawmakers to roll out the GOP agenda, offering a portrait of party unity despite the uneasy coalition that makes up the House minority — and the Republican Party itself. The GOP has shifted from its focus on small government, low taxes and individual freedoms to a more populist, nationalist and, at times, far-right party, essentially still led by Donald Trump, who remains popular despite the deepening state and federal investigations against him.

Propelled by Trump's "Make America Great Again" voters, the Republicans need to pick up just a few seats to win back control of the narrowly-split House, and replace Speaker Nancy Pelosi. But even so, McCarthy's ability to lead the House is far from guaranteed.

While Republicans and Trump did pass tax cuts into law, the GOP's last big campaign promise, repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, collapsed in failure. A long line of Republican speakers, including Gingrich, John Boehner and Paul Ryan, have been forced from office or chose early retirement, often ground down by party infighting.

"House Republicans are really good at running people out of town," said Matt Schlapp, chairman of the Conservative Political Action Coalition, or CPAC.

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McCarthy, first elected to office in 2006, is among the remaining political survivors of those House Republican battles, and he's a new style of leader who has shown more ability to communicate than to legislate.

A key architect of the Republican "tea party" takeover in 2010, the California Republican personally recruited the newcomers to Congress — many who had never served in public office and are long gone. McCarthy was an early Trump endorser, and has remained close to the former president, relying on his high-profile endorsements to propel GOP candidates for Congress. He abandoned an earlier bid to become speaker when support from his colleagues drifted.

The "Commitment to America" reflects the strength of McCarthy's abilities, but also his weaknesses. He spent more than a year pulling together the House GOP's often warring factions — from the far-right MAGA to what's left of the more centrist ranks — to produce a mostly agreed upon agenda.

But the one-page "commitment" preamble is succinct, essentially a pocket card, though it is expected to be filled in with the kind of detail that is needed to make laws.

"They talk about a lot of problems," said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md. "They don't have a lot of solutions."

In traveling to battleground Pennsylvania, a state where Biden holds emotional ties from his early childhood, McCarthy intends to counter the president's fiery Labor Day weekend speech, in which he warned of rising GOP extremism after the Jan 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, with a more upbeat message.

The event is billed as more of a conversation with the GOP leader and lawmakers rather than stirring address in a uniquely contested state.

Along with many as five House seats Republicans believe they can pick up in Pennsylvania in November, the state has one of the most watched Senate races, between Democrat John Fetterman and Trump-backed Mehmet Oz, that will help determine control of Congress. Top of the ticket is the seismic governor's matchup between the GOP's Doug Mastriano, who was seen outside the Capitol on Jan. 6, and Democrat Josh Shapiro.

"If you are a hardline, populist, and you really want anger, Kevin's a little frustrating because he's not going to be angry enough for you," Gingrich said. "On the other hand, if what you want is to have your values implemented and passed in the legislation, he is a really good leader and organizer."

Gingrich has been working with McCarthy and his team to craft the style and substance of the proposal. The former speaker, who has been asked by the Jan. 6 committee investigating the Capitol attack for an interview, was on hand Thursday in Washington, joining McCarthy as he unveiled the plans privately to House Republicans, who have been mixed on the approach.

Mostly, the GOP pocket card hits broad strokes — energy independence, security and an end to liberal social policies, particularly in schooling.

Conservative Republicans complain privately that McCarthy isn't leaning hard enough into their priorities, as he tries to appeal to a broader swath of voters and hold the party together.

Many are eager to launch investigations into the Biden administration and the president's family, with some calling for impeachment. Legislatively, some House Republicans want to fulfill the party's commitment to banning abortion, supporting Sen. Lindsey Graham's bill prohibiting the procedure after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

In a sign of the pressures ahead for McCarthy, dozens of House GOP lawmakers signed on to plans from Trump-aligned Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene to prevent many gender reassignment procedures for minors, celebrating the Georgian as courageous for taking such a hardline approach.

She and others were invited to join Friday's event, as McCarthy seeks their backing.

Republican Rep. Chip Roy of Texas, a member of the conservative Freedom Caucus, has advocated for withholding federal funds as leverage for policy priorities, the tactic that engineered past government shutdowns.

"Putting out like, you know, principles about, 'Well, we'll secure the border.' I mean, okay, but what are we gonna do about it?" Roy said. "The end of the day, I want specific actionable items that's going to show that we're going to fight for the American people."

It's notable that McCarthy alone has proposed a plan if Republicans win control of the House chamber.

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In the Senate, Republican leader Mitch McConnell has declined to put forward an agenda, preferring to simply run against Biden and Democrats in the midterm election.

"Kevin's done a very good job of being in position to become the speaker. And then the question is, what do you do with that? Schlapp said. "This helps as a road map."

US aircraft carrier arrives in South Korea for joint drills

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and LEE JIN-MAN Associated Press

BUSAN, South Korea (AP) — The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan arrived in the South Korean port of Busan on Friday ahead of the two countries' joint military exercise that aims to show their strength against growing North Korean threats.

The joint drills will be the first involving a U.S. aircraft carrier in the region since 2017, when the U.S. sent three aircraft carriers including the Reagan for naval drills with South Korea in response to North Korean nuclear and missile tests.

The allies this year have revived their large-scale military drills that were downsized or shelved in previous years to support diplomacy with Pyongyang or because of COVID-19, responding to North Korea's resumption of major weapons testing and increasing threats of nuclear conflicts with Seoul and Washington.

The South Korean navy said the training is meant to boost the allies' military readiness and show "the firm resolve by the Korea-U.S. alliance for the sake of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."

"The commitment of the U.S. carrier strike group operating in and around the peninsula illustrates our commitment to stand together and our desire and focus ensuring that we are interoperable and integrated to face any challenge or threat whenever we are required," Rear Adm. Michael Donnelly, commander of the carrier strike group, said in a news conference.

The North Korean threat is also expected to be a key agenda when U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris visits South Korea next week after attending the state funeral in Tokyo of slain former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The Reagan's arrival in South Korea comes after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament this month he would never abandon his nuclear weapons and missiles he needs to counter what he perceives as U.S. hostility.

North Korea also passed a new law that enshrined its status as a nuclear power and authorized the preemptive use of nuclear weapons over a broad range of scenarios where the country or its leadership comes under threat.

Sung Kim, the Biden administration's special representative for North Korea, met with South Korean counterpart Kim Gunn on Thursday in Seoul, where they expressed "serious concern" over the North's escalating nuclear doctrine spelled out in the new law, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said.

The diplomats reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to defend South Korea in the event of a nuclear war with the full range of its military capabilities, including nuclear. The allies also maintained their months-old assessment that North Korea is gearing up to conduct its first nuclear test since 2017 and discussed "stern" countermeasures to such an action, the ministry said.

North Korea has dialed up weapons testing to a record pace in 2022, launching more than 30 ballistic weapons including its intercontinental ballistic missiles since 2017, as it exploits a divide in the U.N. Security Council deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine.

While North Korea's ICBMs garner much of U.S. attention because they pose a potential threat to the American homeland, the North has also been expanding its arsenal of nuclear-capable, shorter-range missiles designed to evade missile defenses in South Korea.

North Korea's expanding arsenal and threats of preemptive nuclear attacks have triggered concerns in South Korea over the credibility of the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" protecting its allies in the event of war.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, a conservative who took office in May, has vowed to enhance South Korea's conventional missile capabilities and work with the Biden administration to develop more effective strategies to deter North Korean attacks.

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Senior U.S. and South Korean officials met in Washington this month for discussions on the allies' deterrence strategies and issued a statement reaffirming that "any (North Korean) nuclear attack would be met with an overwhelming and decisive response." The statement said the United States reiterated "its ironclad and unwavering commitment to draw on the full range of its military capabilities, including nuclear (one)" to provide extended deterrence to South Korea.

North Korea has so far rejected U.S. and South Korean calls to return to nuclear diplomacy, which have been stalled since 2019 over disagreements in exchanging the release of U.S.-led sanctions against the North and the North's disarmament steps.

North Korea has harshly criticized Yoon for continuing military exercises with the U.S. and also for letting South Korean civilian activists fly anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets and other "dirty waste" across the border by balloon, even dubiously claiming the items caused its COVID-19 outbreak.

South Korean activists have continued to launch balloons after North Korea last month warned of "deadly" retaliation, triggering concern North Korea may react with a weapons test or even border skirmishes.

South Korea's Unification Ministry, which deals with inter-Korean affairs, pleaded for activists to stop, citing safety reasons. Lee Hyo-jung, the ministry's spokesperson, also said Friday that South Korea was prepared to sternly respond to any North Korean retaliation over leafletting.

Chinese man gets 24 years for brutal group attack on women

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — A court in northern China sentenced one man to 24 years in jail Friday for his role in a vicious attack on four women, as well as other crimes including robbery and opening an illegal gambling ring.

The Guangyang District People's Court in northern Hebei province announced in a statement that the man, Chen Jizhi, was a ringleader of a criminal gang and had conducted criminal activities for years.

The court also sentenced 27 others. The charges against them include opening casinos, robbery, assisting in cybercrime activities, picking quarrels and provoking trouble and sentences range from 6 months to 11 years.

Authorities had started the investigation into Chen after a video came to light in early June in which he and some other men started beating up four women at a barbecue restaurant in Tangshan, a city in Hebei. The men spared no force, using glass bottles and their fists to attack the women and even throwing a chair.

Chen had started the assault on a woman after she rejected his advances and pushed away his hand. He then put his hands on her, and dragged her out of her chair. He was joined quickly by members of his crew as the woman's friends tried to stop his attack. The incident was caught on video from surveillance cameras in the restaurant.

The graphic videos set off public anger and despair as many women raised concerns for their personal safety.

It also recalled the public sense of despair over violence against women that went unpunished, such as a case earlier in the year where a video circulated of a woman chained to the wall in a home in the country side. Authorities later found in an investigation that the woman had been trafficked and sold as a bride.

Initially, police arrested nine people, seven men and two women, for the attack on the four women. Two of the women had to be hospitalized for their injuries.

The investigation over the public assault has evolved into a larger investigation over criminal activities and corruption. Prosecutors later said they were charging 27 other people for crimes uncovered during the investigation.

In August, Communist Party authorities from the Hebei Provincial Commission for Discipline Inspection said they were investigating 15 officials over corruption that involved "evil organizations," including those associated with the attackers.

The 15, including the director of Tangshan's public security bureau and officers from several police stations, are suspected of abuse of power, bribery and other job-related crimes. Eight of them have been

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detained during the investigation.

Powerful Hurricane Fiona roaring by Bermuda, then to Canada

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, Puerto Rico (AP) — Fiona, a Category 4 hurricane, pounded Bermuda with heavy rains and winds early Friday as it swept by the island on a route forecast to have it approaching northeastern Canada late in the day as a still-powerful storm.

Authorities in Bermuda opened shelters and closed schools and offices ahead of Fiona. Premier David Burt sent a tweet urging residents to “take care of yourself and your family. Let’s all remember to check on as well as look out for your seniors, family and neighbors.”

The Canadian Hurricane Centre issued a hurricane watch over extensive coastal expanses of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Fiona should reach the area as a “large and powerful post-tropical cyclone with hurricane-force winds.”

“It’s going to be a storm that everyone remembers when it is all said and done,” said Bob Robichaud, warning preparedness meteorologist for the Canadian Hurricane Centre.

The U.S. center said Fiona had maximum sustained winds of 130 mph (215 kph) late Thursday. It was centered about 195 miles (315 kilometers) west of Bermuda, heading north-northeast at 21 mph (33 kph).

Hurricane-force winds extended outward up to 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the center and tropical storm-force winds extended outward up to 275 miles (445 kilometers).

Fiona so far has been blamed for at least five deaths — two in Puerto Rico, two in the Dominican Republic and one in the French island of Guadeloupe.

Hurricanes in Canada are somewhat rare, in part because once the storms reach colder waters, they lose their main source of energy and become extratropical. But those cyclones still can have hurricane-strength winds, though with a cold instead of a warm core and no visible eye. Their shape can be different, too. They lose their symmetric form and can more resemble a comma.

Robichaud said at a news conference that modelling projected “all-time” low pressure across the region, which would bring storm surges and rainfall of between 10 to 20 centimeters (4 to 8 inches).

Amanda McDougall, mayor of Cape Breton Regional Municipality, said officials were preparing a shelter for people to enter before the storm arrived.

“We have been through these types of events before, but my fear is, not to this extent,” she said. “The impacts are going to be large, real and immediate.”

Dave Pickles, chief operating officer of Nova Scotia Power, said it expected widespread power outages.

Before reaching Bermuda, Fiona caused severe flooding and devastation in Puerto Rico, leading U.S. President Joe Biden to say Thursday that the full force of the federal government is ready to help the U.S. territory recover.

Speaking at a briefing with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials in New York, Biden said, “We’re all in this together.”

Biden noted that hundreds of FEMA and other federal officials are already on the ground in Puerto Rico, where Fiona caused an island-wide blackout.

More than 60% of power customers remained without energy Thursday and a third of customers were without water, while local officials said they could not say when service would be fully restored.

As of Friday, hundreds of people in Puerto Rico remained isolated by blocked roads five days after the hurricane ripped into the island. Frustration was mounting for people like Nancy Galarza, who tried to signal for help from work crews she spotted in the distance.

“Everyone goes over there,” she said pointing toward crews at the bottom of the mountain who were helping others also cut off by the storm. “No one comes here to see us. I am worried for all the elderly people in this community.”

At least five landslides covered the narrow road to her community in the steep mountains around the northern town of Caguas. The only way to reach the settlement was to climb over thick mounds of mud,

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rock and debris left by Fiona, whose floodwaters shook the foundations of nearby homes with earthquake-like force.

At least eight of the 11 communities in Caguas were completely isolated, said Luis González, municipal inspector of recovery and reconstruction.

It was one of at least six municipalities where crews had yet to reach some areas. People there often depend on help from neighbors, as they did following Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm in 2017 that killed nearly 3,000 people.

Daniel Rivera arrived in rural Caguas with a church group and tried to bring a little cheer by dressing as a clown.

"That's very important in these moments," he said, noting that people had never fully recovered from Hurricane Maria. "A lot of PTSD has reared its head these days."

His huge clown shoes squelched through the mud as he greeted people, whose faces lit up as they smiled at him.

After days focused on Ukraine, other concerns emerge at UN

By SARAH DiLORENZO Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — After three days in which the war in Ukraine consumed world leaders at the United Nations, other conflicts and concerns are beginning to emerge.

Some are long-simmering ones with global reach that have receded from the public's attention recently. Israel's prime minister called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in a speech Thursday that focused on that conflict. The Palestinian president speaks on Friday.

Others are regional conflicts that have flared. Armenia's prime minister warned that "the risk of new aggression by Azerbaijan remains very high" after the largest outbreak of hostilities between the two adversaries in nearly two years. The ex-Soviet countries are locked in conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is part of Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994.

Leaders from Iraq and Pakistan, meanwhile, take the stage Friday. Both nations are pivotal to the geopolitical world order but have received less global attention in recent years.

The annual gathering of leaders at the U.N. General Assembly provides an opportunity for each country to air its concerns and express its hopes. This year's meeting has thus far focused heavily on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing war, as countries have deplored how the conflict has upended the geopolitical order, repeatedly raised the specter of nuclear disaster and unleashed food and energy crises.

Russia and Ukraine faced off Thursday at a Security Council meeting — an extraordinary if brief encounter during which the top diplomats from nations at war were in the same room exchanging barbs and accusations, albeit not directly to each other.

At the meeting, the United States called on other nations to tell Russia to stop making nuclear threats and end "the horror" of its war. Moscow repeated its frequent claims that Kyiv has long oppressed Russian speakers in Ukraine's east — one of the explanations Vladimir Putin's government has offered for the invasion.

The Security Council meeting came a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking to the assembled leaders via video, insisted that his forces would win the war and demanded more robust U.N. action. The General Assembly gave Zelenskyy a pass from leaving his wartime nation so he could appear remotely — a decision Russia opposed.

Meanwhile, over in the assembly hall, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid delivered a speech focused on the Palestinians.

The speech, ahead of Nov. 1 elections, appeared to be part of an effort by Lapid to portray himself — both to voters and global leaders — as a statesman and moderate alternative to his main rival, hardline former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"An agreement with the Palestinians, based on two states for two peoples, is the right thing for Israel's

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security, for Israel's economy and for the future of our children," Lapid said.

But he was short on details, and there is virtually no chance Lapid, who has long supported a two-state solution, will get to push forward with his vision. Israel's parliament is dominated by parties that oppose Palestinian independence, and opinion polls forecast a similar result after the upcoming elections.

The Palestinians seek the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip — territories captured by Israel in 1967 — for an independent state, a position that enjoys wide international support.

Biden vows US won't walk away from storm-struck Puerto Rico

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, Puerto Rico (AP) — President Joe Biden said Thursday the full force of the federal government is ready to help Puerto Rico recover from the devastation of Hurricane Fiona, while Bermuda and Canada's Atlantic provinces prepared for a major blast from the Category 4 storm.

Speaking at a briefing with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials in New York, Biden said, "We're all in this together."

Biden noted that hundreds of FEMA and other federal officials are already on the ground in Puerto Rico, where Fiona caused an island-wide blackout.

More than 60% of power customers remained without energy on Thursday, and a third of customers were without water — and local officials admitted they could not say when service would be fully restored.

Biden said his message to the people of Puerto Rico who are still hurting from Hurricane Maria five years ago is: "We're with you. We're not going to walk away."

That seemed to draw a contrast with former President Donald Trump, who was widely accused of an inadequate response to Maria, which left some Puerto Ricans without power for 11 months.

The hurricane was still at Category 4 force late Thursday as it was making a close pass to Bermuda, where authorities opened shelters and announced schools and offices would be closed Friday.

Fiona was expected to still be a large and dangerously potent storm when it reached Canada's Atlantic provinces, likely late Friday, as a post-tropical cyclone.

"It's going to be a storm that everyone remembers when it is all said and done," said Bob Robichaud, warning preparedness meteorologist for the Canadian Hurricane Centre.

Hundreds of people in Puerto Rico remained cut off by road four days after the hurricane ripped into the U.S. territory, and frustration was mounting for people like Nancy Galarza, who tried to signal for help from work crews she spotted in the distance.

"Everyone goes over there," she said pointing toward crews at the bottom of the mountain who were helping others also cut off by the storm. "No one comes here to see us. I am worried for all the elderly people in this community."

At least five landslides cover the narrow road to her community in the steep mountains around the northern town of Caguas. The only way to reach the settlement is to climb over thick mounds of mud, rock and debris left by Fiona, whose floodwaters shook the foundations of nearby homes with earthquake-like force.

"The rocks sounded like thunder," recalled Vanessa Flores, a 47-year-old school janitor. "I've never in my life heard that. It was horrible."

At least one elderly woman who relies on oxygen was evacuated on Thursday by city officials who were working under a pelting rain to clear paths to the San Salvador community.

Ramiro Figueroa, 63, said his bedridden 97-year-old bedridden father refused to leave home despite insistence from rescue crews. Their road was blocked by mud, rocks, trees and his sister's pickup, which was washed down the hill during the storm.

National Guard troops and others brought water, cereal, canned peaches and two bottles of apple juice.

"That has helped me enormously," Figueroa said as he scanned the devastated landscape, where a river had changed its course and tore up the community.

At least eight of 11 communities in Caguas are completely isolated, said Luis González, municipal inspec-

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tor of recovery and reconstruction. It's one of at least six municipalities where crews have yet to reach some areas. People there often depend on help from neighbors, as they did following Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm in 2017 that killed nearly 3,000 people.

Miguel Veguilla said that in Maria's aftermath he used picks and shovels to clear debris. But Fiona was different, unleashing huge landslides.

"I cannot throw those rocks over my shoulder," he said.

Like hundreds of thousands in Puerto Rico, Veguilla has no water or electricity service, but said there is a natural water source nearby.

Daniel Rivera, 31, arrived in rural Caguas with a church group and tried to bring a little cheer by dressing as a clown.

"That's very important in these moments," he said, noting that people had never fully recovered from Hurricane Maria. "A lot of PTSD has reared its head these days."

His huge clown shoes squelched through the mud as he greeted people, whose faces lit up as they smiled at him.

Puerto Rico's government said some 62% of 1.47 million customers remained without power Thursday. A third of customers, or more than 400,000, did not yet have water service.

"Too many homes and businesses are still without power" Biden said in New York, adding that additional utility crews were set to travel to the island to help restore power in the coming days.

The executive director of Puerto Rico's Electric Energy Authority, Josué Colón, told a news conference that areas less affected by Fiona should have electricity by Friday morning. But officials declined to say when power would be restored to the hardest-hit places and said they were working first to get energy to hospitals and other key infrastructure.

Neither local nor federal government officials had provided an overall estimate of damage from the storm, which dropped up to 30 inches of rain in some areas.

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Bermuda Premier David Burt sent a tweet urging residents to "take care of yourself and your family. Let's all remember to check on as well as look out for your seniors, family and neighbors. Stay safe."

The Canadian Hurricane Centre issued a hurricane watch extensive coastal expanses of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island.

Hurricanes in Canada are somewhat rare, in part because once the storms reach colder waters, they lose their main source of energy, and become extratropical. Those cyclones still can have hurricane-strength winds, but now have a cold instead of a warm core and no visible eye. Their shape can be different too. They lose their symmetric form and can more resemble a comma.

Fiona so far has been blamed for at least five deaths — two in Puerto Rico, two in the Dominican Republic and one in the French overseas department of Guadeloupe.

Fiona also hit the Turks and Caicos Islands on Tuesday, but officials there reported relatively light damage and no deaths.

Celtics suspend coach Ime Udoka for 2022-23 season

By JIMMY GOLEN and TIM REYNOLDS AP Sports Writers

BOSTON (AP) — The Boston Celtics have suspended Ime Udoka for a full year, banning the coach who led them to the NBA Finals last spring for the entire 2022-23 season over what two people with knowledge of the matter said was an improper relationship with a member of the organization.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the team did not reveal that detail publicly. In a statement issued Thursday night after a full day of wrangling over the terms of the punishment, the Celtics said Udoka violated team policies and left open the possibility that a longer separation could follow.

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"A decision about his future with the Celtics beyond this season will be made at a later date," the team said.

Assistant coach Joe Mazzulla will take over as interim coach, one of the people who spoke with The AP said. The defending Eastern Conference champions are scheduled to hold media day on Monday and open training camp on Tuesday in preparation for the Oct. 18 season opener.

In a statement published by ESPN, Udoka apologized "to our players, fans, the entire Celtics organization, and my family for letting them down."

"I am sorry for putting the team in this difficult situation, and I accept the team's decision," he said. "Out of respect for everyone involved, I will have no further comment."

A longtime assistant in his first NBA head coaching job, Udoka led Boston to a 51-31 record last season — going 26-6 in the final 32 games. The Celtics beat Brooklyn, Milwaukee and Miami on the way to the NBA Finals, where they lost to the Golden State Warriors in six games.

The developments stunned the NBA and shook up a team that had been among the favorites to contend for a championship this season. It would be an unprecedented 18th title for the franchise.

But in Boston, the story was reminiscent of the shakeup across town in 2020, when Red Sox manager Alex Cora was suspended by Major League Baseball for a year for his role in a sign-stealing scandal at his previous job, with the Houston Astros. Instead, the sides parted ways.

After a last-place finish under Ron Roenicke in the pandemic-shortened season, Cora was re-hired a year later and welcomed back.

It is unclear if Udoka and the Celtics will be as eager to reunite.

The 45-year-old Udoka spent the bulk of his NBA playing career with San Antonio and then joined Spurs coach Gregg Popovich's staff as an assistant. Udoka was on the Spurs' staff from 2012 through 2019, winning it all in '14, and he quickly found his way onto short lists for open head coaching jobs.

He spent the 2019-20 season in Philadelphia and the 2020-21 season in Brooklyn before the Celtics hired him in June 2021 as the successor to Brad Stevens -- who moved up to the front office. In Year 1, Udoka finished fourth in coach of the year voting and the Celtics came within two wins of the championship.

"The future is bright and we're just getting started," Udoka said after the NBA Finals.

Perhaps not.

The bombshell on the eve of training camp is the latest twist heading into what was supposed to be a promising season for the NBA's most-decorated franchise.

The Celtics bolstered their runner-up roster by acquiring guard Malcolm Brogdon in a trade from Indiana, then added sharpshooting veteran forward Danilo Gallinari as a free agent. But last month, Gallinari tore the ACL in his left knee and will be lost for the coming season.

Center Robert Williams, a key part of the Boston defense scheme who played through injuries during last season's playoffs, is still dealing with knee soreness and is expected to miss the start of the season.

The Celtics were also mentioned in speculation over a new home for Brooklyn forward Kevin Durant, a perennial All-Star who asked for — and then backed off — a request to be traded. Although the talks amounted to nothing, it raised questions about Boston's commitment to young star Jaylen Brown.

It's also the second major disciplinary situation in as many weeks in the NBA: Commissioner Adam Silver decided last week to suspend Robert Sarver — the owner of the Phoenix Suns and WNBA's Phoenix Mercury — for one year and fine him \$10 million after an investigation showed his pattern of disturbing workplace conduct, including abusive and racist language. Sarver said Wednesday he intends to sell his teams.

Mazzulla interviewed for the Utah Jazz coaching job this summer, a position that ultimately went to Will Hardy — another of Udoka's assistants in Boston last season.

Mazzulla's only previous experience as a head coach is a two-year stint at Division II's Fairmont State in West Virginia, where he went 43-17 and made the NCAA tournament in his second season. A native New Englander from Rhode Island, Mazzulla played at West Virginia, was an assistant for the Celtics' G League team before taking over at Fairmont State, and then got hired by the Celtics again in June 2019 to be part of Stevens' staff.

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Mazzulla's last game at Fairmont State was against Mercyhurst. His first real game with the Celtics will attract a bit more attention: Boston is scheduled to host longtime rival Philadelphia in the opener, when they will tip off a year-long tribute to Hall of Famer Bill Russell.

'Knocking on famine's door': UN food chief wants action now

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. food chief warned Thursday that the world is facing "a perfect storm on top of a perfect storm" and urged donors, particularly Gulf nations and billionaires, to give a few days of profits to tackle a crisis with the fertilizer supply right now and prevent widespread food shortages next year.

"Otherwise, there's gonna be chaos all over the world," World Food Program Executive Director David Beasley said in an Associated Press interview.

Beasley said that when he took the helm of WFP 5 1/2 years ago, only 80 million people around the world were headed toward starvation. "And I'm thinking, 'Well, I can put the World Food Program out of business,'" he said.

But climate problems increased that number to 135 million. The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020, doubled it to 276 million people not knowing where their next meal was coming from. Finally, Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, sparking a war and a food, fertilizer and energy crisis that has pushed the number to 345 million.

"Within that are 50 million people in 45 countries knocking on famine's door," Beasley said. "If we don't reach these people, you will have famine, starvation, destabilization of nations unlike anything we saw in 2007-2008 and 2011, and you will have mass migration."

"We've got to respond now."

Beasley has been meeting world leaders and speaking at events during this week's General Assembly gathering of leaders to warn about the food crisis.

General Assembly President Csaba Korosi noted in his opening address Tuesday that "we live, it seems, in a permanent state of humanitarian emergency." U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that conflicts and humanitarian crises are spreading, and the funding gap for the U.N.'s humanitarian appeals stands at \$32 billion -- "the widest gap ever."

This year, Beasley said, the war shut down grain shipments from Ukraine — a nation that produces enough food to feed 400 million people — and sharply curtailed shipments from Russia, the world's second-largest exporter of fertilizer and a major food producer.

Beasley said donor fatigue often undermines aid, particularly in countries in ongoing crisis like Haiti. Inflation is also a serious issue, raising prices and hitting poor people who have no coping capacity because COVID-19 "just economically devastated them."

So mothers, he said, are forced to decide: Do they buy cooking oil and feed their children, or do they buy heating oil so they don't freeze? Because there's not enough money to buy both.

"It's a perfect storm on top of a perfect storm," Beasley said. "And with the fertilizer crisis we're facing right now, with droughts, we're facing a food pricing problem in 2022. This created havoc around the world."

"If we don't get on top of this quickly — and I don't mean next year, I mean this year — you will have a food availability problem in 2023," he said. "And that's gonna be hell."

Beasley explained that the world now produces enough food to feed the more than 7.7 billion people in the world, but 50% of that food is because farmers used fertilizer. They can't get those high yields without it. China, the world's top fertilizer producer, has banned its export; Russia, which is number two, is struggling to get it to world markets.

"We've got to get those fertilizers moving, and we've got to move it quickly," he said. "Asian rice production is at a critical state right now. Seeds are in the ground."

In Africa, 33 million small farms feed over 70% of the population, and right now "we're several billion dollars short of what we need for fertilizers." He said Central and South America also faced drought and

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India was buffeted by heat and drought. "It could go on and on," he said.

He said the July deal to ship Ukrainian grain from three Black Sea ports is a start, but "we've got to get the grains moving, we've got to get the fertilizer out there for everybody, and we need to end the wars."

Beasley said the United States contributed an additional \$5 billion for food security, and Germany, France and the European Union are also stepping up. But he called on Gulf states to "step up more" with oil prices so high, particularly to help countries in their region like Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia.

"We're not talking about asking for a trillion dollars here," Beasley said. "We're just talking about asking for a few days' worth of your profits to stabilize the world," he said.

The WFP chief said he also met with a group of billionaires on Wednesday night. He said he told them they had "a moral obligation" and "need to care."

"Even if you don't give it to me, even if you don't give it to the World Food Program, get in the game. Get in the game of loving your neighbor and helping your neighbor," Beasley said. "People are suffering and dying around the world. When a child dies every five seconds from hunger, shame on us."

Officials: Navy bribery case fugitive tried to get to Russia

By JULIE WATSON and REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Since escaping two weeks ago, officials say the fugitive Malaysian defense contractor nicknamed "Fat Leonard" — who orchestrated one of the U.S. Navy's largest bribery scandals — zipped between countries to find a place where he could become virtually untouchable for American authorities.

It almost worked.

After cutting off an ankle monitor and slipping away from house arrest in San Diego on Sept. 4, U.S. and Venezuelan officials say Leonard Glenn Francis went across the border into Mexico, then traveled to Cuba and Venezuela, where he was arrested Tuesday at Simón Bolívar International Airport outside Caracas.

Francis was planning to travel to Russia, according to Interpol Venezuela Director General Carlos Garate Rondon, who disclosed the arrest in a statement posted Wednesday on Instagram. He said Francis would be handed over to the country's judicial authorities to begin extradition proceedings.

Greg Rinckey, a former Army lawyer who is now in private practice, said he believes Francis was "trying to play the angle of using some countries to get outside the jurisdiction of the U.S. Marshals Service."

"It looks like they caught him just in time," Rinckey said. "If he made it to Russia, I don't believe the Russians would have turned him over to us."

And while Venezuela and the United States have an extradition agreement, the U.S. government could face an uphill challenge returning the fugitive to American soil. The Biden administration doesn't officially recognize President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government, has no embassy in Venezuela and has imposed crushing sanctions on the country that have further embittered relations. Law enforcement cooperation between the two countries is rare.

There was no immediate word on when Francis might be extradited to the U.S.

The arrest came on the eve of his scheduled sentencing in a federal court in California for a bribery scheme that lasted years.

Francis pleaded guilty in 2015 and had been allowed to remain in home confinement to receive medical care while he cooperated with the prosecution. With his help, prosecutors secured convictions of 33 of 34 defendants, including more than two dozen Navy officers.

The towering man with a wide girth and gregarious personality wielded incredible influence as a main point of contact for U.S. Navy ships at ports across Asia. His family's ship servicing business, Singapore-based Glenn Defense Marine Asia Ltd. or GDMA, supplied food, water and fuel to vessels for decades. He plied officers with Kobe beef, expensive cigars, concert tickets and wild sex parties at luxury hotels from Thailand to the Philippines. In exchange, commanders passed him classified information and steered their ships, mostly from the Navy's 7th Fleet, to ports he controlled so he could cover up as much as \$35 million in fake charges.

Among those he befriended was a Russian diplomat, Francis told podcaster Tom Wright, who created a

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nine-part series on the case. In an episode posted last October, Francis said he lived only a "stone's throw" from the Russian Embassy in Singapore, and the Russian diplomat would stop by his home uninvited to drop off vodka and other gifts.

It's unknown if Francis turned to his Russian friends for help while on the lam.

A law enforcement official familiar with the case told The Associated Press that authorities tracked down Francis using a cellphone number they were provided. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the case publicly, said Francis was located Tuesday in a Caracas neighborhood.

Venezuelan authorities deployed a team of officers at the airport after a cab driver tipped them off that Francis was leaving a hotel and headed there.

The official said Francis intended to board a plane to the Venezuelan Caribbean Island of Margarita, which Venezuela wants to turn into a popular destination for Russian tourists because of its pristine beaches accessible by ferry or flights from the mainland. The government said last month it plans to offer five flights a week between Margarita and Moscow starting Oct. 1. Signs in Russian can already be seen at the island.

The official said Francis later told authorities his final destination was Russia.

It's unclear if Francis had contacts in Russia offering to help, and if he did, what they wanted in return. Francis bragged about still holding compromising photos and videos of Navy officials.

"What really worried the United States the most was these officers being corrupted by me, that they would be corruptible by the foreign powers," Francis said in one of the podcast's episodes.

His sentencing hearing was still held Thursday to deal with the changing situation. When he returns, Francis will need new attorneys.

His defense attorney, Devin Burstein, told the judge he plans to file a motion severing their ties due to an "irreparable breakdown in the attorney-client relationship." Burstein did not mention his client's arrest in Venezuela.

And when Francis does return, prosecutors indicated he will face an even longer sentence, asking the court to note his failure to appear at his sentencing hearing as ordered. That could add five years to his potential sentence of 25 years, if he is ultimately charged for not showing up.

U.S. District Court Judge Janis Sammartino set a Dec. 14 status hearing for Francis with the caveat that all parties could meet sooner depending on how events unfold.

"This turn of events raises several issues, and obviously will have an impact on other cases," she said.

Sentencing hearings are scheduled in October for four Navy officers who went to trial and were convicted in the case.

4.4M Americans roll up sleeves for omicron-targeted boosters

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

U.S. health officials say 4.4 million Americans have rolled up their sleeves for the updated COVID-19 booster shot. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted the count Thursday as public health experts bemoaned President Joe Biden's recent remark that "the pandemic is over."

The White House said more than 5 million people received the new boosters by its own estimate that accounts for reporting lags in states.

Health experts said it is too early to predict whether demand would match up with the 171 million doses of the new boosters the U.S. ordered for the fall.

"No one would go looking at our flu shot uptake at this point and be like, 'Oh, what a disaster,'" said Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "If we start to see a large uptick in cases, I think we're going to see a lot of people getting the (new COVID) vaccine."

A temporary shortage of Moderna vaccine caused some pharmacies to cancel appointments while encouraging people to reschedule for a Pfizer vaccine. The issue was expected to resolve as government regulators wrapped up an inspection and cleared batches of vaccine doses for distribution.

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"I do expect this to pick up in the weeks ahead," said White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha. "We've been thinking and talking about this as an annual vaccine like the flu vaccine. Flu vaccine season picks up in late September and early October. We're just getting our education campaign going. So we expect to see, despite the fact that this was a strong start, we actually expect this to ramp up stronger."

Some Americans who plan to get the shot, designed to target the most common omicron strains, said they are waiting because they either had COVID-19 recently or another booster. They are following public health advice to wait several months to get the full benefit of their existing virus-fighting antibodies.

Others are scheduling shots closer to holiday gatherings and winter months when respiratory viruses spread more easily.

Retired hospital chaplain Jeanie Murphy, 69, of Shawnee, Kansas, plans to get the new booster in a couple of weeks after she has some minor knee surgery. Interest is high among her neighbors from what she sees on the Nextdoor app.

"There's quite a bit of discussion happening among people who are ready to make appointments," Murphy said. "I found that encouraging. For every one naysayer there will be 10 or 12 people who jump in and say, 'You're crazy. You just need to go get the shot.'"

Biden later acknowledged criticism of his remark about the pandemic being over and clarified the pandemic is "not where it was." The initial comment didn't bother Murphy. She believes the disease has entered a steady state when "we'll get COVID shots in the fall the same as we do flu shots."

Experts hope she's right, but are waiting to see what levels of infection winter brings. The summer ebb in case numbers, hospitalizations and deaths may be followed by another surge, Dowdy said.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, asked Thursday by a panel of biodefense experts what still keeps him up at night, noted that half of vaccinated Americans never got an initial booster dose.

"We have a vulnerability in our population that will continue to have us in a mode of potential disruption of our social order," Fauci said. "I think that we have to do better as a nation."

Some Americans who got the new shots said they are excited about the idea of targeting the vaccine to the variants circulating now.

"Give me all the science you can," said Jeff Westling, 30, an attorney in Washington, D.C., who got the new booster and a flu shot on Tuesday, one in each arm. He participates in the combat sport jujitsu, so wants to protect himself from infections that may come with close contact. "I have no issue trusting folks whose job it is to look at the evidence."

Meanwhile, Biden's pronouncement in a "60 Minutes" interview broadcast Sunday echoed through social media.

"We still have a problem with COVID. We're still doing a lot of work on it. But the pandemic is over," Biden said while walking through the Detroit auto show. "If you notice, no one's wearing masks. Everybody seems to be in pretty good shape. And so I think it's changing."

By Wednesday on Facebook, when a Kansas health department posted where residents could find the new booster shots, the first commenter remarked snidely:

"But Biden says the pandemic is over."

The president's statement, despite his attempts to clarify it, adds to public confusion, said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington.

"People aren't sure when is the right time to get boosted. 'Am I eligible?' People are often confused about what the right choice is for them, even where to search for that information," Michaud said.

"Any time you have mixed messages, it's detrimental to the public health effort," Michaud said. "Having the mixed messages from the president's remarks, makes that job that much harder."

University of South Florida epidemiologist Jason Salemi said he's worried the president's pronouncement has taken on a life of its own and may stall prevention efforts.

"That soundbite is there for a while now, and it's going to spread like wildfire. And it's going to give the impression that 'Oh, there's nothing more we need to do,'" Salemi said.

"If we're happy with 400 or 500 people dying every single day from COVID, there's a problem with that,"

Salemi said. "We can absolutely do better because most of those deaths, if not all of them, are absolutely preventable with the tools that we have."

New York City photographer Vivienne Gucwa, 44, got the new booster Monday. She's had COVID twice, once before vaccines were available and again in May. She was vaccinated with two Moderna shots, but never got the original boosters.

"When I saw the new booster was able to tackle omicron variant I thought, 'I'm doing that,'" Gucwa said. "I don't want to deal with omicron again. I was kind of thrilled to see the boosters were updated."

At least 9 killed as Iran protests over woman's death spread

By The Associated Press undefined

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Clashes between Iranian security forces and protesters angry over the death of a 22-year-old woman in police custody have killed at least nine people since the violence erupted over the weekend, according to a tally Thursday by The Associated Press.

The scope of Iran's ongoing unrest, the worst in several years, still remains unclear as protesters in more than a dozen cities — venting anger over social repression and the country's mounting crises — continue to encounter security and paramilitary forces.

To prevent protests from spreading, Iran's biggest telecom operator largely shut down mobile internet access again Thursday, said Netblocks, a group that monitors internet access, describing the restrictions as the most severe since 2019.

An anchor on Iran's state television suggested the death toll from the mass protests could be as high as 17 on Thursday, but did not say how he reached that figure.

In a country where radio and television stations already are state-controlled and journalists regularly face the threat of arrest, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard urged the judiciary on Thursday to prosecute "anyone who spreads fake news and rumors" on social media about the unrest. Widespread outages of Instagram and WhatsApp, which are used by protesters, also continued Thursday.

WhatsApp tweeted that it was "working to keep our Iranian friends connected and will do anything within our technical capacity to keep our service up and running."

The demonstrations in Iran began as an emotional outpouring over the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman held by the country's morality police for allegedly violating its strictly enforced dress code. Her death has sparked sharp condemnation from the United States, the European Union and the United Nations.

The U.S. government imposed sanctions on the morality police and leaders of other Iranian security agencies, saying they "routinely employ violence to suppress peaceful protesters."

Iranian police say Amini died of a heart attack and was not mistreated, but her family has cast doubt on that account. Independent experts affiliated with the U.N. said Thursday that reports suggested she was severely beaten by the morality police, without offering evidence.

In New York, on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said the death must be "steadfastly" investigated. But he also turned the tables on the country he was visiting for the U.N. General Assembly.

"What about the death of Americans at the hands of U.S. law enforcement?" Raisi asked about his country's rival nation. He called for the "same standard" around the world in dealing with such deaths at the hands of authorities and lamented what he said were "double standards" in the West.

Of Amini's death, he said authorities were doing what they needed to do. "It must certainly be investigated," he said. "I contacted her family at the very first opportunity and I assured them we would continue steadfastly to investigate that incident. ... Our utmost preoccupation is the safeguarding of the rights of every citizen."

Niloufar Hamed, a journalist who took photographs at the hospital after Amini's death, was arrested in Iran on Thursday, according to the reporter's lawyer, Mohammadali Kamfirouzi. He said her house was raided. There was no official comment.

The protests have grown in the last five days into an open challenge to the government, with women

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removing and burning their state-mandated headscarves in the streets and Iranians calling for the downfall of the Islamic Republic itself.

"Death to the dictator!" has been a common cry in the protests.

They are the most serious demonstrations since 2019, when protests erupted over a government hike in the price of gasoline. Rights groups say hundreds were killed in the crackdown that followed, the deadliest violence since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The latest protests are similarly widespread, but seem to have much broader support among the population, with Iranians of all walks of life expressing fury at Amini's death and the government's treatment of women.

Iran's state-run media this week reported demonstrations in at least 13 cities, including the capital, Tehran. Videos online show security forces firing tear gas and water canons to disperse hundreds of protesters. London-based Amnesty International reported that officers also fired birdshot and beat protesters with batons.

Footage on social media from the northern city of Tabriz shows a young man allegedly shot by security forces bleeding out in the street as protesters shout for help.

Another video showed a policeman firing a shotgun at a demonstrator who was tearing down a pro-government billboard in the North Khorasan province. It's unclear if he was wounded.

In another video, protesters can be seen torching a massive billboard showing Qassem Soleimani — Iran's top general who was killed in a U.S. airstrike — in his hometown of Kerman. Soleimani has iconic status among government supporters.

At least nine people have died in the confrontations, according to an AP count based on statements from Iran's state-run and semiofficial media. In a statement on Thursday, the Guard blamed the unrest on "Iran's enemies."

In Amini's home province of Kurdistan, the provincial police chief said four protesters were shot dead. In Kermanshah, the prosecutor said two protesters were killed, insisting that the bullets were not fired by Iran's security forces.

Three men affiliated with the Basij, a volunteer force under the Guard, were killed in clashes in the cities of Shiraz, Tabriz and Mashhad, semiofficial media reported, bringing the death toll acknowledged by officials to at least nine on both sides.

In the northern province of Mazandaran, angry crowds damaged or set fire to over 40 government properties and wounded 76 security officers, Rouhollah Solgi, the deputy governor, said.

Iran has grappled with waves of protests in the recent past, mainly over a long-running economic crisis exacerbated by Western sanctions linked to its nuclear program. Citizens also blame government corruption and mismanagement.

The Biden administration and European allies have been working to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear accord, in which Iran curbed its nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief, but the talks have been deadlocked for months.

From New York, where Raisi took the stage Wednesday at the U.N. General Assembly, CNN's chief international anchor Christiane Amanpour said she had planned to confront Raisi about the protests in what would be his first U.S.-based interview.

But Amanpour wrote on Twitter that Raisi was a no-show. An aide told her the president refused to take part unless she wore a headscarf, given the "situation in Iran." The Iranian government has not commented on the incident.

"I couldn't agree to this unprecedented and unexpected condition," the British-Iranian anchor wrote beside a photo of Raisi's empty chair.

Bank directors urge firing of Trump official in ethics probe

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Executive directors of the Inter-American Development Bank voted unanimously Thursday

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to recommend firing a former Trump official as president of the Washington-based institution, a person familiar with the vote said.

The move came after an investigation conducted at the bank board's request determined that Mauricio Claver-Carone violated ethics rules by favoring a top aide with whom he had a romantic relationship, according to a report obtained by The Associated Press.

The recommendation to remove Claver-Carone came in a closed-door meeting of the bank's 14 executive directors, according to the person, who insisted on not being quoted by name. The ultimate decision to fire Claver-Carone now rests with the finance officials who sit on the Board of Governors representing all 48 of the bank's member nations.

Among those pushing for Claver-Carone's removal is the Biden administration, which said it was troubled by Claver-Carone's refusal to fully cooperate with an independent probe.

"His creation of a climate of fear of retaliation among staff and borrowing countries has forfeited the confidence of the Bank's staff and shareholders and necessitates a change in leadership," a Treasury Department spokesperson said.

Claver-Carone remained defiant in the aftermath of the vote, saying in a statement that replacing him would embolden China, which joined the bank during the Obama administration.

"It's shameful the U.S. commented to the press before notifying me and that it is not defending two Americans against what is clearly fabricated information," he said.

The AP obtained the confidential investigative report by a law firm hired by the bank's board to look into an anonymous complaint of misconduct against Claver-Carone

Investigators said it is reasonable to conclude he carried on a relationship with his chief of staff since at least 2019, when both held senior positions on the National Security Council. They said the purported relationship prompted one U.S. official at the time to warn that it posed a counterintelligence risk.

Exhibit A in the 21-page report is a "contract" that the two purportedly drew up on the back of a place mat in the summer of 2019 while they dined at a steakhouse in Medellin, Colombia. Both were there attending the annual meeting of the Organization of American States.

In it, they allegedly outline a timeline for divorcing their spouses and getting married. There is also a "breach clause" stating that any failure to fulfill the terms would bring "sadness and heartbreak" that could only be mitigated by "candlewax and a naughty box" from an oceanfront hotel in Claver-Carone's native Miami.

"We deserve absolute happiness. May only God part w/ this covenant," according to the contract, a photo of which was provided to investigators by the woman's former husband, who told investigators he found the place mat in her purse when she returned from the trip.

The purported contract is one of several details in the report that have Claver-Carone fighting to save his job. They include allegations he had a 1 a.m. hotel room rendezvous with his chief of staff, sent her a poem on a Sunday morning titled "My Soul is in a Hurry" and — perhaps most troubling — awarded her 40% pay raises in violation of the bank's conflict-of-interest policies.

Claver-Carone has disputed the report's accuracy, strongly denouncing the manner in which the review was conducted and offering no hint that he is considering resignation.

According to investigators, he has denied ever having — now or before — a romantic relationship with his longtime right hand.

His chief of staff denied the allegations in the anonymous complaint and told investigators she never violated the IDB's code of ethics, the report said. In a written submission to investigators, she also complained that she had been denied due process.

The AP isn't naming Claver-Carone's aide because the report, which is labeled "confidential," hasn't been made public.

"Neither I nor any other IDB staff member has been given an opportunity to review the final investigative report, respond to its conclusions, or correct inaccuracies," Claver-Carone said in a statement Tuesday.

The findings recall accusations of ethical lapses against another Republican atop a multilateral institu-

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tion, former Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who resigned as head of the World Bank in 2007 for arranging a generous pay raise for his girlfriend.

The Inter-American Development Bank is the biggest multilateral lender to Latin America, disbursing as much as \$23 billion every year in efforts to alleviate poverty in the region.

The U.S. is the largest shareholder in the Washington-based bank and some inside the White House have made no secret of their dislike for Claver-Carone, whose election as IDB chief in the final months of the Trump presidency broke with tradition that a Latin American head the bank.

Some of the more salacious claims referenced in the report could not be substantiated by New York-based Davis Polk. The law firm also found no evidence that Claver-Carone knowingly broke the bank's travel policies to cover up a romantic relationship, or retaliated against any bank employees, as was alleged in an anonymous complaint sent in March to the bank's board.

Still, Davis Polk harshly criticized Claver-Carone and his chief of staff for failing to cooperate fully with their investigation — considering it a violation of bank policies and principles.

For example, the report said Claver-Carone failed to hand over his bank-issued mobile phone for analysis although he did provide a forensic report conducted by a consultant. Claver-Carone also didn't share messages from his personal phone or Gmail account with his chief of staff, the report said.

"Particularly in light of their failure to cooperate, it would be reasonable to conclude that the evidence of a prior relationship, and the additional circumstantial evidence of a current relationship while they were both at the Bank, constitute a violation of the applicable Bank policies," the report said.

Davis Polk's report said Claver-Carone raised his aide's pay by 40% within a year. It said that one of the raises and a change of title was ordered by Claver-Carone a day after an email exchange in which she complained about not getting sufficient respect from her co-workers.

"You figure it out. It's your bank," she wrote, according to the report.

Davis Polk, which also conducted the investigation that led to Andrew Cuomo's resignation as governor of New York, faulted Claver-Carone for making employment decisions about someone with whom it believes he had been romantically involved. However, it said that other executives received similarly-sized increases and his chief of staff's current salary of \$420,000 is in line with her predecessor's compensation.

Claver-Carone when confronted with photographs of the purported place mat "contract" during an interview this month told investigators that he had never seen the document and denied it was his handwriting or signature. He stated that the document was fraudulent and part of a scheme by his aide's ex-husband to harm her.

In a letter to the bank's general counsel, seen by AP, divorce lawyers for the chief of staff said her former husband had a history of cruelty and revenge that was raised in divorce proceedings. They said any evidence he supplied investigators should not be deemed credible.

However, two independent handwriting experts, one who previously worked for the FBI, concluded there was a high probability that the handwriting on the place mat — excerpts of which are displayed in the report — match Claver-Carone's penmanship in bank documents. Claver-Carone refused to submit a handwriting sample as part of the probe, the report said.

Trump's legal woes mount without protection of presidency

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stark repudiation by federal judges he appointed. Far-reaching fraud allegations by New York's attorney general. It's been a week of widening legal troubles for Donald Trump, laying bare the challenges piling up as the former president operates without the protections afforded by the White House.

The bravado that served him well in the political arena is less handy in a legal realm dominated by verifiable evidence, where judges this week have looked askance at his claims and where a fraud investigation that took root when Trump was still president burst into public view in an allegation-filled 222-page state lawsuit.

In politics, "you can say what you want and if people like it, it works. In a legal realm, it's different," said

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Chris Edelson, a presidential powers scholar and American University government professor. "It's an arena where there are tangible consequences for missteps, misdeeds, false statements in a way that doesn't apply in politics."

That distinction between politics and law was evident in a single 30-hour period this week.

Trump insisted on Fox News in an interview that aired Wednesday that the highly classified government records he had at Mar-a-Lago actually had been declassified, that a president has the power to declassify information "even by thinking about it."

A day earlier, however, an independent arbiter his own lawyers had recommended appeared perplexed when the Trump team declined to present any information to support his claims that the documents had been declassified. The special master, Raymond Dearie, a veteran federal judge, said Trump's team was trying to "have its cake and eat it" too, and that, absent information to back up the claims, he was inclined to regard the records the way the government does: Classified.

On Wednesday morning, Letitia James, the New York State attorney general, accused Trump in a lawsuit of padding his net worth by billions of dollars and habitually misleading banks about the value of prized assets. The lawsuit, the culmination of a three-year investigation that began when he was president, also names as defendants three of his adult children and seeks to bar them from ever again running a company in the state. Trump has denied any wrongdoing.

Hours later, three judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit — two of them Trump appointees — handed him a startling loss in the Mar-a-Lago investigation.

The court overwhelmingly rejected arguments that he was entitled to have the special master do an independent review of the roughly 100 classified documents taken during last month's FBI search, and said it was not clear why Trump should have an "interest in or need for" those records.

That ruling opened the way for the Justice Department to resume its use of the classified records in its probe. It lifted a hold placed by a lower court judge, Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee whose rulings in the Mar-a-Lago matter had to date been the sole bright spot for the former president. On Thursday, she responded by striking the parts of her order that had required the Justice Department to give Dearie, and Trump's lawyers, access to the classified records.

Dearie followed up with his own order, giving the Justice Department until Sept. 26 to submit an affidavit asserting that the FBI's detailed inventory of items taken in the search is accurate. Trump's team will have until Sept. 30 to identify errors or mistakes in the inventory.

Between Dearie's position, and the appeals court ruling, "I think that basically there may be a developing consensus, if not an already developed consensus, that the government has the stronger position in a lot of these issues and a lot of these controversies," said Richard Serafini, a Florida criminal defense lawyer and former Justice Department prosecutor.

To be sure, Trump is hardly a stranger to courtroom dramas, having been deposed in numerous lawsuits throughout his decades-long business career, and he has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to survive situations that seemed dire.

His lawyers did not immediately respond Thursday to a request seeking comment.

In the White House, Trump faced a perilous investigation into whether he had obstructed a Justice Department probe of possible collusion between Russia and his 2016 campaign. Ultimately, he was protected at least in part by the power of the presidency, with special counsel Robert Mueller citing longstanding department policy prohibiting the indictment of a sitting president.

He was twice impeached by a Democratic-led House of Representatives — once over a phone call with Ukraine's leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the second time over the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol — but was acquitted by the Senate on both occasions thanks to political support from fellow Republicans.

It remains unclear if any of the current investigations — the Mar-a-Lago one or probes related to Jan. 6 or Georgia election interference — will produce criminal charges. And the New York lawsuit is a civil matter.

But there's no question Trump no longer enjoys the legal shield of the presidency, even though he has repeatedly leaned on an expansive view of executive power to defend his retention of records the government says are not his, no matter their classification.

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Notably, the Justice Department and the federal appeals court have paid little heed to his assertions that the records had been declassified. For all his claims on TV and social media, both have noted that Trump has presented no information to support the idea that he took any steps to declassify the records.

The appeals court called the declassification question a "red herring" because even declassifying a record would not change its content or transform it from a government document into a personal one. And the statutes the Justice Department cites as the basis of its investigation do not explicitly mention classified information.

Trump's lawyers also have stopped short of saying in court, or in legal briefs, that the records were declassified. They told Dearie they shouldn't be forced to disclose their stance on that issue now because it could be part of their defense in the event of an indictment.

Even some legal experts who have otherwise sided with Trump in his legal fights are dubious of his assertions.

Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University law professor who testified as a Republican witness in the first impeachment proceedings in 2019, said he was struck by the "lack of a coherent and consistent position from the former president on the classified documents."

"It's not clear," he added, "what Jedi-like lawyers said that you could declassify things with a thought, but the courts are unlikely to embrace that claim."

Boeing pays \$200 million to settle SEC charges over 737 Max

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Boeing Co. will pay \$200 million to settle charges that the company and its former CEO misled investors about the safety of its 737 Max after two of the airliners crashed, killing 346 people.

The Securities and Exchange Commission said Thursday that it charged the aircraft maker and former CEO Dennis Muilenburg with making significant misleading public statements about the plane and an automated flight-control system that was implicated in the crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia.

Neither Boeing nor Muilenburg admitted wrongdoing, but they offered to settle and pay penalties, including \$1 million to be paid by Muilenburg, who was ousted in December 2019, nine months after the second crash.

The SEC said Boeing and Muilenburg knew that the flight system, known as MCAS, posed a safety issue but promised the public that the plane was safe. The SEC said they also falsely claimed that there had been no gaps in the process of certifying the plane in the first place.

"Boeing and Muilenburg put profits over people by misleading investors about the safety of the 737 Max all in an effort to rehabilitate Boeing's image" after the crashes, said Gurbir Grewal, director of the SEC's enforcement division.

Boeing said it has made "broad and deep changes across our company in response to those accidents" to improve safety and quality.

"Today's settlement is part of the company's broader effort to responsibly resolve outstanding legal matters related to the 737 Max accidents in a manner that serves the best interests of our shareholders, employees and other stakeholders," said the Arlington, Virginia-based company.

A new Max operated by Indonesia's Lion Air crashed into the Java Sea in October 2018, and another Max flown by Ethiopian Airlines nosedived into the ground near Addis Ababa in March 2019. In each crash, MCAS pushed the nose down after getting faulty readings from a single sensor, and pilots were unable to regain control.

The crashes led regulators around the world to ground the plane for nearly two years until Boeing made fixes to the flight-control system, which was designed to help prevent aerodynamic stalls when the nose points up too sharply. Neither plane that crashed was in danger of stalling.

The SEC accused Boeing of misleading investors in a press release after the Indonesia crash which said the plane was "as safe as any airplane that has ever flown the skies." Boeing knew when it made that claim that MCAS would need to be fixed and was already designing changes, the SEC said.

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After the crash in Ethiopia, Muilenburg said on a call with investors and Wall Street analysts and during Boeing's annual shareholder meeting that the company had followed the normal process for getting the plane certified by regulators. But by then Boeing — in response to a subpoena from federal prosecutors — had already found documents indicating that it didn't disclose key facts about MCAS to the Federal Aviation Administration, the SEC charged.

Boeing reached a separate \$2.5 billion settlement with the Justice Department last year. Most of that money went to airlines whose Max jets were grounded.

Ex-Illinois cop charged in 2020 fatal shooting of Black man

WAUKEGAN, Ill. (AP) — A former suburban Chicago police officer who was fired after he shot into a car two years ago, killing a Black man and seriously wounding the man's girlfriend, has been charged with second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter, authorities announced on Thursday.

In a news release, the Lake County State's Attorney's office said it had unsealed grand jury indictments against former Waukegan police Officer Dante Salinas in the Oct. 20, 2020, shooting that killed a 19-year-old local man, Marcellis Stinnette, and wounded his girlfriend, Tafara Williams, according to the Lake County State's Attorney's office. Salinas also was indicted on felony counts of aggravated battery causing great bodily harm and official misconduct.

On the night of the shooting, another Waukegan officer stopped the couple's car and was questioning them when Williams suddenly drove off, according to investigators. The officer pursued them and Salinas responded to his call for help and joined the chase.

Williams drove off a roadway and crashed, then put her car in reverse in an attempt to leave the area, the Lake County State's Attorney's office said in a news release Thursday.

Salinas had climbed out of his squad car and was not in the path of Williams' car but he "fired several shots into the driver's side of the vehicle as it continued to reverse past him," according to the news release.

Williams was wounded and Stinnette, who prosecutors said had committed no crime, was killed.

An expert analyzing the trajectory of the bullets was able to determine the location of Salinas and the trajectory of his bullets, Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said in the statement.

Salinas surrendered to authorities on Thursday and a judge ordered that he be held on \$350,000 bond, prosecutors said. Second-degree murder carries a maximum prison sentence of 20 years and manslaughter carries a maximum term of five years. If Salinas is convicted of both charges, the sentences would run concurrently.

Douglas Zeit, an attorney who represented Salinas in court on Thursday, declined to comment when reached by phone.

Williams has been charged with aggravated fleeing. She turned herself in to authorities as well and a judge ordered that she be released on a \$50,000 recognizance bond.

Milestone balls leave fans with a choice: Return it or sell?

By NOAH TRISTER AP Baseball Writer

If Aaron Judge passes Roger Maris, some lucky fan might become this generation's Sal Durante.

As a 19-year-old in 1961, Durante caught Maris' record-breaking 61st home run. The story of what followed — Durante sold the ball for \$5,000, and it was returned to Maris as part of the deal — sounds downright quaint by today's standards. But it's a reminder that, even six decades ago, fans who caught famous souvenirs faced a tricky choice: keep the ball, sell it, or give it back to the player who hit it?

With Judge now one away from tying Maris' American League record, anyone who comes up with one of his home run balls could end up with a similar decision to make.

"I'd give it back. Not even a second guess," said Kevin Heathwood, a 35-year-old teacher from Harlem who was at Wednesday night's Yankees-Pirates game in New York. "It belongs to Judge and he earned every single thing that he's gotten. Just being a part of it, that's enough for me."

Many fans share Heathwood's view, feeling that if Judge wants the ball back, it wouldn't be right for the

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fan to keep it. After all, it's Judge's moment. Fans are there to enjoy it and share in it — but why should a spectator insist on making a huge profit off a souvenir he or she received simply from being in the right place at the right time?

On the other hand, keeping a record-setting ball and selling it could yield a life-changing amount of money, which could mean far more to the fan than the ball does to the player. And besides, if Judge — or any other famous slugger — really wants the ball that badly, presumably he can afford to pay just about any asking price.

"I'm a big Yankee fan, a big Judge fan and I would certainly work with them, but I would not just give the ball away," said Danny McDonough, a 32-year-old from Levittown, New York, who attends Seton Hall Law School. "You're holding a very valuable piece of property and I think you're foolish if you just give it up without anything substantial for yourself. Not that I wouldn't like to do that for Judge and the organization. It's too big of an opportunity to pass up."

Bob Fay of Watertown is a 63-year-old memorabilia collector who was also at the game. Not surprisingly, his opinion is similar to McDonough's.

"I'm going to take it home and I'm going to make a million dollars off it," he said. "If I give it to anybody, I'll donate it to the Hall of Fame."

In 1998 — when Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa were the ones chasing Maris — Durante said he actually did think about giving the 61st home run ball back to Maris. But the slugger told him to keep it and make what he could off it. He eventually sold it to a restaurant owner named Sam Gordon, who then gave it to Maris in a photo op with him and Durante.

Maris gave the ball to the Hall of Fame in 1973.

It's not always clear who even has the right to the ball. When Barry Bonds hit his 73rd home run in 2001, one man caught it, but it was jarred loose and another man picked it up. They ended up in court, and a judge decided they should sell the ball and split the proceeds.

There's less controversy when a famous home run is hit to an area fans can't access. When Hank Aaron hit his 715th homer to pass Babe Ruth, Braves pitcher Tom House caught the ball in the bullpen and immediately went to give it to the Atlanta slugger.

When Mark McGwire passed Maris with his 62nd homer in 1998, St. Louis Cardinals grounds crew member Tim Forneris picked up the ball and gave it back. He got quite a bit of good publicity for that gesture — plus a minivan from Chrysler.

For some fans, there's a middle ground between selling the ball for as much as possible or giving it back to the player for nothing. At the very least, they'd like the chance to meet him — and perhaps get a few other items of high sentimental value.

"If I caught the ball, honestly I would really want to meet Judge, hand the ball to him myself. Maybe get a signed ball, a signed bat, a signed jersey, talk to him a little bit," said Rob Casales, a 25-year-old financial analyst from Jersey City, New Jersey, who bought tickets for Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday after Judge hit his 60th homer Tuesday.

"If I'm feeling a little frisky maybe ask for playoff tickets, but I wouldn't try to extort the Yankees for hundreds of thousands of dollars even though I know a lot of people are going to try and do that," he added. "It's not really my move. I love the Yankees too much. I love Aaron Judge too much."

Rob Siwiec, a 26-year-old from Bayonne, New Jersey, who works at a law firm, said he'd like a photo with Judge, an autograph, some merchandise — and perhaps some playoff tickets.

And he had another idea as well — one that Durante and Maris never had to consider.

"I would request that he follow me on either Twitter or Instagram," Siwiec said, "and shout me out."

Alex Jones testifies in trial over his Sandy Hook hoax lies

By DAVE COLLINS and PAT EATON-ROBB Associated Press

WATERBURY, Conn. (AP) — Alex Jones took the stand Thursday at his Connecticut defamation trial, acknowledging he had promoted the conspiracy theory that the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre was a hoax, but angrily refusing to keep apologizing for that.

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More than a dozen relatives of the 26 shooting victims showed up to observe his often contentious testimony in Waterbury Superior Court, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Newtown, where the shooting occurred.

Jones was found liable last year by default for damages to plaintiffs without a trial, for what the judge called his repeated failures to turn over documents to their lawyers. The six-member jury is now deciding how much Jones and Free Speech Systems, parent of Jones' Infowars media platforms, should pay the families for defaming them and intentionally inflicting emotional distress.

On Thursday, Jones admitted calling parents "crisis actors" on his show and saying the shooting was "phony as a three-dollar bill."

Plaintiff attorney Christopher Mattei accused Jones of putting targets on the parents' backs, pointing to the family members in the courtroom and saying "these are real people."

"Just like all the Iraqis you liberals killed and love," Jones responded. "Just, you're unbelievable. You switch on emotions, on-and-off when you want. You're just ambulance chasing."

"Why don't you show a little respect?" Mattei shot back, as Jones' lawyer, Norm Pattis, shouted objections and several family members shook their heads in apparent disbelief.

The exchange went on with Mattei pointing out that the families in the courtroom had "lost children, sisters, wives, moms."

"Is this a struggle session?" said Jones, who in recent years has acknowledged the shooting was real. "Are we in China? I've already said I'm sorry hundreds of times and I'm done saying I'm sorry."

After excusing the jury for the day, Judge Barbara Bellis admonished both sides, saying further outbursts would lead to a contempt hearing.

Bellis had begun the day by going over the topics that Jones could not mention in his testimony: free speech rights; the Sandy Hook families' \$73 million settlement this year with gun-maker Remington (the company made the Bushmaster rifle used to kill the victims at Sandy Hook); the percentage of Jones' shows that discussed Sandy Hook; and whether he profited from those shows or a similar case in Texas.

"This is not the appropriate forum for you to offer that testimony," Bellis said. Jones indicated that he understood.

But the jury had to be sent out of the courtroom several times while attorneys argued about the scope of Jones' answers.

"You're going to get your exercise today, for those of you who wear Fitbits," the judge told jurors.

Earlier in the trial, family members of the victims have given often emotional testimony describing how they endured death threats, in-person harassment and abusive comments on social media. Some moved to avoid the abuse.

Jones' shows had portrayed the Sandy Hook shooting as staged by crisis actors as part of gun control efforts.

Testimony also has focused on website analytics data run by Infowars employees showing how its sales of dietary supplements, food, clothing and other items spiked around the time Jones talked about the Sandy Hook shooting.

Evidence, including internal Infowars emails and depositions, also shows dissent within the company about pushing the hoax lies.

Pattis is arguing that any damages should be limited and accused the victims' relatives of exaggerating the harm the lies caused them.

Jones has already been found liable by default in two similar lawsuits over the Sandy Hook hoax lies in his hometown of Austin, Texas, where a jury in one of the trials ordered Jones last month to pay nearly \$50 million in damages to the parents of one of the children killed. A third trial in Texas is expected to begin near the end of the year.

Jones was asked Thursday about a page on his Infowars site that called the trial a "kangaroo court" and included a graphic showing the judge with lasers shooting from her eyes. He said the page was created by his staff, but called it a "good report."

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He was asked about advertisements on that page and other Sandy Hook content, as well as daily profit reports. Jones said he could not answer those questions, but denied he saw the trial as a marketing opportunity.

Later, when asked about his fundraising and items offered in his Internet store, he made sure to give out the URL where people could buy cryptocurrency to support his company.

"That will end up as a clip on your show tonight," Mattei said. "You're advertising for your cryptocurrency page?"

"I mean people want to keep us in the fight, so I mean I hope whoever the big whales are that would give us money before keep doing it," Jones said.

Jones, who is expected back on the stand Friday, made brief comments to reporters while leaving the courthouse.

"The First Amendment will prevail," he said. "The American people will never be silenced."

Why is a NASA spacecraft crashing into an asteroid?

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — In the first-of-its kind, save-the-world experiment, NASA is about to clobber a small, harmless asteroid millions of miles away.

A spacecraft named Dart will zero in on the asteroid Monday, intent on slamming it head-on at 14,000 mph (22,500 kph). The impact should be just enough to nudge the asteroid into a slightly tighter orbit around its companion space rock — demonstrating that if a killer asteroid ever heads our way, we'd stand a fighting chance of diverting it.

"This is stuff of science-fiction books and really corny episodes of "StarTrek" from when I was a kid, and now it's real," NASA program scientist Tom Statler said Thursday.

Cameras and telescopes will watch the crash, but it will take days or even weeks to find out if it actually changed the orbit.

The \$325 million planetary defense test began with Dart's launch last fall.

ASTEROID TARGET

The asteroid with the bull's-eye on it is Dimorphos, about 7 million miles (9.6 million kilometers) from Earth. It is actually the puny sidekick of a 2,500-foot (780-meter) asteroid named Didymos, Greek for twin. Discovered in 1996, Didymos is spinning so fast that scientists believe it flung off material that eventually formed a moonlet. Dimorphos — roughly 525 feet (160 meters) across — orbits its parent body at a distance of less than a mile (1.2 kilometers).

"This really is about asteroid deflection, not disruption," said Nancy Chabot, a planetary scientist and mission team leader at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory, which is managing the effort. "This isn't going to blow up the asteroid. It isn't going to put it into lots of pieces." Rather, the impact will dig out a crater tens of yards (meters) in size and hurl some 2 million pounds (1 million kilograms) of rocks and dirt into space.

NASA insists there's a zero chance either asteroid will threaten Earth — now or in the future. That's why the pair was picked.

DART, THE IMPACTOR

The Johns Hopkins lab took a minimalist approach in developing Dart — short for Double Asteroid Redirection Test — given that it's essentially a battering ram and faces sure destruction. It has a single instrument: a camera used for navigating, targeting and chronicling the final action. Believed to be essentially a rubble pile, Dimorphos will emerge as a point of light an hour before impact, looming larger and larger in the camera images beamed back to Earth. Managers are confident Dart won't smash into the larger Didymos by mistake. The spacecraft's navigation is designed to distinguish between the two asteroids and, in the final 50 minutes, target the smaller one.

The size of a small vending machine at 1,260 pounds (570 kilograms), the spacecraft will slam into roughly 11 billion pounds (5 billion kilograms) of asteroid. "Sometimes we describe it as running a golf cart into a

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Great Pyramid," said Chabot.

Unless Dart misses — NASA puts the odds of that happening at less than 10% — it will be the end of the road for Dart. If it goes screaming past both space rocks, it will encounter them again in a couple years for Take 2.

SAVING EARTH

Little Dimorphos completes a lap around big Didymos every 11 hours and 55 minutes. The impact by Dart should shave about 10 minutes off that. Although the strike itself should be immediately apparent, it could take a few weeks or more to verify the moonlet's tweaked orbit. Cameras on Dart and a mini tagalong satellite will capture the collision up close. Telescopes on all seven continents, along with the Hubble and Webb space telescopes and NASA's asteroid-hunting Lucy spacecraft, may see a bright flash as Dart smacks Dimorphos and sends streams of rock and dirt cascading into space. The observatories will track the pair of asteroids as they circle the sun, to see if Dart altered Dimorphos' orbit. In 2024, a European spacecraft named Hera will retrace Dart's journey to measure the impact results.

Although the intended nudge should change the moonlet's position only slightly, that will add up to a major shift over time, according to Chabot. "So if you were going to do this for planetary defense, you would do it five, 10, 15, 20 years in advance in order for this technique to work," she said. Even if Dart misses, the experiment still will provide valuable insight, said NASA program executive Andrea Riley. "This is why we test. We want to do it now rather than when there's an actual need," she said.

ASTEROID MISSIONS GALORE

Planet Earth is on an asteroid-chasing roll. NASA has close to a pound (450 grams) of rubble collected from asteroid Bennu headed to Earth. The stash should arrive next September. Japan was the first to retrieve asteroid samples, accomplishing the feat twice. China hopes to follow suit with a mission launching in 2025. NASA's Lucy spacecraft, meanwhile, is headed to asteroids near Jupiter, after launching last year. Another spacecraft, Near-Earth Asteroid Scout, is loaded into NASA's new moon rocket awaiting liftoff; it will use a solar sail to fly past a space rock that's less than 60 feet (18 meters) next year. In the next few years, NASA also plans to launch a census-taking telescope to identify hard-to-find asteroids that could pose risks. One asteroid mission is grounded while an independent review board weighs its future. NASA's Psyche spacecraft should have launched this year to a metal-rich asteroid between Mars and Jupiter, but the team couldn't test the flight software in time.

HOLLYWOOD'S TAKE

Hollywood has churned out dozens of killer-space-rock movies over the decades, including 1998's "Armageddon" which brought Bruce Willis to Cape Canaveral for filming, and last year's "Don't Look Up" with Leonardo DiCaprio leading an all-star cast. NASA's planetary defense officer, Lindley Johnson, figures he's seen them all since 1979's "Meteor," his personal favorite "since Sean Connery played me." While some of the sci-fi films are more accurate than others, he noted, entertainment always wins out. The good news is that the coast seems clear for the next century, with no known threats. Otherwise, "it would be like the movies, right?" said NASA's science mission chief Thomas Zurbuchen. What's worrisome, though, are the unknown threats. Fewer than half of the 460-foot (140-meter) objects have been confirmed, with millions of smaller but still-dangerous objects zooming around. "These threats are real, and what makes this time special, is we can do something about it," Zurbuchen said. Not by blowing up an asteroid as Willis' character did — that would be a last, last-minute resort — or by begging government leaders to take action as DiCaprio's character did in vain. If time allows, the best tactic could be to nudge the menacing asteroid out of our way, like Dart.

Indiana abortion clinics reopening after judge blocks ban

By TOM DAVIES and ARLEIGH RODGERS Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — After an Indiana judge on Thursday blocked the state's abortion ban from being enforced, phones starting ringing across Indiana abortion clinics, which are preparing to resume the procedure a week after the ban had gone into effect.

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"People are getting the word that abortion is now legal again, and people are ready to get their health care that they deserve and that they desire," Dr. Katie McHugh, an abortion provider at Women's Med in Indianapolis, told The Associated Press.

Owen County Judge Kelsey Hanlon issued a preliminary injunction against the ban, putting the new law on hold as abortion clinic operators argue in a lawsuit that it violates the state constitution.

Indiana's seven abortion clinics were to lose their state licenses under the ban — which only permits abortions within its narrow exceptions to take place in hospitals or outpatient surgical centers.

The ban was approved by the state's Republican-dominated Legislature on Aug. 5 and signed by GOP Gov. Eric Holcomb. That made Indiana the first state to enact tighter abortion restrictions since the U.S. Supreme Court eliminated federal abortion protections by overturning *Roe v. Wade* in June.

The judge wrote "there is reasonable likelihood that this significant restriction of personal autonomy offends the liberty guarantees of the Indiana Constitution" and that the clinics will prevail in the lawsuit. The order prevents the state from enforcing the ban pending a trial on the merits of the lawsuit.

Republican state Attorney General Todd Rokita said in a statement: "We plan to appeal and continue to make the case for life in Indiana," calling the abortion ban law "a reasonable way" to protect the unborn.

Women's Med is expecting to see patients again starting Friday, McHugh said.

"I had really hoped for this, but honestly, I didn't really expect it," she said. "So the fact that this is what happened is such a pleasant surprise and such a validation of what we have been saying this whole time."

Whole Woman's Health, which operates an abortion clinic in South Bend, said its staff members "are making plans to resume abortion care in the near future."

"Of course, this landscape of legal back-and-forth leads to disruption in patient care and uncertainty for our staff," said Amy Hagstrom Miller, president and CEO of Whole Woman's Health.

Indiana's ban followed the political firestorm over a 10-year-old rape victim who traveled to the state from neighboring Ohio to end her pregnancy. The case gained wide attention when an Indianapolis doctor said the child came to Indiana because of Ohio's "fetal heartbeat" ban.

An Ohio judge has temporarily blocked that state law, indicating he will allow abortions to continue up to 20 weeks' gestation until after a court hearing scheduled for Oct. 7.

With Indiana now on hold, bans on abortion at any point in pregnancy are in place in 12 Republican-led states. In Wisconsin, clinics have stopped providing abortions amid litigation over whether an 1849 ban is in effect. Georgia bans abortions once fetal cardiac activity can be detected and Florida and Utah have bans that kick in after 15 and 18 weeks gestation, respectively.

The Indiana ban replaced state laws that generally prohibited abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy and tightly restricted them after the 13th week. The ban includes exceptions allowing abortions in cases of rape and incest, before 10 weeks post-fertilization; to protect the life and physical health of the mother; and if a fetus is diagnosed with a lethal anomaly.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana, which is representing the abortion clinics, filed the lawsuit Aug. 31 and argued the ban would "prohibit the overwhelming majority of abortions in Indiana and, as such, will have a devastating and irreparable impact on the plaintiffs and, more importantly, their patients and clients."

Ken Falk, the ACLU of Indiana's legal director, pointed to the state constitution's declaration of rights including "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in arguing before the judge on Monday that it included a right to privacy and to make decisions on whether to have children.

The state attorney general's office said the court should uphold the ban, saying arguments against it are based on a "novel, unwritten, historically unsupported right to abortion" in the state constitution.

"The constitutional text nowhere mentions abortion, and Indiana has prohibited or heavily regulated abortion by statute since 1835 — before, during, and after the time when the 1851 Indiana Constitution was drafted, debated, and ratified," the office said in a court filing.

The question of whether the Indiana Constitution protects abortion rights is undecided.

A state appeals court decision in 2004 said privacy was a core value under the state constitution that

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extended to all residents, including women seeking an abortion. But the Indiana Supreme Court later set aside that ruling without addressing whether the state constitution included such a right.

Hanlon, a Republican who was first elected in 2014 as a judge in the rural southern Indiana county, wrote that Indiana's constitution "is more explicit in its affirmation of individual rights and its limitation of legislative power to intrude into personal affairs" than the U.S. Constitution.

"There is a reasonable likelihood that decisions about family planning, including decisions about whether to carry pregnancy to term," are protected by the state constitution, Hanlon wrote.

Planned Parenthood and other abortion clinic operators involved in the lawsuit said in a statement that they were "grateful that the court granted much needed relief for patients, clients, and providers but this fight is far from over."

US urges world to tell Russia to stop its nuclear threats

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States urged other nations to tell Russia to stop making nuclear threats and end "the horror" of its war in Ukraine as all three countries' top diplomats spoke — but didn't quite meet — at a high-profile U.N. Security Council meeting Thursday.

Held alongside the annual U.N. General Assembly gathering of world leaders, the session followed a striking development in the war this week: Russia called up a portion of its reserves for the first time since World War II. At the same time, President Vladimir Putin said his nuclear-armed country would "use all means available to us" to defend itself if its territory is threatened.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken saw Putin's remark as particularly menacing given plans for referendums in Russian-controlled parts of eastern and southern Ukraine on whether to become part of Russia.

Western nations have condemned those votes as illegitimate and nonbinding. But, in their wake, Moscow might see any Ukrainian attempt to retake those areas as an attack on "Russian territory," Blinken warned.

"Every council member should send a clear message that these reckless nuclear threats must stop immediately," he said.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov didn't mention his country's nuclear capacity or the new troop mobilization during his own remarks at the council meeting, which France called to discuss accountability for alleged abuses and atrocities during the nearly 7-month-long war.

Instead, Lavrov repeated his country's frequent claims that Kyiv has long oppressed Russian speakers in Ukraine's east — one of the explanations Moscow has offered for the invasion — and that Western support for Ukraine is a menace to Russia.

"What's particularly cynical is the position of states that are pumping Ukraine full of weapons and training their soldiers," he said, maintaining that their goal is to prolong fighting "to wear down and weaken Russia."

"That policy means the direct involvement of the West in the conflict," said Lavrov. He added that Ukraine had become "an anti-Russia staging ground to create threats against Russian security" and his country wouldn't accept it.

The Security Council has held dozens of contentious meetings on Ukraine since the war began in February, but Thursday's session had special stature.

"That President Putin picked this week, as most of the world gathers at the United Nations, to add fuel to the fire he started shows his utter contempt and disdain for the U.N. Charter, the U.N. General Assembly and this council," Blinken told foreign ministers around the group's famous horseshoe-shaped table.

"Tell President Putin to stop the horror he started. Tell him to stop putting his interests above the interests of the rest of the world, including his own people," Blinken added.

Regardless, no one expects the council to act against Russia, since Moscow has veto power as a permanent member.

But the meeting was still a rare moment for top diplomats from Ukraine and Russia to appear in the same room — made all the more extraordinary for the fact that Lavrov is under U.S. sanctions.

In a sign of the charged atmosphere, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba apparently objected

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as council staffers prepared to put a placard marking Ukraine's seat next to Russia's. The placard was ultimately moved to another spot.

Ahead of the meeting, Kuleba wryly told reporters that he planned to keep a "social distance" from Lavrov. But it turned out he didn't have to: The Russian appeared only just before speaking and left right after, prompting Kuleba to quip later in his own speech that "Russian diplomats flee almost as quickly as Russian soldiers."

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said he thought Lavrov didn't care to hear "the collective condemnation of this council."

And in an interview with The Associated Press, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre called Lavrov's decision not to hear other speakers in person "a sign of insecurity."

In an undiplomatic exchange, Lavrov accused the U.S. and its allies of covering up alleged misdeeds by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government on the rationale that "he's a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch." Kuleba later chided Russia for the "inappropriate slang."

Blinken argued that Russia should face further censure and isolation for its invasion, pressing other countries to join in Washington's forceful condemnations of the conflict. He cited the discovery of mass graves in Ukraine and repeated allegations from Ukrainians that they were tortured by Russian soldiers.

The International Criminal Court opened an investigation in March into possible crimes amid the war and sent teams to gather evidence. Prosecutor Karim Khan told the council Thursday that he's dispatching more ICC staffers next week to look into allegations emerging from eastern Ukraine.

Khan hasn't yet announced any charges linked to the conflict, but he reiterated that he believes there are reasonable grounds to think that crimes have been committed.

"The picture that I've seen so far is troubling indeed," he said.

The meeting came less than a week after Ukraine's Zelenskyy announced the discovery of a mass burial site near a northeastern city, Iziurm, that had recently been recaptured from Russian forces. Zelenskyy said investigators found evidence that some of the dead were tortured.

French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna told the council that the discovery prompted her country to send more investigators to join others who have been in Ukraine since hundreds of civilians were found dead in another city, Bucha, after a Russian withdrawal in late March.

There are "so many violations of the laws of war and so many actions for which Russia must be held accountable," she said.

Other council members also called for accountability, but in varying tones.

"Investigations into violations of international humanitarian law should be objective and fair, based on fair facts, rather than an assumption of guilt, and without being politicized," said Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China, which has maintained strong ties with Russia.

Tears and hugs for Russians called up to fight in Ukraine

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Russia escalated its military and political campaign Thursday to capture Ukrainian territory, rounding up Russian army reservists to fight, preparing votes on annexing occupied areas and launching new deadly attacks.

A day after President Vladimir Putin ordered a partial mobilization to bolster his troops in Ukraine, dramatic scenes of tearful families bidding farewell to men departing from military mobilization centers in Russia appeared on social media.

Video on Twitter from the eastern Siberian city of Neryungri showed men emerging from a stadium. Before boarding buses, the men hugged family members waiting outside, many crying and some covering their mouths with their hands in grief. A man held a child up to the window of one bus for a last look.

In Moscow, women hugged, cried and made the sign of the cross on men at another mobilization point. A 25-year-old who gave only his first name, Dmitry, received a hug from his father, who told him "Be careful," as they parted.

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Dmitry told Russian media company Ostorozhno Novosti he did not expect to be called up and shipped out so quickly, especially since he still is a student.

"No one told me anything in the morning. They gave me the draft notice that I should come here at 3 p.m. We waited 1.5 hours, then the enlistment officer came and said that we are leaving now," he said. "I was like, 'Oh great!' I went outside and started calling my parents, brother, all friends of mine to tell that they take me."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in some of his harshest comments so far in the nearly 7-month-old war, lashed out at Russians succumbing to the pressure to serve in their country's armed forces and those who haven't spoken out against the war. In his nightly video address, he switched from his usual Ukrainian language into Russian to directly tell Russian citizens they are being "thrown to their deaths."

"You are already accomplices in all these crimes, murders and torture of Ukrainians," Zelenskyy said, wearing a black T-shirt that said in English: "We Stand with Ukraine," instead of his signature olive drab T-shirt. He said Russians' options to survive are to "protest, fight back, run away or surrender to Ukrainian captivity."

Western leaders derided Putin's mobilization order as an act of weakness and desperation. More than 1,300 Russians were arrested in antiwar demonstrations Wednesday after he issued it, according to the independent Russian human rights group OVD-Info. Organizers said more protests were planned for Saturday.

Putin's partial call-up of 300,000 reservists was short on details, so much so that the Russian military announced Thursday it had set up a call center to answer questions.

In Washington, Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon's press secretary, said the U.S. believes that it will take Russia time to train and equip the new troops and that doing so may not solve command and control, logistics and morale issues.

Concerns about a potentially wider draft sent some Russians scrambling to buy plane tickets to flee the country, and Zelenskyy claimed Thursday that the Russian military is preparing to draft up to a million men. A Kremlin spokesman earlier denied such claims.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser offered concrete support to potential deserters. She told the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung that anyone who "courageously opposes Putin's regime and therefore puts himself in the greatest danger" can apply for asylum in Germany.

In the Kremlin's territory annexation campaign, pro-Moscow authorities in four Russian-held regions of Ukraine plan voter referendums starting Friday on becoming part of Russia — a move that could expand the war and follows the Kremlin's playbook from when it annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula after a similar referendum. Most of the world considers the 2014 annexation of Crimea to have been illegal.

Voting on the referendums in Ukraine's Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions is scheduled to last through Tuesday. Foreign leaders have called the votes illegitimate and nonbinding.

In Luhansk, billboards reading "With Russia Forever" and "Our Choice-Russia" appeared on the streets, while volunteers distributed ribbons in the colors of the Russian national flag and posters reading, "Russia is the future. Participate in the referendum!"

On the battlefield, Russian and Ukrainian forces exchanged missile and artillery barrages as both sides refused to concede ground.

Russian missile strikes in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia left one person dead and five wounded, Ukrainian officials said. Officials in the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk said Ukrainian shelling killed at least six people.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a deputy in the Ukrainian president's office, said a hotel in Zaporizhzhia was struck and rescuers were trying to free people trapped in rubble. The governor of the mostly Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region, Oleksandr Starukh, said Russian forces had targeted infrastructure and damaged apartment buildings in the city, which remains in Ukrainian hands.

The mayor of the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk, Alexei Kulemzin, said Ukrainian shelling hit a covered market and a minibus. Overnight, one person was killed during Russian shelling in Nikopol, across the river from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, according to the Dnipropetrovsk regional governor.

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While the hostilities continued, the two sides managed to agree on a major prisoner swap. Ukrainian officials announced the exchange of 215 Ukrainian and foreign fighters — 200 of them for a single person, an ally of Putin's. Denis Pushilin, head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, confirmed that pro-Russian Ukrainian opposition leader Viktor Medvedchuk, was part of the swap.

Putin has repeatedly spoken about Medvedchuk as a victim of political repression. Media reports alleged that before Russia's invasion, Medvedchuk was a top candidate for leading a puppet government the Kremlin hoped to install in Ukraine.

Among the freed fighters were Ukrainian defenders of a steel plant in Mariupol during a long Russian siege, along with 10 foreigners, including five British citizens and two U.S. military veterans, who had fought with Ukrainian forces. Some of those freed had faced death sentences in Russian-occupied areas.

A video on the BBC news website Thursday showed two of the released British men, Aiden Aslin and Shaun Pinner, speaking inside a plane while en route home.

"We just want to let everyone know that we're now out of the danger zone and we're on our way home to our families," Aslin said in the video, as Pinner added: "By the skin of our teeth."

The non-profit Presidium Network, which is helping provide aid to Kyiv, said Aslin, Pinner and three other Britons were safely home and reunited with their families Thursday.

The continuation of Russian missile attacks and beginning of a partial mobilization of Russians into the armed forces suggested the Kremlin was seeking to dispel any notion of weakness or waning determination to achieve its wartime aims in light of recent battlefield losses and other setbacks.

Ratcheting up tensions, a senior Kremlin official on Thursday repeated Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons if Russian territory comes under attack.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said strategic nuclear weapons are one of the options to safeguard Russian-controlled territories in eastern and southern Ukraine. The remark appeared to serve as a warning that Moscow could also target Ukraine's Western allies.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken responded Thursday, calling on every U.N. Security Council member to "send a clear message" to Russia that it must stop its nuclear threats.

Russia's neighbors have been on edge about a possible threat from Russia. Estonia said training exercises started Thursday for nearly 2,900 reservists and volunteers, in an apparent counter to Moscow's announcement of a partial military mobilization.

One day after Zelenskyy speech, US, Russia square off at UN

By PIA SARKAR and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — One day after Ukraine's president laid out a forceful case against Russia's invasion at the United Nations, the United States made its own assertions in front of the U.N. Security Council on Thursday about why Russia should face further censure and isolation. Minutes later, Russia came right back, calling the claims unfair and saying Ukraine is to blame.

Antony Blinken, the United States' top diplomat, spoke to Security Council members on Thursday, detailing allegations of what he called war crimes and other atrocities committed by Russia and urging them to "send a clear message" to the country to stop its nuclear threats.

Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, addressed the Security Council shortly afterward, repeating his country's frequent claims that Kyiv has long oppressed Russian speakers in Ukraine's east — one of the explanations Moscow has offered for the invasion.

Ukraine's Western allies "have been covering up the crimes of the Kyiv regime," said Lavrov, who was not in the room when Blinken and some other U.S. allies spoke. He appeared just before his own speech and departed immediately afterward.

The almost-exchange between the two top diplomats came on the heels of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's demands for world leaders to punish Russia in a video speech delivered Wednesday, just hours after Moscow made an extraordinary announcement that it would mobilize some reservists for the war effort.

Buoyed by a counteroffensive that has retaken swaths of territory that the Russians seized, Zelenskyy

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vowed that his forces would not stop until they had reclaimed all of Ukraine.

"We can return the Ukrainian flag to our entire territory. We can do it with the force of arms," the president said in a speech delivered in English. "But we need time."

Video speeches by Zelenskyy in an olive green T-shirt have become almost commonplace. But this speech was one of the most keenly anticipated at the U.N. General Assembly, where the war has dominated over conflicts in other regions.

On Thursday, Israel's prime minister, Yair Lapid, delivered a speech focused on the Palestinians and included a call for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

"An agreement with the Palestinians, based on two states for two peoples, is the right thing for Israel's security, for Israel's economy and for the future of our children," Lapid said.

The speech, coming ahead of Nov. 1 elections, appeared to be part of an effort by Lapid to portray himself — both to voters and global leaders — as a statesman and moderate alternative to his main rival, hardline former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

But it was short on details, and there is virtually no chance Lapid, who has long supported a two-state solution, will get to push forward with his vision. Israel's parliament is dominated by parties that oppose Palestinian independence, and opinion polls forecast a similar result after the upcoming elections.

The Palestinians seek the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip — territories captured by Israel in 1967 — for an independent state, a position that enjoys wide international support.

While Lapid and dozens of other world leaders sought airtime for issues plaguing their own nations — including climate change, rising food costs, human rights and vaccine inequity — Ukraine remained at the center of the U.N. General Assembly, popping up in speeches by leaders from all over the world decrying Russia's invasion of a sovereign country.

"It's an attack on this very institution where we find ourselves today," said Moldovan President President Maia Sandu, whose country borders Ukraine.

U.S. President Joe Biden's address, too, focused heavily on the war in Ukraine.

"This war is about extinguishing Ukraine's right to exist as a state, plain and simple, and Ukraine's right to exist as a people. Whoever you are, wherever you live, whatever you believe, that should make your blood run cold," he said. "If nations can pursue their imperial ambitions without consequences, then we put at risk everything this very institution stands for. Everything."

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is not attending the General Assembly, has said he sent his armed forces into Ukraine because of risks to his country's security from what he considers a hostile government in Kyiv; to liberate Russians living in Ukraine — especially its eastern region of the Donbas — from what he views as the Ukrainian government's oppression; and to restore what he considers to be Russia's historical territorial claims on the country.

Earlier this week, he warned that his nuclear-armed country will "certainly use all means available to us" if its territory is threatened and to defend the country and its people.

Putin's decree Wednesday about the mobilization was sparse on details but officials said as many as 300,000 reservists could be tapped. It was apparently an effort to seize momentum after the Ukrainian counteroffensive.

But the first such call-up in Russia since World War II also brought the fighting home in a new way for Russians and risked fanning domestic anxiety and antipathy toward the war. Shortly after Putin's announcement, flights out of the country rapidly filled up, and more than 1,000 people were arrested at rare antiwar demonstrations across the country.

Zelenskyy asserted that Moscow wants to spend the winter preparing its forces in Ukraine for a new offensive, or at least preparing fortifications while mobilizing more troops in the largest military conflict in Europe since World War II

"Russia wants war. It's true. But Russia will not be able to stop the course of history," he said, declaring that "mankind and the international law are stronger" than what he called a "terrorist state."

FTC says Bezos, Jassy must testify in probe of Amazon Prime

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal regulators are ordering Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and CEO Andy Jassy to testify in the government's investigation of Amazon Prime, rejecting the company's complaint that the executives are being unfairly harassed in the probe of the popular streaming and shopping service.

The Federal Trade Commission issued an order late Wednesday denying Amazon's request to cancel civil subpoenas sent in June to Bezos, the Seattle-based company's former CEO, and Jassy. The order also sets a deadline of Jan. 20 for the completion of all testimony by Bezos, Jassy and 15 other senior executives, who also were subpoenaed.

Jassy took over the helm of the online retail and tech giant from Bezos, one of the world's richest individuals, in July 2021. Bezos became executive chairman.

Amazon hasn't made the case that the subpoenas "present undue burdens in terms of scope or timing," FTC Commissioner Christine Wilson said in the order on behalf of the agency. However, the FTC did agree to modify some provisions of the subpoenas that it acknowledged appeared too broad.

The FTC has been investigating since March 2021 the sign-up and cancellation practices of Amazon Prime, which has an estimated 200 million members around the globe.

The company said it was disappointed but not surprised that the FTC mostly ruled in favor of its own position, but it was pleased that the agency "walked back its broadest requests" in the subpoenas.

"Amazon has cooperated with the FTC throughout the investigation and already produced tens of thousands of pages of documents," the company said in a statement. "We are committed to engaging constructively with FTC staff, but we remain concerned that the latest requests are overly broad and needlessly burdensome, and we will explore all our options."

In a petition to the FTC filed last month, the company objected to the subpoenas to Bezos and Jassy, saying the agency "has identified no legitimate reason for needing their testimony when it can obtain the same information, and more, from other witnesses and documents." Amazon said the FTC was hounding Bezos, Jassy and the other executives, calling the information demanded in the subpoenas "overly broad and burdensome."

The investigation has widened to include at least four other Amazon-owned subscription programs: Audible, Amazon Music, Kindle Unlimited and Subscribe & Save, as well as an unidentified third-party program not offered by Amazon. The regulators have asked the company to identify the number of consumers who were enrolled in the programs without giving their consent, among other customer information.

With an estimated 150 million U.S. subscribers, Amazon Prime is a key source of revenue, as well as a wealth of customer data, for the company, which runs an e-commerce empire and ventures in cloud computing, personal "smart" tech and beyond. Amazon Prime costs \$139 a year. The service added a coveted feature this year by obtaining exclusive video rights to the NFL's "Thursday Night Football."

Last year, Amazon asked unsuccessfully that FTC Chair Lina Khan step aside from separate antitrust investigations into its business, contending that her public criticism of the company's market power before she joined the government makes it impossible for her to be impartial. Khan was a fierce critic of tech giants Facebook (now Meta), Google and Apple, as well as Amazon. She arrived on the antitrust scene in 2017, writing an influential study titled "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox" when she was a Yale law student.

EXPLAINER: What's behind referendums in occupied Ukraine?

By The Associated Press undefined

Four occupied regions in Ukraine are set to start voting Friday in Kremlin-engineered referendums on whether to become part of Russia, setting the stage for Moscow to annex the areas in a sharp escalation of the nearly seven-month war.

Ukraine and its Western allies have rejected the votes as illegitimate and neither free nor fair, saying they will have no binding force.

A look at the referendums and their potential implications:

WHY ARE THE REFERENDUMS HAPPENING?

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The Kremlin has used this tactic before. In 2014, it held a hastily called referendum in Ukraine's Crimea region that also was denounced by the West as illegal and illegitimate. Moscow used the vote as a justification to annex the Black Sea peninsula in a move that was not recognized by most of the world.

On Tuesday, authorities in the separatist Luhansk and Donetsk regions that make up Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas abruptly announced that referendums on joining Russia would be held starting Friday. Moscow-backed officials in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the south also called votes.

The moves followed months of conflicting signals from Moscow and separatist officials about the referendums that reflected the shifts on the battlefield.

During the summer, when the Kremlin hoped for a quick capture of all of the Donbas region, local officials talked about organizing the votes in September.

Russian troops and local separatist forces have taken control of virtually all of the Luhansk region, but only about 60% of the Donetsk region. The slow pace of Russia's offensive in the east and the Ukrainian push to reclaim areas in the Kherson region made officials in Moscow talk about delaying the votes until November.

The Kremlin's plans changed again after a lightning Ukrainian counteroffensive this month forced Russian troops to retreat from broad swaths of the northeastern Kharkiv region and raised the prospect of more gains by Kyiv's forces.

Observers say that by moving quickly to absorb the captured territories into Russia, the Kremlin hopes to force Ukraine to halt its counteroffensive and accept the current areas of occupation or face devastating retaliation.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE REGIONS WHERE THE VOTE WILL OCCUR?

The 2014 vote in Crimea was held under the close watch of Russian troops shortly after they had overtaken the peninsula, where most residents were pro-Moscow.

Separatists who have controlled large chunks of the Donbas since 2014 have long pushed for joining Russia and have shown little tolerance for dissent. When the rebellion erupted there, the separatists quickly organized referendums in which a majority voted to join Russia, but the Kremlin ignored the outcome.

The two regions declared their independence from Ukraine weeks after Crimea's annexation, triggering eight years of fighting that President Vladimir Putin used as a pretext to launch an invasion in February to protect their residents.

In the southern regions, which were occupied by Russian troops in the opening days of the invasion, anti-Russian sentiments run strong. Hundreds of pro-Kyiv activists have been arrested, with many alleging they were tortured. Others were forcibly deported, and tens of thousands fled.

Since Russian forces swept into the Kherson region and part of the Zaporizhzhia region, Moscow-appointed authorities there have cut off Ukrainian TV broadcasts, replacing them with Russian programming. They have handed out Russian passports to residents, introduced the ruble and even issued Russian license plates to pave the way for their incorporation into Russia.

Moscow-appointed administrations have come under frequent attacks by members of Ukrainian resistance movement, which has killed local officials, bombed polling stations and other government buildings, and helped the Ukrainian military target key infrastructure.

WHAT IS BEING SAID ABOUT THE LEGITIMACY OF THE VOTE?

The five-day voting process will take place in the absence of independent monitors and offer ample room for rigging the outcome.

When the referendums were announced earlier this week, the West immediately questioned their legitimacy. U.S. President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz referred to them as shams, and French President Emmanuel Macron said they would have "no legal consequences."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also called them "noise" to distract the public.

HOW IS RUSSIA'S MILITARY MOBILIZATION RELATED?

A day after the referendums were announced, Putin ordered a partial mobilization of reservists to bolster his forces in Ukraine, and he also declared he was ready to use nuclear weapons to fend off any attacks

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on Russian territory.

The Defense Ministry said the mobilization — Russia's first since World War II — is intended to call up about 300,000 reservists with previous military experience. Observers noted, however, that Putin's decree is broad enough to allow the military to swell the numbers if needed. Some reports suggest the Kremlin's goal is amassing 1 million men, in a secret part of the decree.

The Kremlin long has shunned taking such a deeply unpopular move, wary of fomenting discontent and eroding Putin's support base.

The latest Ukrainian counteroffensive exposed Russia's inability to control the 1,000-kilometer (over 600-mile) front line with its current limited force of volunteers. Military experts say it will take months to make the newly called-up reservists ready for combat.

HOW IS PUTIN'S NUCLEAR THREAT RELATED?

As Putin struggles for ways to avoid new humiliating defeats, he signaled his readiness Wednesday to use nuclear weapons to protect the country's territory — a blunt warning to Ukraine to stop pressing its offensive into the regions now set to become part of Russia.

Observers saw Putin's threat as an effective ultimatum to Ukraine and its Western backers to freeze the conflict or face a potential escalation all the way to a nuclear conflict.

While Russian military doctrine envisages using atomic weapons in response to a nuclear attack or aggression involving conventional weapons that "threatens the very existence of the state," Putin's statement further lowered the threshold for their use.

Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by Putin, amplified the president's threat Thursday, saying that after absorbing the four Ukrainian regions, Moscow could use "any Russian weapons, including strategic nuclear weapons" to defend them.

The mention of strategic nuclear forces, which include intercontinental ballistic missiles and long-range bombers, sent a warning that Russia could target not only Ukraine but also the U.S. and its allies with nuclear weapons in case of an escalation.

Zelenskyy dismissed the nuclear threats as bluster and vowed to free all occupied territories.

James Cameron turns to Earth before release of new 'Avatar'

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — There's a new nature documentary series that promises to show viewers incredible animal behavior in vibrant clarity. Heard that all before? Well, this one is on steroids.

"Super/Natural," a six-part series from National Geographic now streaming on Disney+, has tapped "Avatar" creator James Cameron as executive producer, and he's added special effects on top of leading-edge filmmaking technology.

The effects sometimes morph the animals into something like stars in a Marvel movie, with their bellows distorting the air, lumbering attacks that cause shock waves in sand or pheromones from an insect rendered as bursting noxious clouds. Even trees light up when sugars move through their roots.

"We're not actually falsifying or turning it into a superhero movie. We're giving an access portal for our limited senses into a natural world that goes far, far beyond anything that we can sense directly," Cameron told reporters recently.

The episodes are arranged by theme — eat or be eaten, the mating game and bloodlines are some of the topics — and viewers get a visual treat as cameras capture everything from fireflies in Mexico producing a synchronized light show to bottlenose dolphins teaming up with Brazilian fishermen to catch mullet.

Videographers armed with the latest science data underwent 80 animal shoots in 25 countries to create the series, using such high-tech gear as high-speed cameras and drones. Cameron listed what they tried to capture — infrasound, ultrasound, ultraviolet and infrared, among them.

"What's our purpose in this? Not just to entertain, but absolutely to teach and to show the wonder, the majesty, the complexity, of nature," said Cameron. "We're going to pull out every trick we know as entertainers, as storytellers, to try to get that engagement."

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So unlike a traditional nature documentary where adding effects is a strict non-no, "Super/Natural" allows us to feel what bat sonar might look like, see what a bumblebee sees or how bears communicate with invisible clues.

"The bear can smell pheromones, but we can't see it. It's a visual medium; it's not a smell medium," he said. "It is real. It's just that we can't see it. So we have to use the effects to see as they see or to smell as they smell."

The series is narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch, who is lively, sly and delicious in his descriptions. "The female of the species is into some pretty freaky stuff," he says of vampire spiders. Of cicadas popping out after 17 years underground, he drily adds: "America's biggest speed dating event is about to begin."

Cameron was full of praise for Cumberbatch: "He doesn't just narrate it; he acts it," he said. "He gets you inside what's happening in a way that I think is very relatable."

Cameron, an ardent environmentalist and vegan, sees "Super/Natural" as a logical extension of his latest filmmaking, which includes the upcoming fantasy "Avatar: The Way of Water." In both, he hopes to reawaken a sense of wonder for the natural world.

"The natural history stuff is not just a side gig to making 'Avatar' movies. To me, they go together perfectly as something that's equally exciting to me," he said. "It always awakens in me this sense of amazement at how complex nature is."

That amazement is captured in the series with images of glow-in-the-dark flying squirrels soaring the length of a football field, burrowing owls copying the sound of a snake rattle to scare away predators and devil rays leaping 6 feet out of the ocean.

Cameron's last documentary series on animals was "Secrets of the Whales" narrated by Sigourney Weaver. The director has fond memories from growing up in Canada of exploring the woods, trapping insects and watching birds.

"It blows your mind how amazing nature is, things that we just take for granted, and how nature has developed all these different amazing strategies for these animals and these plants over millions of years."

He also took a gentle swipe at the attention the latest images from the James Webb Space Telescope have garnered, from Neptune's rings to galaxy clusters.

"This is the only planet we know of for sure — evidence-based — that has life. And it's an amazing planet," he said. "There's hundreds of millions of species here as opposed to Mars, where we don't even know if there's one species."

"I love Mars. I love exploration in space and underwater. But we have to take care of this planet. We have to understand it before we destroy it."

Trump docs probe: Court lifts hold on Mar-a-Lago records

By ERIC TUCKER, NOMAAN MERCHANT and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a stark repudiation of Donald Trump's legal arguments, a federal appeals court on Wednesday permitted the Justice Department to resume its use of classified records seized from the former president's Florida estate as part of its ongoing criminal investigation.

The ruling from a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit amounts to an overwhelming victory for the Justice Department, clearing the way for investigators to continue scrutinizing the documents as they consider whether to bring criminal charges over the storage of top-secret records at Mar-a-Lago after Trump left the White House. In lifting a hold on a core aspect of the department's probe, the court removed an obstacle that could have delayed the investigation by weeks.

The appeals court also pointedly noted that Trump had presented no evidence that he had declassified the sensitive records, as he maintained as recently as Wednesday, and rejected the possibility that Trump could have an "individual interest in or need for" the roughly 100 documents with classification markings that were seized by the FBI in its Aug. 8 search of the Palm Beach property.

"If you're the president of the United States, you can declassify just by saying 'It's declassified.' Even by thinking about it...You're the president, you make that decision," Trump claimed in a Fox News Channel

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interview recorded Wednesday before the appeals court ruling.

The government had argued that its investigation had been impeded, and national security concerns swept aside, by an order from U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon that temporarily barred investigators from continuing to use the documents in its inquiry. Cannon, a Trump appointee, had said the hold would remain in place pending a separate review by an independent arbiter she had appointed at the Trump team's request to review the records.

The appeals panel agreed with the Justice Department's concerns.

"It is self-evident that the public has a strong interest in ensuring that the storage of the classified records did not result in 'exceptionally grave damage to the national security,'" they wrote. "Ascertaining that," they added, "necessarily involves reviewing the documents, determining who had access to them and when, and deciding which (if any) sources or methods are compromised."

An injunction that delayed or prevented the criminal investigation "from using classified materials risks imposing real and significant harm on the United States and the public," they wrote.

Two of the three judges who issued Wednesday's ruling — Britt Grant and Andrew Brasher — were nominated to the 11th Circuit by Trump. Judge Robin Rosenbaum was nominated by former President Barack Obama.

Lawyers for Trump did not return an email seeking comment on whether they would appeal the ruling. The Justice Department did not have an immediate comment.

The FBI last month seized roughly 11,000 documents, including about 100 with classification markings, during a court-authorized search of the Palm Beach club. It has launched a criminal investigation into whether the records were mishandled or compromised, though it is not clear whether Trump or anyone else will be charged.

Cannon ruled on Sept. 5 that she would name an independent arbiter, or special master, to do an independent review of those records and segregate any that may be covered by claims of attorney-client privilege or executive privilege and to determine whether any of the materials should be returned to Trump.

Raymond Dearie, the former chief judge of the federal court based in Brooklyn, has been named to the role and held his first meeting on Tuesday with lawyers for both sides.

The appeals court ruling substantially narrowed the special master's job duties, enabling the Justice Department to avoid providing him with classified documents to review. Responding to the order, Cannon on Thursday struck the parts of her order that required the department to give Dearie and Trump's lawyers access to the classified documents. Instead, Dearie would review the much larger tranche of non-classified government documents.

The Justice Department had argued that a special master review of the classified documents was not necessary. It said Trump had no plausible basis to invoke executive privilege over the documents, nor could the records be covered by attorney-client privilege because they do not involve communications between Trump and his lawyers.

It had also contested Cannon's order requiring it to provide Dearie and Trump's lawyers with access to the classified material. The court sided with the Justice Department on Wednesday, saying "courts should order review of such materials in only the most extraordinary circumstances. The record does not allow for the conclusion that this is such a circumstance."

Though Trump's lawyers have said a president has absolute authority to declassify information, they have notably stopped short of asserting that the records were declassified. The Trump team this week resisted providing Dearie with any information to support the idea that the records might have been declassified, saying the issue could be part of their defense in the event of an indictment.

The Justice Department has said there is no indication that Trump took any steps to declassify the documents and even included a photo in one court filing of some of the seized documents with colored cover sheets indicating their classified status. The appeals court, too, made the same point.

"Plaintiff suggests that he may have declassified these documents when he was President. But the record contains no evidence that any of these records were declassified," the judges wrote. "In any event,

at least for these purposes, the declassification argument is a red herring because declassifying an official document would not change its content or render it personal.”

Powell’s stark message: Inflation fight may cause recession

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve delivered its bluntest reckoning Wednesday of what it will take to finally tame painfully high inflation: Slower growth, higher unemployment and potentially a recession.

Speaking at a news conference, Chair Jerome Powell acknowledged what many economists have been saying for months: That the Fed’s goal of engineering a “soft landing” — in which it would manage to slow growth enough to curb inflation but not so much as to cause a recession — looks increasingly unlikely.

“The chances of a soft landing,” Powell said, “are likely to diminish” as the Fed steadily raises borrowing costs to slow the worst streak of inflation in four decades. “No one knows whether this process will lead to a recession or, if so, how significant that recession would be.”

Before the Fed’s policymakers would consider halting their rate hikes, he said, they would have to see continued slow growth, a “modest” increase in unemployment and “clear evidence” that inflation is moving back down to their 2% target.

“We have got to get inflation behind us,” Powell said. “I wish there were a painless way to do that. There isn’t.”

Powell’s remarks followed another substantial three-quarters of a point rate hike — its third straight — by the Fed’s policymaking committee. Its latest action brought the Fed’s key short-term rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, to 3% to 3.25%. That’s its highest level since early 2008.

Falling gas prices have slightly lowered headline inflation, which was a still-painful 8.3% in August compared with a year earlier. Those declining prices at the gas pump might have contributed to a recent rise in President Joe Biden’s public approval ratings, which Democrats hope will boost their prospects in the November midterm elections.

On Wednesday, the Fed officials also forecast more jumbo-size hikes to come, raising their benchmark rate to roughly 4.4% by year’s end — a full point higher than they had envisioned as recently as June. And they expect to raise the rate again next year, to about 4.6%. That would be the highest level since 2007.

By raising borrowing rates, the Fed makes it costlier to take out a mortgage or an auto or business loan. Consumers and businesses then presumably borrow and spend less, cooling the economy and slowing inflation.

Other major central banks are taking aggressive steps, too, to combat global inflation, which has been fueled by the global economy’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and then Russia’s war against Ukraine. On Thursday, Britain’s central bank raised its key interest rate by a half-percentage point — to its highest level in 14 years. It was the Bank of England’s seventh straight move to increase borrowing costs at a time of rising food and energy prices, which have fueled a severe cost-of-living crisis.

This month, Sweden’s central bank raised its key interest rate by a full point. And the European Central Bank delivered its largest-ever rate increase with a three-quarter-point hike for the 19 countries that use the euro currency.

In their quarterly economic forecasts Wednesday, the Fed’s policymakers also projected that economic growth will stay weak for the next few years, with unemployment rising to 4.4% by the end of 2023, up from its current level of 3.7%. Historically, economists say, any time unemployment has risen by a half-point over several months, a recession has always followed.

“So the (Fed’s) forecast is an implicit admission that a recession is likely, unless something extraordinary happens,” said Roberto Perli, an economist at Piper Sandler, an investment bank.

Fed officials now foresee the economy expanding just 0.2% this year, sharply lower than their forecast of 1.7% growth just three months ago. And they envision sluggish growth below 2% from 2023 through 2025. Even with the steep rate hikes the Fed foresees, it still expects core inflation — which excludes volatile food and gas costs — to be 3.1% at the end of 2023, well above its 2% target.

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Powell warned in a speech last month that the Fed's moves will "bring some pain" to households and businesses. And he added that the central bank's commitment to bringing inflation back down to its 2% target was "unconditional."

Short-term rates at a level the Fed is now envisioning will force many Americans to pay much higher interest payments on a variety of loans than in the recent past. Last week, the average fixed mortgage rate topped 6%, its highest point in 14 years, which helps explain why home sales have tumbled. Credit card rates have reached their highest level since 1996, according to Bankrate.com.

Inflation now appears increasingly fueled by higher wages and by consumers' steady desire to spend and less by the supply shortages that had bedeviled the economy during the pandemic recession. On Sunday, Biden said on CBS' "60 Minutes" that he believed a soft landing for the economy was still possible, suggesting that his administration's recent energy and health care legislation would lower prices for pharmaceuticals and health care.

The law may help lower prescription drug prices, but outside analyses suggest it will do little to immediately bring down overall inflation. Last month, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office judged it would have a "negligible" effect on prices through 2023. The University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model went even further to say "the impact on inflation is statistically indistinguishable from zero" over the next decade.

Even so, some economists are beginning to express concern that the Fed's rapid rate hikes — the fastest since the early 1980s — will cause more economic damage than necessary to tame inflation. Mike Konczal, an economist at the Roosevelt Institute, noted that the economy is already slowing and that wage increases — a key driver of inflation — are levelling off and by some measures even declining a bit.

Surveys also show that Americans are expecting inflation to ease significantly over the next five years. That is an important trend because inflation expectations can become self-fulfilling: If people expect inflation to ease, some will feel less pressure to accelerate their purchases. Less spending would then help moderate price increases.

The Fed's rapid rate hikes mirror steps that other major central banks are taking, contributing to concerns about a potential global recession. The European Central Bank last week raised its benchmark rate by three-quarters of a percentage point. The Bank of England, the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Bank of Canada have all carried out hefty rate increases in recent weeks.

And in China, the world's second-largest economy, growth is already suffering from the government's repeated COVID lockdowns. If recession sweeps through most large economies, that could derail the U.S. economy, too.

Bank of England raises rates but avoids bolder hike like Fed

By KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Bank of England raised its key interest rate Thursday by another half-percentage point to the highest level in 14 years, but despite facing inflation that outpaces other major economies, it avoided more aggressive hikes made by the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks.

It is the Bank of England's seventh straight move to increase borrowing costs as rising food and energy prices fuel a cost-of-living crisis that is considered the worst in a generation. Despite facing a slumping currency, tight labor market and inflation near its highest level in four decades, officials held off on acting more boldly as they predicted a second consecutive drop in economic output this quarter, an informal definition of recession.

The bank matched its half-point increase last month — the biggest in 27 years — to bring its benchmark rate to 2.25%. The decision was delayed for a week as the United Kingdom mourned Queen Elizabeth II and comes after new Prime Minister Liz Truss' government unveiled a massive relief package aimed at helping consumers and businesses cope with skyrocketing energy bills.

The new measures have eased uncertainty over energy costs and are "likely to limit significantly further increases" in consumer prices, the bank's policymakers said. They expected inflation — now at 9.9% — to

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peak at 11% in October, lower than previously forecast.

"Nevertheless, energy bills will still go up and, combined with the indirect effects of higher energy costs, inflation is expected to remain above 10% over the following few months, before starting to fall back," the monetary policy committee said.

The bank signaled it is prepared to respond more forcefully at its November meeting if needed. Its decision comes during a busy week for central bank action marked by much more aggressive moves to bring down soaring consumer prices.

The U.S. Federal Reserve hiked rates Wednesday by three-quarters of a point for the third consecutive time and forecast that more large increases were ahead. Also Thursday, the Swiss central bank enacted its biggest-ever hike to its key interest rate.

Three of the British bank's nine committee members wanted a similar three-quarter-point raise but were outvoted by five who preferred a half-point and one who voted for a quarter-point.

The decision "suggests the Bank of England is concerned about the UK's economic deteriorating outlook amid the looming threat of recession," said Victoria Scholar, head of investment at interactive investor. "The timid increase will do little to stem the slide in sterling but may avoid inadvertently inducing unnecessary pain for the economy which is already grappling with slowing demand and deteriorating confidence."

Surging inflation is a worry for central banks because it saps economic growth by eroding people's purchasing power. Raising interest rates — the traditional tool to combat inflation — reduces demand and therefore prices by making it more expensive to borrow money for big purchases like cars and homes.

Inflation in the United Kingdom hit 9.9% in August, close to its highest level since 1982 and five times higher than the Bank of England's 2% target. The British pound is at its weakest against the dollar in 37 years, contributing to imported inflation.

To ease the crunch, Truss' government announced it would cap energy bills for households and businesses that have soared as Russia's war in Ukraine drives up the price of natural gas needed for heating.

The Treasury is expected to publish a "mini-budget" Friday with more economic stimulus measures, and the bank said it won't be able to assess how they will affect inflation until its November meeting..

The Bank of England expects gross domestic product to fall by 0.1% in the third quarter, below its August projection of 0.4% growth. That would be a second quarterly decline after official estimates showed output fell by 0.1% in the previous three-month period.

The weakness partly reflects a smaller-than-expected rebound after an extra June holiday to celebrate the queen's 70 years on the throne and the impact of another public holiday Monday for her funeral, officials said.

The bank avoided pressure to go bigger even as other banks around the world take aggressive action against inflation fueled by the global economy's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and then the war in Ukraine.

This month, Sweden's central bank raised its key interest rate by a full percentage point, while the European Central Bank delivered its largest-ever rate increase with a three-quarter point hike for the 19 countries that use the euro currency.

But British policymakers signaled they will "respond forcefully, as necessary" if there are signs that inflationary pressure is more persistent than expected, "including from stronger demand."

The bank said it's also moving ahead with plans to trim its bond holdings built up under a stimulus program, selling off 80 billion pounds (\$90 billion) worth of assets over the next year to bring its portfolio down to 758 billion pounds.

Palestinian strife highlights lost hopes of armed youths

By SAM MCNEIL Associated Press

NABLUS, West Bank (AP) — Nablus was a battered city. Shops gaped open to the street, their windows smashed. Street signs were overturned. Ash stained the roads. Armored vehicles roamed the city center, still pockmarked and splattered with paint from a day of protests.

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The destruction resembled the aftermath of firefights between Palestinian youths and the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank's second-largest city, where posters of killed Palestinians paper the old city's limestone walls. But this time, Israel was not involved. The violent chaos on Tuesday that left a 53-year-old man dead erupted between Palestinians and their own security forces, who coordinate with Israel in an uneasy alliance against Islamic militants.

The rare outburst, coming amid the deadliest violence in the West Bank since 2016, underscored the internal divisions tearing at Palestinian society and cast a spotlight on the growing ranks of disillusioned, impoverished young men taking up arms.

Many have spent their entire lives in a territory occupied by Israel, scarred by infighting and segmented by checkpoints. They have not known a national election since 2006. They have no hope in the long-stalemated peace process. Their aging president, Mahmoud Abbas, is in his 18th year of what was supposed to be a four-year term. They see his Palestinian Authority as a vehicle for corruption and collaboration with Israel.

The clashes erupted after Palestinian forces arrested two men, including Musab Ishtayyeh, a popular local militant wanted by Israel. A 26-year-old man who lives in the area said that although the sides reached a truce, further violence was likely unless Ishtayyeh is released.

"I do not recognize the presidency of Abu Mazen," he said, voicing a popular sentiment in the neighborhood. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared arrest.

"There is no difference between Israel and the Palestinian Authority," he added, saying the Palestinian security forces "want to burn the resistance and kill those who fight."

The latest violence stems from a series of deadly Palestinian attacks inside Israel last spring, which triggered a surge in nightly Israeli arrest raids across the territory. Some 90 Palestinians have been killed in the crackdown. Israel says many were militants or local youths who hurled stones and firebombs at troops, though several civilians have also died.

Experts say the escalation has deeper roots in a power struggle, as Palestinian leaders vie over the succession of the 87-year-old Abbas.

"The leadership vacuum is trickling down from the top all the way down. High-level members are trying to rally their supporters for doomsday," said Tahani Mustafa, an analyst at the International Crisis Group. "In these sorts of contexts, radicalism really thrives."

A lack of opportunity and political horizon has also fueled the unrest. Israel captured the West Bank in 1967, and its military occupation shows no signs of ending.

The last round of substantive peace talks broke down in 2009, and Israel has steadily consolidated its control of the territory with ever expanding construction of settlements that are now home to some 500,000 Jews. The Palestinians seek all of the West Bank, along with Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, for a future state.

Widely disenchanted with the PA, young Palestinians are flocking to an array of militant groups to get weapons. Palestinian security has struggled to assert control in flashpoint cities in the northern West Bank, like Nablus and Jenin.

The instability has consequences for Israel, which depends on cooperation with Palestinian security, and for the United States and other countries that have relied on the PA to establish order in the West Bank and serve as a partner in stalled peace negotiations.

"We need the PA to operate as a buffer between us and all the (Palestinian) organizations," said Michael Milstein, a former head of the Palestinian department in Israeli military intelligence. "The test has only just begun."

Palestinian security officials declined to comment on this week's violence or the reasons for their unpopularity.

In recent months, the Israeli military has grown frustrated with what it describes as the PA's reluctance to maintain order in flashpoint cities under its control.

"The PA has the manpower, the ammunition and the arms," said one Israeli military official, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in line with military guidelines. "In certain places, we

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feel they don't have the will."

The official said the army has seized 300 guns since Israel began its West Bank raids. He said the arms come mainly from small factories that make improvised pistols, or are smuggled from Jordan, Egypt or Lebanon. Some guns stolen from the military also make their way to the West Bank.

Wednesday's truce temporarily halted the fighting, but the streets still bristled with tension and an armed group vowed to continue the battle on behalf of their arrested comrades.

"We will not abandon our brother ... who is wanted by the occupation forces and is currently kidnapped," the militant group, named the Den of Lions, wrote to the AP.

The group, based in the stone warren of the old city, is tied to Ibrahim al-Nabulsi, a prominent militant who was killed in an Israeli raid last month. His photo is on coffee stands, graffiti, posters and necklaces worn by children in Nablus. The Palestinian security services identified him as the son of one of their own colonels — a schism that illustrates how younger Palestinians, who grew up during the searing violence of the second Palestinian intifada, have lost faith in their leaders.

Many Palestinians see their security forces as protecting Israel against Palestinian protests, not Palestinians from Israeli assaults. The forces also have faced widespread criticism over brutal tactics, like last year when riots erupted over an anti-corruption activist's death in custody.

Gangs of young Palestinian men are increasingly firing at Israeli forces during raids or shooting at soldiers manning checkpoints. The gangs operate without the backing of traditional political factions and militant groups.

Last week, two Palestinian gunmen killed an Israeli soldier at a military checkpoint in the northern West Bank before they were shot dead. One of the attackers was a Palestinian security officer.

Ghassan Khatib, a former Palestinian peace negotiator and Cabinet minister, acknowledged there is little public faith in the Palestinian leadership. He blamed a lack of hope and repeated Israeli measures that have weakened the Palestinian Authority.

"If everybody would maintain the same attitude and practices," he warned, "we are going gradually toward the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, and chaos in Palestinian society."

Federer's final match comes in doubles alongside rival Nadal

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — It was quite a collection of tennis luminaries sharing the black indoor hard court for a Laver Cup doubles practice session Thursday, 66 Grand Slam titles among them, a group collectively nicknamed the Big Four: Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal on one side of the net; Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray on the other.

This team event founded by his management company marks the end of Federer's career, and his last match will come Friday night alongside longtime rival Nadal for Team Europe against the Team World doubles pairing of Frances Tiafoe and Jack Sock.

"I'm not sure if I can handle it all. But I'll try," the 41-year-old Federer said about his sure-to-be-emotional on-court farewell after 20 major championships, a total of 103 tournament titles and hundreds of weeks at No. 1 across nearly a quarter of a century as a professional tennis player.

"Sitting here," Federer said Thursday at a team news conference, with Nadal, who is 36, to his left, and Djokovic and Murray, both 35, a couple of seats down to his right, "it feels good that I go first from the guys. It feels right."

Federer is ending his playing days following a series of operations on his right knee. He hasn't competed since a quarterfinal loss at Wimbledon to Hubert Hurkacz in July 2021.

In February of this year, when word emerged that Federer would be in London this week, he said Nadal messaged him suggesting they play doubles together again. They teamed up to win a doubles match during the first Laver Cup in 2017.

"I saw him playing on TV before I arrived on tour. I saw him having success on TV, and then (we were) able to create an amazing rivalry together. And on the other hand, something that probably we are very

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proud of is having a friendly rivalry," Nadal said Thursday. "Tomorrow is going to be a special thing. Difficult. Going to be difficult to handle everything, especially for Roger, without a doubt. But for me, too. At the end, one of the most important players — if not the most important player — in my tennis career is leaving."

They played each other in singles 40 times (Nadal won 26), including 14 Grand Slam matchups (Nadal won 10). Nadal came out on top in their classic 2008 Wimbledon final, considered by some the greatest match in history; Federer won their last showdown, in the 2019 semifinals at the All England Club.

"To be part of this historic moment," Nadal said about Friday, "is going to be something amazing, unforgettable."

Tiafoe, a 24-year-old American who beat Nadal en route to his first Grand Slam semifinal at the U.S. Open this month, deadpanned: "Yeah, I'm just excited to play two up-and-comers tomorrow."

Added Tiafoe: "It's going to be iconic to be a part of that. Both guys are absolute legends. And obviously, (it's) Roger's last dance."

The full lineup for Day 1 of the three-day Laver Cup was announced Thursday.

The singles matches will be Sock against two-time 2022 Grand Slam finalist Casper Ruud of Team Europe, Diego Schwartzman of Team World against 2021 French Open runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas of Team Europe, and Alex de Minaur of Team World against three-time major champion Murray, before the Federer-Nadal doubles match closes the schedule.

Everyone knows what the main event will be: Federer's goodbye.

"For me," Murray said, "it feels right seeing him and Rafa on the same side of the net together."

More consumers buying organic, but US farmers still wary

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

CHURDAN, Iowa (AP) — In the 1970s when George Naylor said he wanted to grow organic crops, the idea didn't go over well.

Back then organic crops were an oddity, destined for health food stores or maybe a few farmers markets.

"I told my dad I wanted to be an organic farmer and he goes, 'Ha, ha, ha,'" Naylor said, noting it wasn't until 2014 that he could embrace his dream and begin transitioning from standard to organic crops.

But over the decades, something unexpected happened — demand for organics started increasing so fast that it began outstripping the supply produced in the U.S.

Now a new challenge has emerged: It's not getting consumers to pay the higher prices, it's convincing enough farmers to get past their organic reluctance and start taking advantage of the revenue pouring in.

Instead of growing to meet the demand, the number of farmers converting to organic is actually dropping. Last month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture committed up to \$300 million to recruit and help more farmers make the switch.

"It feels good," said Chris Schreiner, executive director of the organic-certifying organization Oregon Tilth, referring to the government help. "It's a milestone in the arc of this work."

Schreiner, who has worked at the Oregon-based organization since 1998, said expanding technical training is important given the vast differences in farming land conventionally and organically. Schreiner noted that one farmer told him that converting a conventional farmer was like asking "a foot doctor to become a heart surgeon."

The key difference is the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides as well as genetically modified seeds. Most conventional farms rely on those practices but they are banned at organic farms. Instead, organic farmers must control weeds and pests with techniques such as rotating different crops and planting cover crops that squeeze out weeds and add nutrients to the soil.

Crops can only be deemed organic if they are grown on land that hasn't been treated with synthetic substances for three years. During that period, farmers can grow crops, but they won't get the extra premium that accompanies organic crops.

According to the USDA, the number of conventional farms newly transitioning to organic production

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dropped by about 70% from 2008 to 2019. Organic comprises about 6% of overall food sales, but only 1% of the country's farmland is in organic production, with foreign producers making up the gap.

In the U.S, "There are so many barriers to farmers making that leap to organic," said Megan DeBates, vice president of government affairs for the Organic Trade Association.

While farmers seem hesitant, U.S. consumers aren't. Annual sales of organic products have roughly doubled in the past decade and now top \$63 billion, according to the Organic Trade Association. Sales are projected to climb up to 5.5% this year.

That growth is clear to anyone pushing a cart in an average supermarket, past bins of organic apples and bananas, through dairy and egg sections and along shelves brimming with organic beef and chicken.

The new USDA effort would include \$100 million toward helping farmers learn new techniques for growing organic crops; \$75 million for farmers who meet new conservation practice standards; \$25 million to expand crop insurance options and reduce costs; and \$100 million to aid organic supply chains and develop markets for organics.

Nick Andrews, an Oregon State University extension agent who works with organic farmers, called the USDA effort a "game changer." It should be especially attractive to farmers with small parcels of land because the added value of organic crops makes it possible to make significant money off even 25 to 100 acre (10 to 40 hectare) farms — much smaller than the commercial operations that provide most of the country's produce.

"I've seen organic farmers keep families in business who otherwise would go out of business," Andrews said.

Noah Wendt, who in the past few years has transitioned 1,500 acres (607 hectares) of land in central Iowa to organic, noted the shift has been "rocky" at times for him and his farming partner, Caleb Akin.

But he and Akin recently bought a grain elevator east of Des Moines to use solely for organic crops, the kind of project the USDA program can assist. They hope the elevator will not only be a nearby spot to store grain but provide a one-stop shop to learn about growing and marketing organic crops.

Seeing all the organic activity is gratifying for George and Patti Naylor, who farm near the tiny central Iowa community of Churdan. But they say they still value most the simple benefits of their choice, such as evenings spent watching hundreds of rare monarch butterflies that flock to their herbicide-free farm.

As Patti Naylor put it, "It really helps to believe in what you're doing."

Today in History: September 23, Nixon's "Checkers" speech

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 23, the 266th day of 2022. There are 99 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 23, 1952, Sen. Richard M. Nixon, R-Calif., salvaged his vice-presidential nomination by appearing on television from Los Angeles to refute allegations of improper campaign fundraising in what became known as the "Checkers" speech.

On this date:

In 1780, British spy John Andre was captured along with papers revealing Benedict Arnold's plot to surrender West Point to the British.

In 1806, the Lewis and Clark expedition returned to St. Louis more than two years after setting out for the Pacific Northwest.

In 1955, a jury in Sumner, Mississippi, acquitted two white men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, of murdering Black teenager Emmett Till. (The two men later admitted to the crime in an interview with Look magazine.)

In 1957, nine Black students who'd entered Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas were forced to withdraw because of a white mob outside.

In 1962, "The Jetsons," an animated cartoon series about a Space Age family, premiered as the ABC television network's first program in color.

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In 1987, Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., withdrew from the Democratic presidential race following questions about his use of borrowed quotations and the portrayal of his academic record.

In 1999, the Mars Climate Orbiter apparently burned up as it attempted to go into orbit around the Red Planet.

In 2001, President George W. Bush returned the American flag to full staff at Camp David, symbolically ending a period of national mourning following the 9/11 attacks.

In 2002, Gov. Gray Davis signed a law making California the first state to offer workers paid family leave.

In 2011, after 41 years, the soap opera "All My Children" broadcast its final episode on ABC-TV.

In 2016, President Barack Obama vetoed a bill to allow the families of 9/11 victims to sue the government of Saudi Arabia, arguing it undermined national security. (Both the House and Senate voted to override the veto.)

In 2020, President Donald Trump refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he were to lose the election, telling reporters, "We're going to have to see what happens."

Ten years ago: The Libyan militia suspected in the Sept. 11 attack on the U.S. diplomatic compound that killed the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans said it had disbanded on orders of the country's president. "Homeland" won the Emmy Award for best drama series, and its stars Claire Danes and Damian Lewis each won leading actor awards; "Modern Family" received four awards, including a three-peat as best comedy series.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump tweeted that NBA star Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors was no longer invited to the White House because Curry had said he didn't want to make such a visit with his championship team; NBA star LeBron James responded with a tweet calling Trump a "bum" and saying, "Going to the White House was a great honor until you showed up!" Large amounts of federal aid began moving into Puerto Rico to help communities still without fresh water, fuel, electricity or phone service in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

One year ago: Opening a major new phase in the U.S. vaccination drive against COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention endorsed booster shots for millions of older or otherwise vulnerable Americans. In an effort to combat climate change, the Environmental Protection Agency issued a rule sharply limiting domestic production and use of hydrofluorocarbons, highly potent greenhouse gases commonly used in refrigerators and air conditioners. A gunman attacked a grocery store east of Memphis, Tennessee, killing one person and wounding 14 others before taking his own life; he'd been asked to leave his job at the store earlier in the day.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Julio Iglesias is 79. Actor Paul Petersen (TV: "The Donna Reed Show") is 77. Actor/singer Mary Kay Place is 75. Rock star Bruce Springsteen is 73. Director/playwright George C. Wolfe is 68. Rock musician Leon Taylor (The Ventures) is 67. Actor Rosalind Chao is 65. Golfer Larry Mize is 64. Actor Jason Alexander is 63. Actor Chi McBride is 61. Actor Erik Todd Dellums is 58. Actor LisaRaye is 56. Singer Ani (AH'-nee) DiFranco is 52. Rock singer Sam Bettens (K's Choice) is 50. Recording executive Jermaine Dupri is 50. Actor Kip Pardue is 46. Actor Anthony Mackie is 44. Pop singer Erik-Michael Estrada (TV: "Making the Band") is 43. Actor Aubrey Dollar is 42. Actor Brandon Victor Dixon is 41. Actor David Lim is 39. Actor Cush Jumbo is 37. Actor Skylar Astin is 35. Former tennis player Melanie Oudin (oo-DAN') is 31.