

# Groton Daily Independent

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8:30 a.m.: ASVAB Testing (Grades 11 and 12 (optional))  
UMC: Bible Study, 10 a.m.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

## Wednesday, Oct. 26

Chicken enchiladas, Spanish rice, refried beans, tossed green salad, fruit cobbler.  
School Breakfast: Eggs and breakfast potatoes.  
School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, peas and carrots.  
St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.  
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm  
UMC: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; UMYF Pumpkin Carving/Painting, 7 p.m.

## Groton Community Calendar

### Monday, Oct. 24

Senior Menu: French dip sandwich, macaroni salad, seasoned cabbage, waldorf salad.  
School Breakfast: Mini pancakes.  
School Lunch: Pepperoni pizza, mixed vegetables.  
Volleyball at Britton (rescheduled from Oct. 28). C match at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.  
Noon: Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck dinner.  
3:30 p.m.: 5th grade band introduction.  
Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Tuesday, Oct. 25

Roast pork, mashed potatoes with gravy, parsley buttered carrots, apple sauce, Molasses cookie, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast sandwich.  
School Lunch: Tacos with toppings.

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

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

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## Larson interns at Professional Management Services



Cade Larson, son of Dave and Joy Larson, is working as an intern at Professional Management Services. "I've been learning about the hard work involved with this business," Larson explained. "I clean feeders as well as load feed and stock."

"The feeders, filled with various kinds of nutrient-rich feed, are rented to farmers," he said. "Farmers pull these feeders to their feedlots and return them when they are empty."

"When they are returned, they are dirty, some with hard, crusted feed that is moldy and smelly," Larson smiled. "Cleaning them is the hardest part of my job."

"When I was given the choice to select a place to work, I quickly chose Professional Management Services since I worked here this past summer," he added. "I already knew most of the customers and what my job included."

"In spite of the hard work that is often required, I enjoy working here and visiting with the local farmers," Larson explained. "I also enjoy the flexible schedule and being around the other employees."

"I participate in baseball and basketball," he said. "After I graduate from high school, I plan to attend Mitchell Technical College and become an electrician."

- Dorene Nelson

## Barse interns in band dept.



Carter Barse, son of Chris and Pamela Barse, is working as an intern for Mrs. Desiree Yeigh, the band teacher for Groton Junior / Senior High School. "I've been helping with a variety of tasks including organizing music and getting everything back into its proper place," Barse stated.

"Since I am looking into a degree in music education, I decided to do my internship in the band room to see how that all works and falls into place," he explained.

"It is difficult and sometimes even confusing to get the correct music into the right folder for the student who needs it," Barse explained. "That is probably the hardest part of this job, especially when everyone wants it now!"

"The easiest part is the relaxed atmosphere here in the band room," he said. "I'm not under any pressure but know what to do and do it!"

"After I graduate from high school, I plan to attend either the University of South Dakota or the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities," Barse listed.

"In high school I am currently the drum major for the marching band," he said, "but I also play the alto saxophone, participate in choir and show choir, I play in both the jazz band and the flex band, and I have been a member of All State Band."

- Dorene Nelson

## Germ theory, antibiotics, and our 21st century challenge

As a lover of the history of science and medicine, one of my favorite topics to read and learn about is the discovery of germ theory. Up until the mid to late 1800's, diseases had numerous other theories, and the theory of miasma – meaning “bad air” – dominated as an explanation for cholera, plague, and other infectious outbreaks.

Bacteria themselves were seen and discovered with the development of the first microscopes in the 1600's. Dutch scientist Antonie Van Leeuwenhoek is credited as the father of microbiology, having created the early versions of our modern microscopes. Though he saw microbes with his inventions, the idea that these tiny organisms caused disease was yet to be discovered.

Germ theory, though it had beginnings smattered in earlier times, really did not take off until discoveries by 19th century thinkers including Louis Pasteur, Joseph Lister, and Robert Koch. This was an exciting time to be a biologist, and in my opinion these careers are all worthy of blockbuster movies. By the early 1900's an enormous shift had occurred, and the idea that microorganisms could cause disease was well accepted.

Initially the discovery of germ theory was most useful in prevention – sanitation of water and food went a long way toward decreasing outbreaks of previously common diseases. But another huge change occurred in 1928 with the discovery of penicillin. Penicillin was a chemical compound secreted by a type of mold which Alexander Fleming found killed bacteria. By the mid century many other antibiotics were discovered and ultimately used to treat bacterial infections.

Antibiotics are certainly one of the greatest advancements in the history of medicine and have saved countless lives worldwide. However, as our ability to treat them has advanced, bacteria have continued to evolve. By numerous processes some types of bacteria have changed in ways to evade once-effective antibiotics. At the same time, development of new types of antibiotics have slowed to a trickle in the 21st century. Life-threatening bacterial infections for which we have no or limited ability to treat are a real concern of experts in infectious disease.

The challenge of our era, I think, is mitigating the danger posed by antibiotic-resistant infections. The most important step we can all take is to reduce the use of antibacterial medication when it is not necessary. Challenges for our hospital teams include looking critically every day to see if and which antibiotics can safely be stopped in hospitalized patients. Preserving the efficacy of this precious resource will be the work of all of us.

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices internal medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Based on Science, Built on Trust



**Kelly Evans-Hullinger, M.D..**



**The painting of the city's water reservoir continued on Sunday as they tried to finish up before the weather changed. There is still work that needs to be done to the interior of the reservoir.** (Photos by Paul Kosel)



## **Service Notice: Becky Diegel**

Funeral services for Rebecca Diegel, 47, of Groton will be 4:30 p.m., Thursday, October 27th at the Groton High School Gymnasium. Pastor Brandon Dunham will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held at the United Methodist Church on Wednesday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m.

Becky passed away October 22, 2022 at home surrounded by her family after a courageous battle with cancer.

## We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.

### "Equal Protection: Serving Sons and Daughters"



By David Adler

In 1996, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark opinion in *United States v. Virginia* that exalted women's rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment by ending the 157-year-old tradition of all-male education at the Virginia Military Institute, one of the nation's most distinguished military colleges.

Writing for a 7-1 majority, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg described VMI as "incomparable," a school justly known for its "unparalleled record as a leadership training program," dating back to its founding in 1839. The problem was, this "unique program," the only single-sex school among Virginia's public institutions of higher learning, was reserved exclusively to men. Women were not permitted to attend. As such, Justice Ginsburg wrote: "While Virginia serves the state's sons, it makes no provision whatever for her daughters. That is not equal protection."

The Court rejected Virginia's remedy—the creation of the Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership (VWIL) at a private women's college, Mary Baldwin College. That school was dramatically inferior to VMI, as measured by the quality of its faculty, the academic skills of its students and its facilities. Virginia's "remedy" did not even meet the infamous constitutional standard of "separate but equal," set forth in 1896, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which sought to justify the separation of whites from blacks.

The Court did not require VMI to admit all women, of course, just as VMI would not admit all men. What the Court did require, as a matter of the equal protection of the law, was the admission of women capable of performing the same activities expected of men. Justice Ginsburg wrote: "Some women, at least, can meet the physical standards VMI imposes on men, are capable of all the activities required of VMI cadets, prefer VMI's methodology over VWIL's, could be educated using VMI's methodology, and would want to attend VMI if they had the chance."

The question before the Court was whether Virginia could constitutionally deny to women who have the will and capacity to attend VMI. The measuring rod, that is the standard of review set forth by the Court, based on its precedents, as explained by Justice Ginsburg, was this: "Defenders of sex-based government action must demonstrate an 'exceedingly persuasive justification' for that action." To meet this demonstration, the "defender of a gender line in law," Ginsburg emphasized, must show, "at least, that the challenged classification serves important governmental objectives and that any discriminatory means employed are substantially related to the achievement of those objectives."

As Justice Ginsburg stated, the heightened review applied to sex-based classifications" does not make sex a proscribed classification, but it does mark as presumptively invalid" under the Equal Protection Clause, any law or official policy that denies to women, "simply because they are women," the "equal opportunity

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to aspire, achieve, participate in, and contribute to society based upon what they can do.”

Justice Ginsburg’s ringing endorsement of equal protection reflected Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s generosity. When the Court took its vote in conference to determine the outcome of the VMI case, Chief Justice William Rehnquist initially supported the school’s admission policy, which meant that Justice John Paul Stevens, the senior most member of the Court voting in the majority, had the right to choose which Justice would be tasked to write the opinion. Stevens assigned the opinion to O’Connor, but she demurred, saying, “I really think Ruth ought to write this.”

Justice Ginsburg had long since established her credentials as an advocate for gender equality, first as a young law professor, then as an author of scholarly articles and court briefs, then as an attorney appearing before the Supreme Court, and finally as a sitting Justice. She welcomed the opportunity to write the opinion. She demonstrated her appreciation, and scholarly acuity, by citing as precedential authority Justice O’Connor’s 1982 opinion for the Court in *Mississippi University for Women v. Hogan*, in which the first woman appointed to the Court struck down as an equal protection violation the school’s policy of admitting only women to its nursing program. Justice O’Connor, appointed by President Ronald Reagan, had declared that the female only admissions policy was grounded on “archaic and stereotypic notions” of the “proper” roles of men and women in American society.

When Justice Ginsburg read her VMI opinion from the Supreme Court Bench, she glanced at Justice O’Connor, and nodded. To some observers in the courtroom that day, it appeared that the two female Justices made eye contact, held their gaze and exchanged a knowing smile, a clear demonstration of their deep bond and abiding affection, a genuine sisterhood engaged in fighting for the cause of gender equality and equal protection under the law. Justice Ginsburg had said, many times, that the VMI opinion was the most “satisfying” that she had written in promoting civil liberties. In turn, Justice O’Connor told Justice Ginsburg how “proud” she was of her for writing the opinion.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota Newspaper Association and this newspaper.

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The Groton Fire Department was called out to a hay bale fire at the TJ Harder farm early Sunday morning. Approximately 170-180 hay bales were lost in the blaze. There were no injuries and no report of other damage. (Photo by April Abeln)



About half of the hale bales were spread out in this photo. (Photo by April Abeln)



Up front view inside the tractor cab. (Photo by April Abeln)



The Simon brothers- Steven and Shane, came to assist with the fire. (Photo by April Abeln)

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**TJ Harder was using a backhoe to spread out the bales.** (Photo by April Abeln)



**Ryan Kutter is pictured putting water on the fire.** (Photo by April Abeln)



**Adam Harder was using farm equipment to help battle the fire.** (Photo by April Abeln)



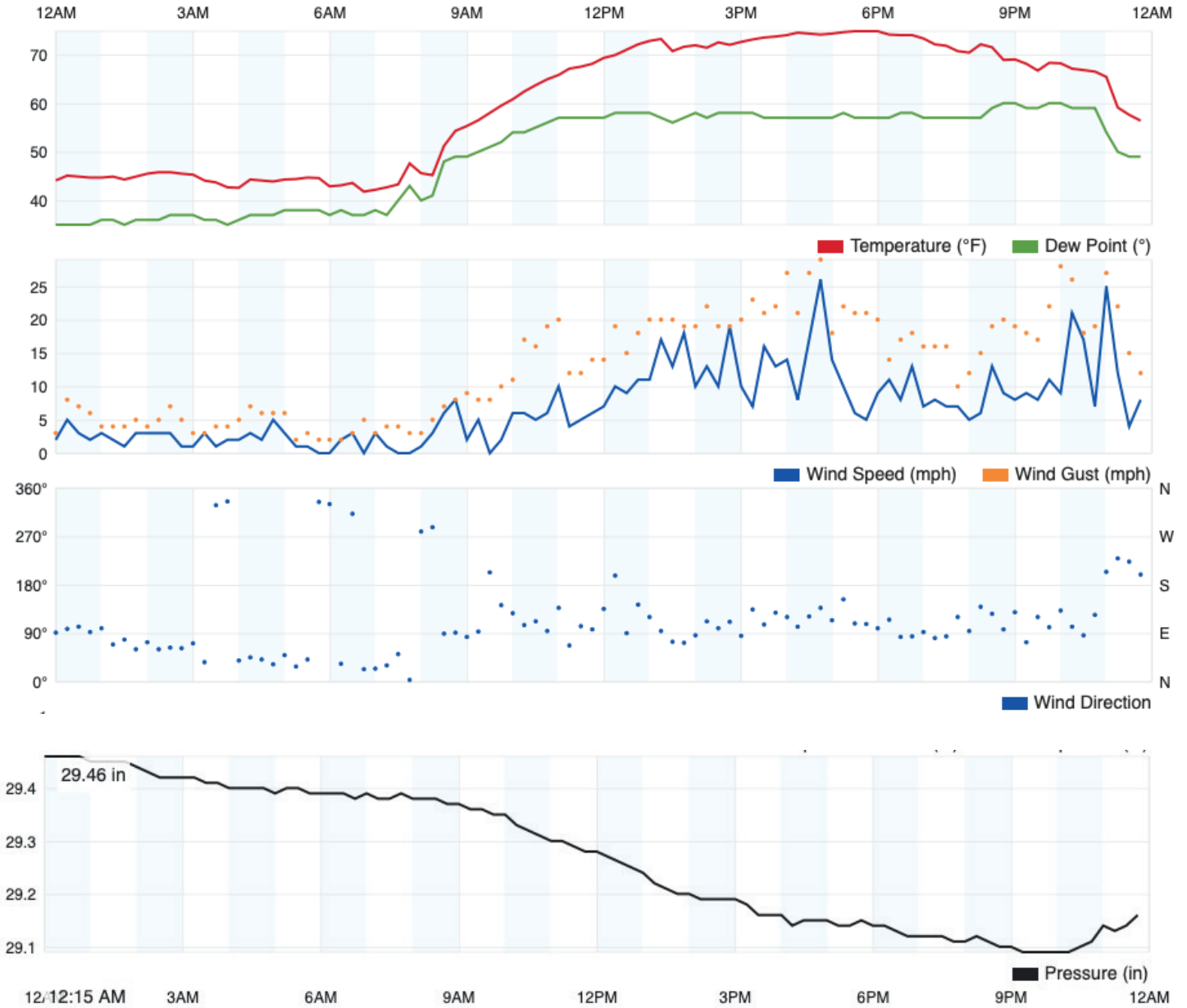
**Michael Dunbar is pictured putting water on the equipment to keep it cool.** (Photo by April Abeln)



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Cloudy and Breezy

High: 48 °F ↓

Tonight



Decreasing Clouds

Low: 26 °F

Tuesday



Sunny then Sunny and Breezy

High: 59 °F

Tuesday Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 25 °F

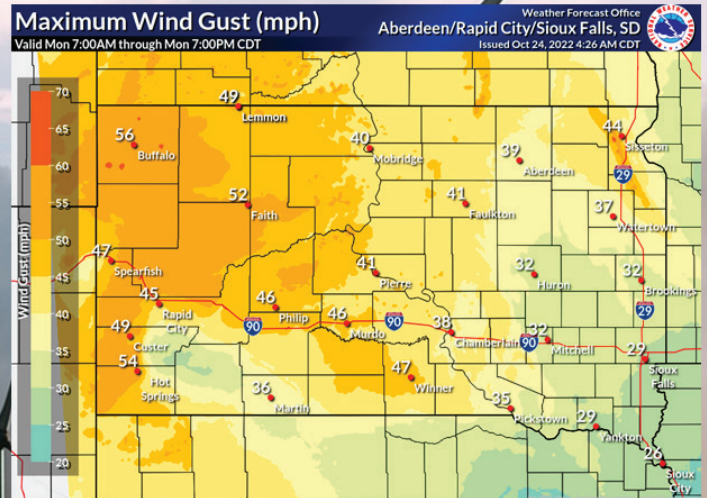
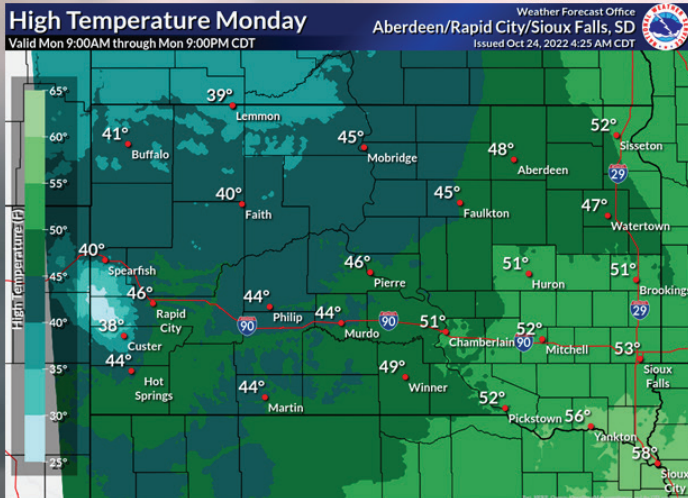
Wednesday



Sunny

High: 56 °F

## Windy and Colder Today



National Weather Service Aberdeen, South Dakota

Updated: 10/24/2022 4:44 AM Central

An area of low pressure moved north across the area last night. This low is centered over eastern North Dakota this morning and will continue moving northward today. Strong west winds on the back side of this system will affect central South Dakota today, with gusts around 50 mph. The winds will diminish this evening. Areas of light rain, and perhaps even some light snow will affect portions of central and north central South Dakota through the morning hours.

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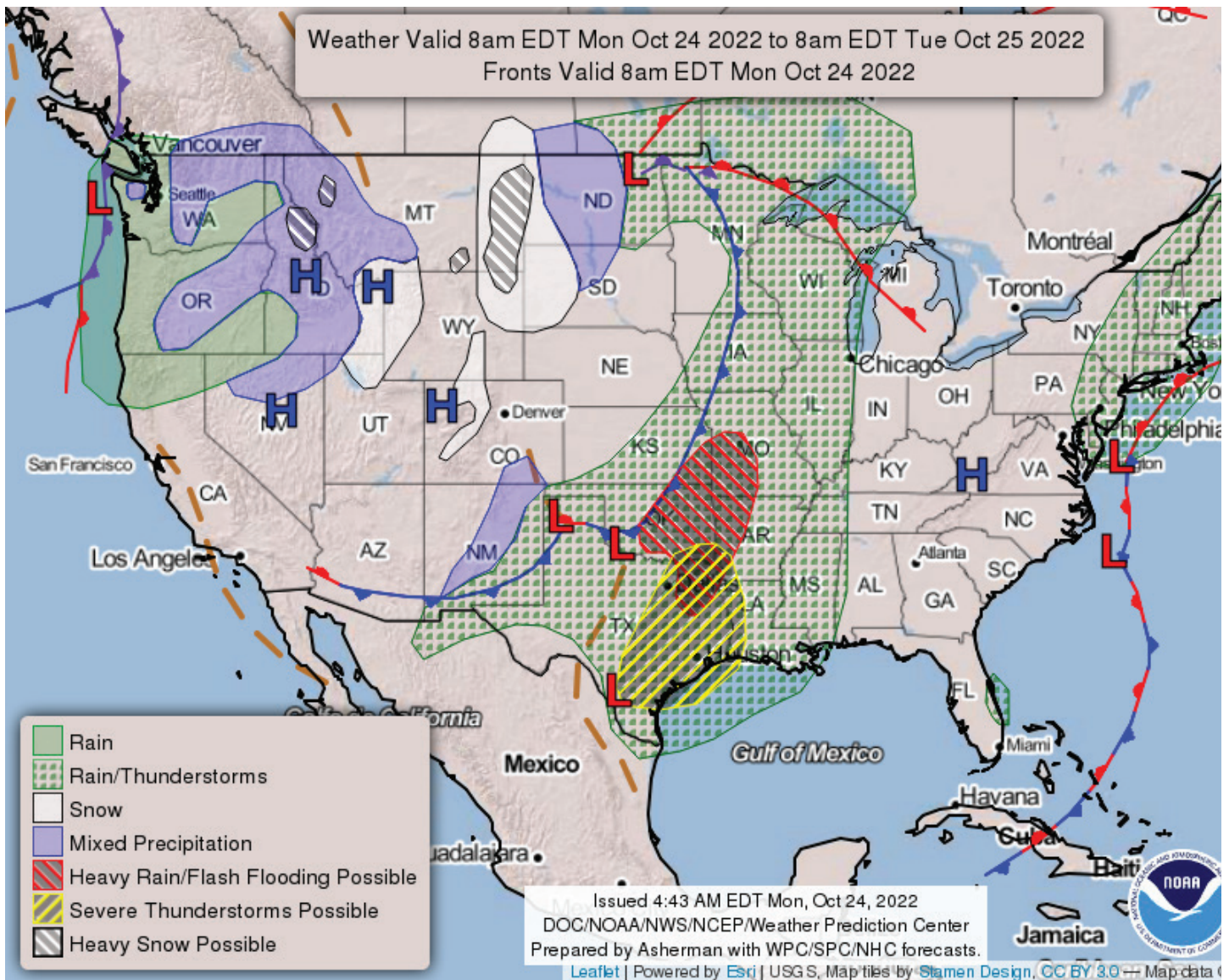
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 75 °F at 5:57 PM**  
**Low Temp: 41 °F at 6:37 AM**  
**Wind: 29 mph at 4:45 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 10 hours, 33 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 83 in 1989  
Record Low: 6 in 1917  
Average High: 55°F  
Average Low: 30°F  
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.77  
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.45  
Average Precip to date: 20.10  
Precip Year to Date: 16.50  
Sunset Tonight: 6:33:30 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:00:58 AM



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## Today in Weather History

October 24, 1989: A storm in the western U.S. produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe, with 21 inches reported at Donner Summit. Thunderstorms in northern California produced 3.36 inches of rain at Redding to establish a 24 hour record for October, and bring their rainfall total for the month to a record 5.11 inches. Chiefly "Indian Summer" type weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s. Record highs included 74 degrees at International Falls, Minnesota and 86 degrees at Yankton, South Dakota. Record highs also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. The record highs were 80 degrees at Mobridge and Sisseton, 83 degrees at Aberdeen, and 84 degrees at Pierre.

1785 - A four day rain swelled the Merrimack River in New Hampshire and Massachusetts to the greatest height of record causing extensive damage to bridges and mills. (David Ludlum)

1878: The Gale of 1878 was an intense Category 2 hurricane that was active between October 18 and October 25. It caused extensive damage from Cuba to New England. Believed to be the strongest storm to hit the Washington - Baltimore region since hurricane records began in 1851.

1937 - A snow squall in Buffalo NY tied up traffic in six inches of slush. (David Ludlum)

1947 - The Bar Harbor holocaust occurred in Maine when forest fires consumed homes and a medical research institute. The fires claimed 17 lives, and caused thirty million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1951 - Sacramento, CA, reported a barometric pressure of 29.42 inches, to establish a record for October. (The Weather Channel)

1969 - Unseasonably cold air gripped the northeastern U.S. Lows of 10 degrees at Concord, NH, and 6 degrees at Albany NY established October records. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Snow fell across northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin overnight, with five inches reported at Poplar Lake MN and Gunflint Trail MN. Thunderstorm rains caused flash flooding in south central Arizona, with street flooding reported around Las Vegas NV. Strong northwesterly winds gusting to 50 mph downed some trees and power lines in western Pennsylvania and the northern panhandle of West Virginia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds circulating around a deep low pressure centered produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region, with six inches reported at Ironwood MI. Wind gusts to 80 mph were reported at State College PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A storm in the western U.S. produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe, with 21 inches reported at Donner Summit. Thunderstorms in northern California produced 3.36 inches of rain at Redding to establish a 24 hour record for October, and bring their rainfall total for the month to a record 5.11 inches. Chiefly "Indian Summer" type weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s. Record highs included 74 degrees at International Falls MN, and 86 degrees at Yankton SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 - Hurricane Wilma reached the U.S. coastline near Everglades City in Florida with maximum sustained winds near 120 mph. The hurricane accelerated across south Florida and the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area, exiting the coast later the same day. There were 10 fatalities in Florida, and nearly 6 million people lost power, the most widespread power outage in Florida history. Preliminary estimates of insured losses in Florida were over \$6 billion, while uninsured losses were over \$12 billion.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### TRUST AND OBEY

Knowing who or what to trust may be difficult. It may be the result of having someone disappoint us or take advantage of us. None the less, trust once lost, is often costly and difficult to regain.

Years ago a mother and father sat in my office and asked, "Dr. Guido, in light of what our son has done, will we ever be able to trust him again? He has disappointed us time and time again. He has lied to us and he has stolen from us and he has betrayed us. How can we ever believe what he says is true?"

My heart ached as they looked at me. They loved their son dearly. They made many sacrifices on his behalf. They sent him to the best schools and took him to church when he was young. But a gradual change came over him, and they did not know what to do.

After thinking a few moments I replied, "Yes, once we lose trust in someone we love dearly, it causes problems that are difficult to overcome. But, there seems to be one principle that might help you. It begins with keeping our promises. If I say and do it, that's me keeping my word, and you can begin to trust me. If I say it and don't do it, I've not honored my word, and old doubts will return. The past will invade our minds and hearts, and trust will become more difficult than ever. Keeping my word is the only reason you would have to trust me."

"Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." We know that we can trust the Lord because He has always honored His word. If He said it, He did it - time and time again!

Prayer: How blest we are, Father, to know Your Word and place our trust in You. Your record of doing what You said You would do is revealed in Your Word. Thank You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers and blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD. Proverbs 16:20



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  
11/13/2022: Snow Queen Contest  
11/19/2022: 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  
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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

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- 9 Months ..... \$42.60
- 12 Months ..... \$53.25

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## News from the Associated Press

### **Trial over Georgia's restrictive abortion law to begin**

ATLANTA (AP) — A trial to determine whether Georgia can continue to ban abortion as early as six weeks into a pregnancy is set to begin in an Atlanta courtroom Monday.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney has scheduled two days of testimony in a lawsuit that seeks to strike down the law on multiple grounds, including that it violates the Georgia Constitution's right to privacy and liberty by "forcing pregnancy and childbirth upon countless Georgians."

The state attorney general's office responded in a court filing that Georgia's privacy protections do not extend to abortion because it affects another "human life."

Georgia's law bans most abortions once a "detectable human heartbeat" is present. Cardiac activity can be detected by ultrasound in cells within an embryo that will eventually become the heart as early as six weeks into a pregnancy. That means most abortions in Georgia are effectively banned at a point before many women know they are pregnant.

The doctors and advocacy groups that filed the lawsuit before McBurney in July also argue the law was invalid from the start because it violated the U.S. Constitution and U.S. Supreme Court precedent when it was enacted.

Georgia's law was passed by state lawmakers and signed by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp in 2019 but it had been blocked from taking effect until the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which had protected the right to an abortion for nearly 50 years. The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals allowed Georgia to begin enforcing its abortion law just over three weeks after the high court's decision in June.

The law includes exceptions for rape and incest, as long as a police report is filed, and allows for later abortions when the mother's life is at risk or a serious medical condition renders a fetus unviable.

The state has argued that the *Roe* decision itself was wrong and the Supreme Court ruling wiped it out of existence.

In August, McBurney rejected a request by the plaintiffs to immediately block the abortion law while the lawsuit was pending, though he stressed that decision did not touch on the merits of the case. Earlier this month, he denied a request by state officials to postpone the trial, which he will decide, not a jury.

### **Rishi Sunak: UK's ex-Treasury chief gets 2nd shot at PM job**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Rishi Sunak ran for Britain's top job and lost. Now he has another shot — and the chance to say "I told you so."

The former U.K. Treasury chief was runner-up to Liz Truss in the contest to replace the scandal-plagued Boris Johnson as Conservative Party leader and prime minister. But Truss quit after a turbulent 45-day term, and Johnson has abandoned a comeback attempt, leaving Sunak a strong favorite to finally assume the office he missed out on less than two months ago.

Victory in the Conservative leadership contest would be vindication for Sunak, who warned in the last campaign that Truss' tax-cutting economic plans were reckless and would cause havoc. And so they did.

Truss resigned last week after her package of tax cuts spooked financial markets, hammered the value of the pound and obliterated her authority.

If he wins, he will be Britain's first nonwhite leader and the first Hindu to take the top job. At 42, he'll also be the youngest prime minister in more than 200 years, a political prodigy whose youthful looks, sharp suits, and smooth, confident manner saw him dubbed "Disly Rishi" by the British media.

To win, Sunak still must overcome allegations by opponents that he was a turncoat for quitting Johnson's government as it foundered amid ethics scandals. The near-simultaneous resignations of Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid on July 5 set off a chain reaction. Within 48 hours, some 50 members of the government had quit, and Johnson was forced to step down.



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Sunak painted it as a matter of principle, saying he wanted to repair the “breakdown of trust” in politics. He also accused Truss of offering “fairy tales” by promising immediate tax cuts when he felt curbing soaring inflation was a bigger priority.

“I would rather lose having fought for the things that I passionately believe are right for our country, and being true to my values, than win on a false promise,” Sunak said in a BBC interview.

Sunak was born in 1980 in Southampton on England’s south coast to parents of Indian descent who were both born in East Africa. He grew up in a middle-class family, his father a family doctor and his mother a pharmacist, and says he inherited their hard-working ethos.

“I grew up working in the shop, delivering medicines,” he said during the campaign. “I worked as a waiter at the Indian restaurant down the street.”

He has described how his parents saved to send him to Winchester College, one of Britain’s toniest and most expensive boarding schools.

There he mingled with the elite. Rivals recently dug up a clip from a 2001 television documentary about the class system in which the 21-year-old Sunak said he had “friends who are aristocrats, I have friends who are upper class, I have friends who are, you know, working class — well, not working class.”

After high school, Sunak studied politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford University — the degree of choice for future prime ministers — then got an MBA at Stanford University.

He worked for the investment bank Goldman Sachs as a hedge fund manager and lived in the U.S., where he met his wife, Akshata Murty. The couple has two daughters.

Returning to Britain, Sunak was elected to Parliament for the safe Tory seat of Richmond in Yorkshire in 2015. In Britain’s 2016 Brexit referendum, he supported leaving the European Union — a risky career move, since it went against the Conservative government’s policy.

When “leave” unexpectedly won, Sunak’s career took off. He served in several junior ministerial posts before being appointed chancellor of the exchequer — head of the Treasury — by Johnson in February 2020, just before the pandemic hit.

An instinctively low-tax, small state politician who idolizes former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, he nonetheless forked out billions in government money to keep people and businesses afloat during the pandemic. His furlough program, which paid the salaries of millions of workers when they were temporarily laid off, made him the most popular member of the government — a status he burnished with slick social media messages that rivals and critics said stressed his own brand more than the government’s.

But Sunak has had his wobbles over the years. Critics said a campaign to get people to eat in restaurants after lockdown restrictions were eased in the summer of 2020 contributed to another wave of COVID-19.

Others have said Sunak’s family’s vast wealth and Silicon Valley past put him out of touch with the struggles of ordinary people.

He also faced questions about his finances and those of his wife. Murty is the daughter of the billionaire founder of Indian tech giant Infosys, and the couple is worth 730 million pounds (\$877 million), according to the Sunday Times Rich List.

In April 2022, it emerged that Murty did not pay U.K. tax on her overseas income. The practice was legal, but it looked bad at a time when Sunak was raising taxes for millions of Britons. Sunak also was criticized for holding on to his American green card, which signifies an intent to settle in the U.S., for two years after he became Britain’s finance minister.

Sunak was cleared of wrongdoing, but the revelations still hurt. He was fined by police, along with Johnson and dozens of others, for attending a party in the prime minister’s office in 2020 that broke coronavirus lockdown rules. Outrage over those parties at a time when Britons were forced to stay home contributed to Johnson’s downfall. Sunak has said he attended inadvertently and briefly.

In his first leadership campaign, he depicted himself as the candidate of grown-up decisions and fiscal probity, criticizing Truss’ plans to lower taxes and increase borrowing, and vowing to get inflation under control.

That’s now a harder job than ever.

## Test scores show historic COVID setbacks for kids across US

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The COVID-19 pandemic spared no state or region as it caused historic learning setbacks for America's children, erasing decades of academic progress and widening racial disparities, according to results of a national test that provide the sharpest look yet at the scale of the crisis.

Across the country, math scores saw their largest decreases ever. Reading scores dropped to 1992 levels. Nearly four in 10 eighth graders failed to grasp basic math concepts. Not a single state saw a notable improvement in their average test scores, with some simply treading water at best.

Those are the findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress — known as the "nation's report card" — which tested hundreds of thousands of fourth and eighth graders across the country this year. It was the first time the test had been given since 2019, and it's seen as the first nationally representative study of the pandemic's impact on learning.

"It is a serious wakeup call for us all," Peggy Carr, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, a branch of the Education Department, said in an interview. "In NAEP, when we experience a 1- or 2-point decline, we're talking about it as a significant impact on a student's achievement. In math, we experienced an 8-point decline — historic for this assessment."

Researchers usually think of a 10-point gain or drop as equivalent to roughly a year of learning.

It's no surprise that children are behind. The pandemic upended every facet of life and left millions learning from home for months or more. The results released Monday reveal the depth of those setbacks, and the size of the challenge facing schools as they help students catch up.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said it's a sign that schools need to redouble their efforts, using billions of dollars that Congress gave schools to help students recover.

"Let me be very clear: these results are not acceptable," Cardona said.

The NAEP test is typically given every two years. It was taken between January and March by a sample of students in every state, along with 26 of the nation's largest school districts. Scores had been stalling even before the pandemic, but the new results show decreases on a scale not seen before.

In both math and reading, students scored lower than those tested in 2019. But while reading scores dipped, math scores plummeted by the largest margins in the history of the NAEP test, which began in 1969.

Math scores were worst among eighth graders, with 38% earning scores deemed "below basic" — a cutoff that measures, for example, whether students can find the third angle of a triangle if they're given the other two. That's worse than 2019, when 31% of eighth graders scored below that level.

No part of the country was exempt. Every region saw test scores slide, and every state saw declines in at least one subject.

Several major districts saw test scores fall by more than 10 points. Cleveland saw the largest single drop, falling 16 points in fourth-grade reading, along with a 15-point decline in fourth-grade math. Baltimore and Tennessee's Shelby County also saw precipitous declines.

"This is more confirmation that the pandemic hit us really hard," said Eric Gordon, chief executive for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. To help students recover, the school system has beefed up summer school and added after-school tutoring.

"I'm not concerned that they can't or won't recover," Gordon said. "I'm concerned that the country won't stay focused on getting kids caught up."

The results show a reversal of progress on math scores, which had made big gains since the 1990s. Reading, by contrast, had changed little in recent decades, so even this year's relatively small decreases put the averages back to where they were in 1992.

Most concerning, however, are the gaps between students.

Confirming what many had feared, racial inequities appear to have widened during the pandemic. In fourth grade, Black and Hispanic students saw bigger decreases than white students, widening gaps that have persisted for decades.

Inequities were also reflected in a growing gap between higher and lower performing students. In math

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and reading, scores fell most sharply among the lowest performing students, creating a widening chasm between struggling students and the rest of their peers.

Surveys done as part of this year's test illustrate the divide.

When schools shifted to remote learning, higher performing students were far more likely to have reliable access to quiet spaces, computers and help from their teachers, the survey found.

The results make clear that schools must address the "long-standing and systemic shortcomings of our education system," said Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of Los Angeles schools and a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets the policies for the test.

"While the pandemic was a blow to schools and communities, we cannot use it as an excuse," he said. "We have to stay committed to high standards and expectations and help every child succeed."

Other recent studies have found that students who spent longer periods learning online suffered greater setbacks. But the NAEP results show no clear connection. Areas that returned to the classroom quickly still saw significant declines, and cities — which were more likely to stay remote longer — actually saw milder decreases than suburban districts, according to the results.

Los Angeles can claim one of the few bright spots in the results. The nation's second-largest school district saw eighth-grade reading scores increase by 9 points, the only significant uptick in any district. For other districts, it was a feat just to hold even, as achieved by Dallas and Florida's Hillsborough County.

Testing critics caution against putting too much stock in exams like NAEP, but there's no doubt that the skills it aims to measure are critical. Students who take longer to master reading are more likely to drop out and end up in the criminal justice system, research has found. And eighth grade is seen as a pivotal time to develop skills for math, science and technology careers.

For Carr, the results raise new questions about what will happen to students who appear to be far behind in attaining those skills.

"We want our students to be prepared globally for STEM careers, science and technology and engineering," she said. "This puts all of that at risk. We have to do a reset. This is a very serious issue, and it's not going to go away on its own."

## **COP27's Coke sponsorship leaves bad taste with green groups**

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — This year's United Nations climate summit is brought to you by Coke.

Soft drink giant Coca-Cola Co.'s sponsorship of the flagship U.N. climate conference, known as COP27, sparked an online backlash and highlighted broader concerns about corporate lobbying and influence.

The COP27 negotiations aimed at limiting global temperature increases are set to kick off next month in the Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh. The Egyptian organizers cited Coca-Cola's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and key focus on climate when they announced the sponsorship deal in September, which triggered immediate outrage on social media.

Activists slammed the company for its outsized role contributing to plastic pollution and pointed to the deal as an example of corporate "greenwash" — exaggerating climate credentials to mask polluting behaviors. An online petition calling for Coke to be removed as a sponsor has garnered more than 228,000 signatures, while hundreds of civil society groups signed an open letter demanding polluting companies be banned from bankrolling or being involved in climate talks.

Coca-Cola said its participation underscores its ambitious plans to cut its emissions and clean up plastic ocean trash.

Critics say corporate involvement goes against the spirit of the meetings, where tens of thousands of delegates from around the world gather to hammer out global agreements on combating climate change to stop the earth from warming to dangerous levels. This year, the focus is on how to implement promises made at previous conferences, according to the Egyptian presidency.

At COP meetings, "the corporate presence is huge, of course, and it's a slick marketing campaign for them," said Bobby Banerjee, a management professor at City University of London's Bayes Business School,

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who has attended three times since 2011.

Over the years, the meetings have evolved to resemble trade fairs, with big corporations, startups and industry groups setting up stalls and pavilions on the sidelines to lobby and schmooze — underscoring how a growing number of companies want to engage with the event, sensing commercial opportunities as climate change becomes a bigger global priority.

IBM, Microsoft, Boston Consulting Group and Vodafone also have signed up as sponsors or partners but have drawn less flak for their participation than Coca-Cola.

The United Nations Climate Change press office referred media inquiries to the organizers, saying it was a matter between Egypt and the company. The Egyptian presidency didn't respond to email requests for comment. U.N. Climate Change's website says it "seeks to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships with non-Party stakeholders."

Georgia Elliott-Smith, a sustainability consultant and environmental activist who set up the online petition, said she's calling on the U.N. "to stop accepting corporate sponsorship for these events, which simply isn't necessary, and stop enabling these major polluters to greenwash their brands, piggybacking on these really critical climate talks."

Environmental groups slammed the decision to let Coca-Cola be a sponsor, saying it's one of the world's biggest plastic producers and top polluters. They say manufacturing plastic with petroleum emits carbon dioxide and many of the single-use bottles are sold in countries with low recycling rates, where they either end up littering oceans or are incinerated, adding more carbon emissions to the atmosphere.

In a statement, Coca-Cola said it shares "the goal of eliminating waste from the ocean" and appreciates "efforts to raise awareness about this challenge." Packaging accounts for about a third of Coke's carbon footprint, and the company said it has "ambitious goals," including helping collect a bottle or can for every one it sells, regardless of maker, by 2030.

Coca-Cola said it will partner with other businesses, civil society organizations and governments "to support cooperative action" on plastic waste and noted that it signed joint statements in 2020 and 2022 urging U.N. member states to adopt a global treaty to tackle the problem "through a holistic, circular economy approach."

"Our support for COP27 is in line with our science-based target to reduce absolute carbon emissions 25% by 2030, and our ambition for net zero carbon emissions by 2050," the company said by email.

Experts say sponsorships overshadow a bigger problem behind the scenes: fossil fuel companies lobbying and influencing the talks in backroom negotiations.

"The real deals are handled indoors, you know, in closed rooms," said Banerjee, the management professor. At the first one he attended — COP17 in Durban, South Africa, in 2011 — he tried to get into a session on carbon emissions in the mining industry, a topic he was researching.

"But guess what? They turned me away, and who walks into the room to discuss, to develop global climate policy? CEOs of Rio Tinto, Shell, BP, followed by the ministers," Banerjee said, adding that a Greenpeace member behind him was also blocked. "This group of people — mining companies and politicians — are deciding on carbon emissions."

Elliott-Smith, the environmental activist, attended last year's COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, as a legal observer to the negotiations. While she's not naive about corporate-political lobbying, she was "really shocked at the amount of corporates attending the conference, (and) of the open participation between CEOs and climate negotiating delegations in these conversations."

In Glasgow, retailers, tech companies and consumer goods brands were signed up as partners, but fossil fuel companies were reportedly banned by the British organizers. Still, more than 500 lobbyists linked to the industry attended, according to researchers from a group of NGOs who combed through the official accreditation list.

This year, oil and gas companies might feel more welcome because Egypt is expected to spotlight the region and attract a big contingent from Middle Eastern and North African countries, whose economies and government revenue depend on pumping oil and gas.

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Egypt historically sided with developing countries resisting pressure to cut emissions further, which say they shouldn't have to pay the price for rich countries' historical carbon dioxide emissions.

Ahead of the meeting, U.N. human rights experts and international rights groups criticized the Egyptian government's human rights track record, accusing authorities of covering up a decade of violations, including a clampdown on dissent, mass incarcerations and rollback of personal freedoms, in an attempt to burnish its international image. The country's foreign minister told The Associated Press earlier this year that there would be space for protests.

Against this backdrop, "it will be that much easier to censor, prohibit or silence attempts by civil society seeking to hold the process accountable to delivering the needed outcomes," said Rachel Rose Jackson, director of climate research and policy at watchdog group Corporate Accountability. "It will also make the polluter PR and greenwashing surrounding the talks that much more effective."

## World faces tension with China under Xi Jinping's third term

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The world faces the prospect of more tension with China over trade, security and human rights after Xi Jinping, the country's most powerful leader in decades, awarded himself another term as leader of the ruling Communist Party.

Xi has tightened control at home and is trying to use China's economic heft to increase its influence abroad. Washington accused Beijing this month of trying to undermine U.S. alliances, global security and economic rules. Activists say Xi's government wants to deflect criticism of abuses by changing the U.N.'s definition of human rights.

Xi says "the world system is broken and China has answers," said William Callahan of the London School of Economics. "More and more, Xi Jinping is talking about the Chinese style as a universal model of the world order, which goes back to a Cold War kind of conflict."

At a Communist Party congress that wrapped up Saturday, Xi gave no sign of plans to change the severe "zero-COVID" strategy that has frustrated China's public and disrupted business and trade. He called for more self-reliance in technology, faster military development and protection of Beijing's "core interests" abroad. He announced no changes in policies that have strained relations with Washington and Asian neighbors.

On Sunday, Xi was awarded a third five-year term as party leader in a break with tradition that called for him to step down after 10 years. The party named a seven-member ruling Standing Committee of Xi and his allies, which gives him a free hand to carry out his plans.

POLITICS: Xi calls for the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" based on reviving the Communist Party's role as the economic, social and cultural leader in a throwback to what he sees as a golden age after the 1949 revolution. "Xi's embrace of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy should put to rest any wishful thinking that Xi's China might peacefully liberalize its politics and economy," Kevin Rudd, president of the Asia Society and a former Australian prime minister, wrote in Foreign Affairs. Xi's government has jailed dissidents, stepped up internet censorship and crushed a pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. Its "social credit" initiative tracks the public and punishes infractions from fraud to littering. "Zero COVID," which tracks individuals using smartphone apps and has confined tens of millions to their homes, "is indicative of how Xi Jinping wants Chinese society to work," said Callahan. "It is to be under constant surveillance and control," he said. "It has become much more authoritarian and at times totalitarian."

ECONOMY: By 2035, the Communist Party wants economic output per person to match a "medium-level developed country," Xi said in a report to the congress. That suggests doubling output from 2020 levels, according to Larry Hu and Yuxiao Zhang of Macquarie, an Australian financial services group. Meanwhile, however, the ruling party is building up subsidy-devouring state industry and tightening control over entrepreneurs who generate wealth and jobs. That prompts warnings that economic growth that sank to 2.2% over a year earlier in the first half of 2022 will suffer. The economy faces challenges from tension with Washington, curbs on China's access to Western technology, an aging population and a slump in its

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vast real estate industry. "If top leaders take the target seriously, they might have to adopt a more pro-growth policy stance," Hu and Zhang said in a report. Analysts are watching for details after the party's Central Economic Work Conference in early December.

**TECHNOLOGY:** Xi promised to "build China's self-reliance and strength in science and technology." He gave no details, but earlier efforts to reduce reliance on the West and Japan by creating Chinese sources of renewable energy, electric vehicle, computer and other technologies have prompted complaints that Beijing violates its free-trade commitments by shielding its companies from competition. American officials worry Chinese competition might erode U.S. industrial leadership. China faces growing limits on access to Western technology, especially from the United States, which warns it might be used to make weapons. China is building its own chip industry, but analysts say it is generations behind global leaders. Beijing doesn't appear to be trying to isolate China but wants to reduce strategic unease by catching up with other countries, said Alicia Garcia Herrero of Natixis, a French investment bank. She said that will involve increased state-led investment. "That is going to create some tension," she said.

**SECURITY:** Xi says "external and internal security" are the "bedrock of national rejuvenation." In a speech that used the word security 26 times, he said Beijing will "work faster" to modernize the party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, and "enhance the military's strategic capabilities." China already has the world's second-highest military spending after the United States and is trying to extend its reach by developing ballistic missiles, submarines and other technologies. Xi refused to renounce the use of force to unite Taiwan with the mainland. Xi also called for improved security for supplies of energy, food and industrial goods. The party also sees "ideological security" as a priority, which is leading to more internet censorship.

**FOREIGN RELATIONS:** Beijing increasingly uses its economic muscle as the biggest trading partner for all of its neighbors as leverage in politics and security. China blocked imports of Australian wine, meat and other goods after its government called for an investigation into the origins of COVID-19. Beijing tried unsuccessfully to persuade 10 Pacific island governments to sign a security pact this year, but is making inroads with some. Police officers from the Solomon Islands are being trained in China. Beijing wants a "China-centered security system," said Callahan. "Beijing wants to be a world leader, and part of that, according to Beijing, is to be a leader in the hard politics of global security." Chinese diplomats, in a trend dubbed "wolf warrior diplomacy," are more confrontational and sometimes violent. This month, Chinese diplomats in Manchester, England, beat a protester after dragging him onto the grounds of their consulate. Diplomats have "carried forward the fighting spirit," said a deputy foreign minister, Ma Zhaoxu. He said the diplomatic corps will "improve its fighting skills and always stand at the forefront of safeguarding national interests and national dignity."

**COVID-19:** Xi gave no indication China's "zero-COVID" strategy might ease despite public frustration with its costs. While other countries have eased travel curbs, China is sticking to a strategy that has kept infection rates low but shut down major cities. The party newspaper People's Daily tried to dispel expectations of a relaxation once the congress ended. The strategy "must be sustained," it argued. Public health experts say more of the elderly need to be vaccinated before the ruling party can relax the COVID-19 restrictions. That might take months. Forecasters say that means it might be the end of 2023 before controls might ease.

**CLIMATE:** Xi promised a "proactive and steady" approach to reducing climate-changing carbon emissions, but at the same time the ruling party is increasing coal production to avert a repeat of last year's power shortages and blackouts. A Cabinet official said coal output will rise to 4.6 billion tons in 2025. That would be 12% more than 2021. Xi said in a 2020 speech to the United Nations that China's emissions should peak in 2030 but didn't say at what level. China already emits more carbon than the United States and other developed economies combined, according to Rhodium Group. China is building more coal-fired power plants, which activists warn might cause higher emissions. Meanwhile, Beijing suspended a climate dialogue with Washington in August in retaliation for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to rival Taiwan.

**Next UK prime minister: Sunak closes in after Johnson balks**

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By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Former Treasury chief Rishi Sunak is strong favorite to become Britain's next prime minister within days — or even hours — after former leader Boris Johnson dropped out of the Conservative Party leadership contest.

After the resignation of Liz Truss last week, the governing party is choosing Britain's third prime minister this year at a time of political turmoil and severe economic challenges.

Sunak, 42, is the only candidate with confirmed support from more than 100 lawmakers, the number needed to run in the election. House of Commons Leader Penny Mordaunt has far fewer expressions of support, but is aiming to reach the threshold by the time nominations close at 2 p.m.

If Mordaunt does not reach 100 nominations, Sunak will win by acclamation and could move into 10 Downing St. by Monday evening.

If both make the ballot, the 357 Conservative lawmakers will hold an indicative vote on Monday to show their preference. If neither subsequently drops out, the choice will go to the 172,000 party members around the country, with a result announced Friday.

Mordaunt will come under intense pressure to step aside and not force a membership vote if Sunak is the strong favorite among lawmakers.

Home Secretary Grant Shapps, a Sunak supporter, said the former Treasury chief did not think he had the contest "in the bag."

"He's speaking to colleagues this morning, he's working very hard to attract those supporters who were perhaps with Boris Johnson previously," Shapps said. "But, look, I'll leave it to Penny, she's a terrific colleague. Let's see what happens."

Sunak, who was runner-up to Truss in this summer's Tory leadership race to replace Johnson, has promised "integrity, professionalism and accountability" if he forms a government — a contrast to the chaos that consumed the past two prime ministers.

Johnson dramatically quit the race on Sunday night, ending a short-lived, high-profile attempt to return to the prime minister's job he was ousted from little more than three months ago amid ethics scandals.

Johnson spent the weekend trying to gain support from fellow Conservative lawmakers after flying back from a Caribbean vacation. Late Sunday he said he had amassed the backing of 102 colleagues. But he was far behind Sunak in support, and said he had concluded that "you can't govern effectively unless you have a united party in Parliament."

The prospect of a return by Johnson had thrown the already divided Conservative Party into further turmoil. He led the party to a thumping election victory in 2019, but his premiership was clouded by scandals over money and ethics that eventually became too much for the party to bear.

In his Sunday statement, Johnson insisted he was "well placed to deliver a Conservative victory" in the next national election, due by 2024. And he said that he likely would have won a ballot of Conservative Party members against either of his rivals.

"But in the course of the last days I have sadly come to the conclusion that this would simply not be the right thing to do," he said.

He hinted he might be back, however, saying: "I believe I have much to offer but I am afraid that this is simply not the right time."

Truss quit Thursday after a turbulent 45 days in office, conceding that she could not deliver on her botched tax-cutting economic package, which she was forced to abandon after it sparked fury within her party and weeks of turmoil in financial markets.

Sunak, who was Treasury chief from 2020 until this summer, steered Britain's slumping economy through the coronavirus pandemic. He quit in July in protest at Johnson's leadership.

The Conservative Party turmoil is fueling demands for a national election. Under Britain's parliamentary system, there does not need to be one until the end of 2024, though the government has the power to call one sooner.

Currently that looks unlikely. Opinion polls say an election would spell disaster for the Conservatives, with the left-of-center Labour Party winning a large majority.

## Judges, ministers, now army chief: Settlers rise in Israel

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military has long had a cozy relationship with Jewish settlers in the West Bank. Those ties are about to deepen.

For the first time, a settler will serve as chief of staff of Israel's military, becoming the enforcer of Israel's open-ended occupation of the West Bank, now in its 56th year.

Maj. Gen. Herzi Halevi's nomination was approved on Sunday and he is expected to begin his three-year term on Jan. 17.

Halevi's rise caps the decades-long transformation of the settler movement from a small group of religious ideologues to a diverse and influential force at the heart of the Israeli mainstream whose members have reached the highest ranks of government and other key institutions.

Critics say the settlers' outsized political influence imperils any hope for the creation of an independent Palestinian state and endangers the country's future as a democracy. They say Halevi's appointment lays bare just how interconnected settlers and the military truly are.

"It isn't surprising that we've come to a point where the chief of staff is a settler too," said Shabtay Bendet of the anti-settlement watchdog group Peace Now.

Others say Halevi, currently deputy chief of staff, has had a distinguished military career and his place of residence won't affect his decision-making. He served as head of the elite Sayeret Matkal unit, as well as military intelligence and led the Southern Command, from where he oversaw operations in the Gaza Strip.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz praised Halevi as an ethical officer. "I have no doubt that he is the right man to head the military," Gantz said upon nominating him.

The military declined to make Halevi available for an interview.

Born just months after the 1967 Mideast war, when Israel captured the West Bank, and raised in Jerusalem, Halevi is a descendant of a rabbi seen as the father of the modern settler movement.

Halevi lives in Kfar HaOranim, a settlement that abuts the invisible line between Israel and the West Bank.

Many of those moving to Kfar HaOranim might have been drawn by cheaper housing prices in a central location between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, rather than a radical ideology. Yet choosing to live in a settlement often indicates even some nationalist political inclination. Many Israelis are still hesitant to visit parts of the West Bank.

A search through some of Halevi's past speeches and public statements did not reveal his opinion on the Jewish settlement enterprise.

The settler movement embraced the incoming army chief.

"We are proud that the new chief of staff is a resident," said Israel Ganz, the head of the regional settlement council that includes Kfar HaOranim. He said he expects any chief of staff to operate with a belief in the "righteousness" of Jewish settlement and "deepening the roots" of Jewish settlers.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of their hoped-for state, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

Since 1967, the settler population has grown to some 500,000 people, who live in more than 130 settlements and outposts in the West Bank. Nearly 3 million Palestinians live in the West Bank, most of them in semi-autonomous population centers administered by the Palestinian Authority.

Much of the international community considers the settlements illegitimate and obstacles to peace, while Israel views the territory as its biblical heartland and critical to security.

A two-tier system is in place in the West Bank, with settlers enjoying the same rights as citizens in Israel, while Palestinians are subject to military rule. The Palestinian Authority administers parts of the West Bank but it is hobbled in many aspects by the occupation.

For Palestinians, soldiers are the most visible enforcers of the occupation. Under international law an occupying military is meant to protect civilians under its rule, but Palestinians typically view soldiers as



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hostile to them.

Soldiers man the checkpoints that Palestinians must cross through to enter Israel or the ones that are set up between their cities, disrupting their journey. Soldiers often conduct arrest raids in Palestinian autonomous areas, in search of suspected militants. Palestinians accused of violence are tried, and almost always convicted, in military courts. Israel sees those measures as essential to its security.

Critics also say the military turns a blind eye to settler violence against Palestinians, which has been intensifying in recent months, including rampages that have also targeted soldiers. In one case last week a settlement guard on a Defense Ministry salary was seen joining forces with a settler in a clash with Palestinians. The military says troops work to prevent breaking of the law by both Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank.

For settlers, the military buttresses their presence in the West Bank. Soldiers protect settlements. The military escorts settlers when they want to visit sensitive sites or hold a march or protest. A defense body headed by a general is in charge of approving settler housing, and some of the military's top commanders are settlers.

Oded Revivi, mayor of the Efrat settlement, said he didn't believe Halevi's place of residence would influence the way he ran the military in the West Bank, which he said is dictated by policies made by elected officials.

"He was chosen because of his career, because of his achievements during his career," he said. "It has absolutely nothing to do with where he lives."

Over the years, settlers reached key positions in Israeli institutions.

The country's current roster of Supreme Court judges includes at least two settlers. Settler politicians have long served as Cabinet ministers, including Avigdor Lieberman, who has been Israel's foreign, defense and finance minister. Settlers have held key positions in cultural institutions and in bodies that allocate land. Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett was previously a settler leader, though he did not live in a settlement.

That integration, part of a years-long concerted effort by settlers, is hardly questioned by Israelis.

Many Israelis give little thought to the occupation, and news media often ignore the approval of new settler housing, unless it draws international rebuke. And pushback against the settler narrative is often officially silenced. Schools in liberal Tel Aviv were recently prohibited from showing maps that demarcate the West Bank, indicating it as distinct from Israel.

The world of culture, once a mainstay of liberalism and Israel's dovish left, has embraced settlers, featuring them on reality TV shows, while artists and musicians are increasingly agreeing to perform in settlements or accept funding from settler sponsors. One popular rocker who had often denounced settlers apologized to them at a recent concert in the Beit El settlement.

Diana Buttu, a Palestinian commentator, said having a settler as chief of staff raises concerns that the military's conduct toward the Palestinians will worsen, further entrench Israel's occupation and make the creation of a Palestinian state all the more unlikely.

"There's this fiction that people in the international community seem to have that somehow there's Israel and then there's the settlements — as though they are separate and apart from one another," she said. "But really, in reality, we see that it's all one."

## WHO head in Middle East 'disturbed' by abuse reported by AP

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — The head of the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean region told staff in an internal email that he is "very disturbed" by allegations reported by the Associated Press last week that the U.N. health agency's Syria director misspent millions, abused staff and violated the organization's own COVID-19 protocols as the pandemic swept across the war-torn country.

In a message sent to all staff in the Middle East on Friday, Dr. Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari said "the allegations negatively impact the people of Syria, whom we strive to serve."

This week, two members of WHO's ethics department in Geneva, including its director, are visiting the

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agency's Eastern Mediterranean headquarters in Cairo, which oversees Syria.

"The purpose of the visit is to advance awareness through various sessions, on the ethical conduct, principles, values and expectations," staff were told in an internal email sent on behalf of WHO's director of business operations in Cairo.

The AP on Thursday published an investigation based on more than 100 confidential U.N. emails, documents and other materials showing that WHO staffers told investigators the agency's Syria representative, Dr. Akjemal Magtymova, engaged in abusive behavior, pressured WHO staff to sign contracts with high-ranking Syrian government politicians and plied government officials with gifts. Magtymova declined to comment and called the allegations "defamatory."

The misconduct claims from more than a dozen WHO staffers have triggered one of the biggest internal probes in years, involving more than 20 investigators.

"As the investigation continues, we have already taken mitigating action," Al-Mandhari said in his message to staff, referring to the decision to name an acting Syria representative in May. "We also proactively informed our donor partners of the ongoing investigation." Still, Magtymova remains in her position and continues to draw a director-level salary.

Karam Shaar, a Syria expert at the Washington-based Middle East Institute, said that although there have been rumors of U.N. corruption in Syria for years, the AP report showed that "they are more extreme than we ever thought."

"What reportedly happened at the WHO Syria office is particularly egregious because at this point in time, Syrians have never been more vulnerable," Shaar said. "It's exactly at this time that WHO should be responsible, yet we have never heard as serious allegations from any other U.N. agency. The charges against WHO are by far the worst."

Syria's health system has been devastated by more than a decade of war, and for years the country has relied almost exclusively on humanitarian aid. Nearly 90% of the population lives in poverty and more than 7 million people have been displaced by the conflict.

Adam Kamradt-Scott, a professor specializing in global health at the European University Institute in Italy, said that because WHO's funds come from taxpayers, the agency must prove its spending is warranted.

Financial documents obtained by the AP showed, among other examples, that WHO's Magtymova once spent more than \$11,000 of WHO funds on a party mostly to honor her own achievements during COVID-19. Numerous WHO staffers also alleged that Magtymova used WHO funds to buy inappropriate gifts for Syrian government officials, including gold coins and expensive cars.

"If it were any other context than the U.N. and there was a misappropriation of funds, you would likely see employees being held criminally responsible," Kamradt-Scott said. "But we still have a situation where WHO staff are essentially investigating other WHO staff, which is not exactly the best approach."

In his email to WHO staffers in the Eastern Mediterranean, regional director Al-Mandhari encouraged officials to report suspected misconduct through WHO's own "integrity hotline."

Eight WHO personnel who complained internally about Magtymova's reported misconduct as early as last year told the AP their concerns have yet to be addressed.

One former Syrian staffer wrote to the WHO chief earlier this month, pleading for help after earlier emails went unanswered.

"I would like to inquire about the next step regarding the damages due to stress caused by workplace and the potential loss of employment as a result of harassment," wrote the former employee, who asked for \$35,000 in compensation. "Your support and feedback in this regard is essential to save the image of WHO in my beloved country, Syria." WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has not responded, despite insisting in the past that WHO has "zero tolerance" for misconduct.

According to WHO figures, there are more than 250 ongoing internal investigations involving abusive behavior or sexual exploitation and harassment.

Sheba Crocker, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, said the U.S. was in contact with WHO and was closely following its internal probe in Syria, where it is a major U.N. donor.

"Responsible leadership as well as stewardship of member state resources must always be a requirement for leadership positions in international organizations," Crocker said in a statement.

Natasha Hall, a senior fellow in the Middle East Program at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies, said there were structural failures that consistently allowed for U.N. abuses to occur.

"The knee-jerk reaction in the U.N. is to just cover up these violations and hope they go away," she said, comparing the U.N. response in Syria to the Catholic Church's handling of the sexual abuse of children. "Unless donor governments collectively push back on this, it's likely we will keep hearing about these kinds of abuses."

## Ukraine hospital's staff fight dark memories of occupation

By LORI HINNANT, EVGENIY MALOLETKA and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

IZIUM, Ukraine (AP) — The doctors are preparing for cold days in the basement. They already spent four months performing surgeries there this year, from the war's early days until well into the Russian occupation of Iziium.

At least they can expect the generator to have a steady supply of fuel, even if it's no match for the winter air that will blow in through the glassless windows and collapsed walls of a hilltop hospital in northeast Ukraine.

This hospital was the only medical facility to stay open when Russian troops overran Iziium in early March, not long after the invasion of Ukraine. The city returned to Ukrainian hands last month during a counteroffensive that dealt a blow to Moscow's war aims and military prestige.

The signs around the entire hospital complex warning of mines are disappearing one by one as Ukrainian sappers painstakingly clear each patch of earth. The scars from what happened here, to the buildings and to the people who provided and received care, will take much longer to heal.

The dead were collected out back, in the morgue, which remains without power and where the stench is strong but not fatal. Autopsies were impossible then and still are; the staff of three is on the verge of quitting because there's simply no point anymore.

The dead need electricity less than the living. Plus, the shadows in the morgue mask the holes in the ceiling from the Chechen soldier's bullets that pierced the neck and stomach of a staff pathologist, who bled out in front of his colleagues.

On the other edge of the hospital compound is the paramedics' station, also without power. The chief paramedic can hardly bring himself to talk about the six months under Russian occupation, when every day brought fresh horror.

Abandoned is the shattered building in the middle that served as the Russian military hospital. There, empty liquor bottles are scattered with children's drawings of encouragement. Stained uniforms are strewn across the floor and bloodied stretchers lean against the walls.

The handful of doctors, nurses, paramedics and pathologists who stayed during the occupation found ways to accommodate the Russians in their midst because they saw themselves as the only hope for saving lives in a city rapidly filled with the sick and wounded.

Serhiy Botsman bitterly wants to forget those days, his worst as a paramedic. As a small cat twines itself around his ankles, his gaze turns hard at the memory of a woman screaming as she lay helpless beneath two bodies. Her injuries would ultimately take her leg — an amputation carried out in the basement surgery.

But at least she survived. Botsman's inner eye fixes itself upon the spilled intestines of a 6-year-old boy, who begged him to help his mother. Neither mother nor son survived the day.

"There is nobody who wants to come and relieve us," he said. "I am tired. I am so tired. For seven months no one has come to take our place. And how could I leave knowing that no one will come to help us?"

The morgue workers had a role to play when medical training failed, ensuring the dead were not forgotten in a city where so many of their friends and family had fled, where a mass grave was marked with numbers, not names.

Dr. Yurii Kuznetsov, a trauma surgeon, also fights against his memories. He saw wounds from bombs,

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bullets and shrapnel, and on people who arrived asking for help with injuries they refused to explain but which looked like torture.

"It's like a sniper when he's asked if he can see in his dreams all those people he has eliminated. You can go crazy that way," he said, the dark circles beneath his eyes deepening. He no longer has an intact home to return to — the bombs made sure of that.

Until July, Kuznetsov simply lived in the hospital basement. Two stretchers perched on wheels and a low bed served as the operating tables. The room was so cold that "to inject the solutions, we had to warm them up against our body," he recalled. The electrician who managed to keep the lights on with a diesel generator was as important as the surgeon in the tenuous environment.

"We were all terribly depressed from time to time. We cried, cursed. We didn't want to do anything," Kuznetsov said. "With every saved person, with every saved life, the confidence (of being right) to have stayed here. ... We were convinced it was not all in vain."

When the bombings tapered off and Russian forces assumed firm control of Iziurm, he found a makeshift home outside the hospital compound and moved surgeries to the ground floor.

That's where he still works, in the only wing with reasonably solid walls and intact windows. When the thermometer dips below freezing, he expects he'll again shift everything back down to the basement, where the temperature is cold but stable.

The memory of Fedir Zdebskyi's death haunts the hospital personnel who survived the Russian occupation. Zdebskyi was a dedicated pathologist who refused to allow his prosthetic leg to slow him down, according to Valentyna Bachanova, a colleague who witnessed his death.

Zdebskyi drove his Volkswagen through the bumpy hospital lot regularly to reach the morgue and catalogue the dead, despite the war raging in the neighborhood, Bachanova said. One day, a Chechen soldier decided he wanted the car for himself, rejecting Zdebskyi's offer to drive him.

"I'm sleeping on the damp ground because of you," the soldier said.

Zdebskyi lost his temper after a brief back and forth with the soldier, who identified himself as Ahmed and said he'd been at war for all of his 26 years.

"You are to blame for coming here. You came to my land; you came to kill and rob here," the pathologist said, according to Bachanova and another colleague in the room.

The last words he heard were from the Chechen: "Your life is still in my hands." And then five shots — two to the head, two to the stomach and one in the ceiling. Zdebskyi was 70 years old.

The last the witnesses to his death heard, his body was taken across the border to Belgorod, in Russia. The soldier's commanding officer came to take their statements but beyond that, they don't know what happened to the man who killed Zdebskyi.

They knew their colleague.

"He always cared. People were dying, but he cared about their children, relatives, mothers. He always said, 'This is someone's son, someone's father, someone's husband,'" Bachanova said, sighing deeply. "Well of course, there's no sense in trying to prove anything to a man with a weapon."

## Migrants feel inflation's squeeze twice — at home and abroad

By AYA BATRAWY, TRISHA AHMED, CLAUDIA TORRENS and MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS Associated Press Dubai, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP) — In nearly every corner of the globe, people are spending more on food and fuel, rent and transportation.

But inflation isn't affecting people equally. For migrants with relatives relying on money they send back, higher prices are pinching families twice: at home and abroad.

Migrant workers who send cash to loved ones overseas are often saving less because they're forced to spend more as prices rise. For some, the only option is hustling harder, working weekends and nights, taking on second jobs. For others, it means cutting back on once-basic things like meat and fruit so they can send what's left of their savings to family back home, some of whom are struggling with hunger or conflict.

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"I used to save something, about \$200 weekly. Now, I can barely save \$100 per week. I live by the day," said Carlos Huerta, a 45-year-old from Mexico working as a driver in New York City.

Across the Atlantic, Lissa Jataas, 49, sends about 200 euros (\$195) from her desk job in Cyprus to family in the Philippines each month. To save money, she looks for cheaper food at the grocery store and buys clothes from a charity shop.

"It's about being resilient," she said.

Economies reeling from the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and effects of climate change were hit again by Russia's war in Ukraine, which sent food and energy prices soaring.

Those costs plunged 71 million more people worldwide into poverty in the weeks following the February invasion, which cut off critical grain shipments from the Black Sea region, according to the United Nations Development Program.

When food and fuel prices shoot up, the money people can send to relatives doesn't go as far as it once did. The International Monetary Fund estimates that global inflation will peak at 9.5% this year, but in developing countries, it's much higher.

"Poorer people are spending far more of their income on food and energy," said Max Lawson, head of inequality policy at anti-poverty organization Oxfam.

He said inflation is "pouring fire" on inequality: "It's almost like poor people are kind of like a sponge that are meant to absorb the economic shock."

Mahdi Warsama, 52, came to the U.S. from Somalia as a teenager. An American citizen who works for the nonprofit Somali Parents Autism Network, he sends anywhere from \$3,000 to \$300 a month to relatives in Somalia, sometimes borrowing money to send what relatives need for medical bills and other emergencies.

Warsama, who splits his time between Columbus, Ohio, and Minneapolis, estimates he sent \$1,500 last month to help his relatives pay for necessities like food and water for themselves and their livestock.

Thousands of people have died in a drought gripping Somalia, with the U.N. saying half a million children are at risk of death due to malnutrition or near famine.

"Just as we have inflation in the United States, in Somalia, it's even worse," he said, adding that sacks of rice, sugar and flour that once cost \$50 are now \$70.

He's changed his spending habits, is looking for ways to earn more and monitors interest rate hikes and inflation — something he never did before this year.

"I am more determined to work harder and make more money," Warsama said. "I have to be more mindful, the fact that I have to help my relatives back home."

In New York, Huerta has been living apart from his wife and kids for nearly 20 years, picking up jobs from washing dishes to driving executives — whatever it takes to earn enough.

He said he sends about \$200 a week to his wife and mother in Puebla, Mexico. Huerta also learned to paint houses, so if there's no demand for a chauffeur, he can still earn around \$150 a day.

With earnings of about \$3,600 a month and rent for his Queens apartment going up, Huerta said he's switched out steak for chicken, eats less fruit as prices skyrocketed and canceled his cable.

For Jaatas, who has lived in Cyprus for almost two decades, the six relatives she supports in the Philippines are not only facing rising costs but are reeling from the aftermath of a typhoon that knocked out water and electricity.

"We really like to help our family back home regardless of whatever disaster or shortcomings," she said.

Analysis by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace says the Philippines is the most food-insecure country in emerging Asia due to its reliance on imported food.

Ester Beatty, who heads a chapter of the European Network of Filipino Diaspora in Cyprus, said it's common for Filipinos to work Sundays in the Mediterranean island nation as they seek extra income to support relatives back home struggling to afford staples like rice and sugar.

In developing countries, it's estimated that lower-income families spend over 40% of their household earnings on food even with government subsidies, said Peter Ceretti, an analyst tracking food security at risk advisory firm Eurasia Group.

Ali el-Sayyed Mohammed, 26, came to the United Arab Emirates in February after several years search-

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ing for work in Egypt.

"Life is expensive and wages don't cover enough so I took the step of leaving," he said. "It was a hard decision at first, but the situation left me with no choice."

With his father deceased, Mohammed is the family's breadwinner, supporting three sisters and his mother. He hails from Beheira, a Nile Delta province that has seen many of its young men leave, sometimes embarking on deadly voyages across the Mediterranean Sea in search of work in Europe.

With around \$1,000 saved up, Mohammed came to Dubai and crashed with friends until he landed a job at one of the city's most popular Egyptian restaurants, Hadoota Masreya.

The rising cost of living in Egypt, though, has made his goals of saving enough to help his sister get married next year or secure his own future even harder. Egypt's inflation has climbed to about 16% as the currency's value has dropped, making life for millions of Egyptians living in poverty even more difficult.

"I have a lot of staff whose families rely on the income they make from the restaurant and a big portion of their incomes are sent back home so people there can live," said Mohamed Younis, manager at Hadoota Masreya.

The restaurant recently increased wages to keep up with the rising cost of living, he said.

Younis said growing numbers of Egyptian men are reaching out in search of work. Younis manages a YouTube channel called "Restaurant Clinic" that gives advice in Arabic on succeeding in the restaurant industry. He warns that moving to the UAE comes with risks because finding a job takes time and money.

Back in Minnesota, 36-year-old school bus driver Mohamed Aden says he moonlights as an Uber driver to support his wife, children and siblings who fled Somalia for Kenya due to violence in his homeland.

With no work authorization in Kenya, his family relies on the money he sends — nearly half of his \$2,000 in monthly earnings.

But he's paying more for gas, and food prices are higher in Kenya, so the money doesn't go as far.

Aden tries to visit Kenya each December during the cold Minnesota winter.

"This year, I can't because of inflation," he said. "I'm the only one here, feeding the family ... but I will go back when I get the money."

## Task one in Trump Organization trial: Picking a neutral jury

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's company goes on trial Monday in a criminal tax case and the first task facing the court is a big one: Picking a jury of New Yorkers who don't have a strong opinion about the former president.

Manhattan prosecutors say the Trump Organization helped top executives avoid income taxes on job perks such as rent-free apartments and luxury cars.

Trump himself isn't on trial and isn't expected to testify. But the judge and lawyers in the case will likely be looking to keep people off the jury if they have unshakably strong feelings about the Republican, who isn't liked in his hometown.

In the 2020 presidential election, 87% of Manhattan voters supported Democrat Joe Biden for president. Trump got 12% of the vote.

Once jury selection is complete, Judge Juan Manuel Merchan has said he expects the trial to last at least four weeks.

The trial is expected to center on the actions and testimony of longtime Trump Organization executive Allen Weisselberg, who pleaded guilty in August to taking in more than \$1.7 million worth of untaxed perks from the company.

Trump has decried the probe as a "political witch hunt." The company's lawyers have said it played by the rules.

If convicted, the Trump Organization could be fined more than \$1 million. A guilty verdict could hamper the company's ability to get loans and make deals.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg inherited the prosecution when he took office in January. Bragg

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has taken a cautious approach with Trump, declining so far to bring charges against him personally in what's now a three-year investigation.

The jury selection process could take several days, especially if people in the pool express reservations about their ability to be neutral.

Getting a panel with an open mind, though, could be critical to avoiding a mistrial.

In the spring, another trial in a nearby federal courthouse ended in the mistrial because of tensions between jurors about political views. That case involved associates of former Trump adviser Steve Bannon who were accused of defrauding a charity founded to help pay for a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Eleven jurors in that case sent a note to the judge asking another juror to be removed because that person had shown an anti-government bias and accused all the others of being liberals. The judge declined and the jury ultimately couldn't agree on a verdict.

## US Border Patrol sending migrants to offices with no notice

By CLAUDIA TORRENS and VANESSA A. ALVAREZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Wilfredo Molina arrived in the U.S. from his native Venezuela, he told border agents he wanted to go to Miami but didn't have an address. They directed him to what he thought was a shelter in midtown Manhattan but turned out to be a gray office building.

"It was a fake building. I didn't understand what it was," he said.

Molina was among 13 migrants who recently arrived in the U.S. who agreed to share documents with The Associated Press that they received when they were released from U.S. custody while they seek asylum after crossing the border with Mexico. The AP found that most had no idea where they were going — nor did the people at the addresses listed on their paperwork.

Customs and Border Protection, which oversees the Border Patrol, did not respond to repeated questions about families and individuals interviewed and the addresses assigned to them.

But the snafus suggest a pattern of Border Patrol agents, particularly in Texas, sending migrants without friends or family in the United States to offices that get no notice. The places often don't have space to house migrants. Yet because those addresses appear on migrants' paperwork, important notices may later be sent there.

"We believe that Border Patrol is attempting to demonstrate the chaos that they are experiencing on the border to inland cities," said Denise Chang, executive director of the Colorado Housing Asylum Network. "We just need to coordinate so that we can receive people properly."

Addresses on documents shown to AP included administrative offices of Catholic Charities in New York and San Antonio; an El Paso, Texas, church; a private home in West Bridgewater, Massachusetts; and a group operating homeless shelters in Salt Lake City.

A Venezuelan family that came to the American Red Cross' Denver administrative offices was referred to multiple shelters before someone volunteered to take them in. Migrants who came to New York ended up in shelters, hotels or temporary apartments that the city helped them find and pay for.

A surge in migration from Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua brought the number of illegal crossings to the highest level ever recorded in a fiscal year. In the 12-month period that ended Sept. 30, migrants were stopped 2.38 million times, up 37% from 1.73 million times the year before and surpassing 2 million for the first time.

The year-end numbers reflect deteriorating economic and political conditions in some countries, the relative strength of the U.S. economy and uneven enforcement of Trump-era asylum restrictions.

Many are immediately expelled under the asylum restrictions, a public health order known as Title 42, which denies people a chance at seeking asylum on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

But others — including people from Cuba and Nicaragua, with which the U.S. has strained relations — are released with notices to appear in immigration court or under humanitarian parole. Those migrants must tell agents where they will live, but many can't provide an address.

"It almost seems as though, at the border, officials are simply just looking up any nonprofit address

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they can or just looking up any name at all that they can and just putting that down without actually ever checking whether that person has mentioned it, whether there's beds or shelter at that location, or whether this is even a location that can provide legal assistance," said Lauren Wyatt, managing attorney with Catholic Charities of New York. "So clearly, this is not the most effective way to do this."

Most of the migrants interviewed in New York had hopped on taxpayer-funded buses that Texas and the city of El Paso have been sending regularly to the northeast city.

Republican Govs. Ron DeSantis of Florida, Greg Abbott of Texas and Doug Ducey of Arizona also have been sending migrants released at the border to Democratic strongholds, including Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. They have been criticized for failing to notify local officials of plans. Republicans say they are highlighting issues with President Joe Biden's immigration policies.

The Biden administration recently agreed to accept up to 24,000 Venezuelans at U.S. airports if they apply for asylum online with financial sponsors, similar to how Ukrainians have been admitted since Russia's invasion. Mexico has said it will take back Venezuelans who cross the border into the U.S. and are expelled under Title 42 authority.

Yeisy Hernández, a Venezuelan who reached New York after taking one of El Paso's buses, says the address in her documents is for an El Paso church that wasn't expecting migrants and where she slept just one night. Now she worries immigration notices might be sent there.

Hundreds of immigrants have shown up at one of the offices for Catholic Charities of New York with documents listing the address. Wyatt said the group complained and the government promised to put an end to the practice by Aug. 1 — something that "obviously, hasn't happened."

The group also has received more than 300 notices to appear in immigration court for people the organization does not know, Wyatt said. It's also received deportation orders for migrants who failed to appear in court because their notices were sent to a Catholic Charities address.

Victor Quijada traveled with relatives last month to Denver after border agents sent the Venezuelan family to an American Red Cross office building. Once there, they were referred to a city shelter that also turned them away. They eventually found a shelter that took them in for a few days, but they felt unsafe.

"It was tough what we had to go through; from the things we had to eat to being on the streets — an experience I wouldn't wish on anyone," Quijada said.

Chang, from the Colorado Housing Asylum Network, eventually took the family into her home and her organization helped them lease an apartment. She said she knows of several migrants assigned to addresses of groups that can't help them.

"The five families that I've worked with in the last three months, all five were picked up off the street, literally sitting on the sidewalk with children," she said.

The building in midtown Manhattan where Molina went is an International Rescue Committee refugee resettlement office, but it provides only limited services to asylum-seekers there, said Stanford Prescott, a spokesman for the group.

Only one of the IRC's U.S. offices — in Phoenix — operates a shelter for asylum-seekers and most stay less than 48 hours. Yet its Dallas and Atlanta offices also have been listed on migrants' documents.

"We are deeply concerned that listing these addresses erroneously may lead to complications for asylum-seekers who are following a legal process to seek safety in the U.S.," Prescott said.

## 2 Koreas exchange warning shots along disputed sea boundary

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North and South Korea exchanged warning shots Monday along their disputed western sea boundary — a scene of past bloodshed and naval battles — in a development that raises worry of possible clashes after North Korea's recent barrage of weapons tests.

South Korea's navy broadcast warnings and fired warning shots to repel a North Korean merchant ship that violated the sea boundary at 3:42 a.m., the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

North Korea's military said its coastal defense units responded by firing 10 rounds of artillery warning



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shots toward its territorial waters, where "naval enemy movement was detected." It accused a South Korean naval ship of intruding into North Korean waters on the pretext of cracking down on an unidentified ship.

There were no reports of fighting, but the sea boundary off the Korean Peninsula's west coast is a source of long-running animosities. The American-led U.N. command drew a boundary at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, but North Korea insists upon a boundary that encroaches deeply into waters controlled by the South. Among the deadly events that have happened in the area are the North's shelling of a South Korean island and its alleged torpedoing of a South Korean navy ship, both in 2010. The two attacks killed 50 South Koreans.

Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea said North Korea had likely intentionally plotted its ship incursion because it would be "unimaginable" for a North Korean merchant ship to cross the boundary that early in a day without the permission of the North's military.

Cheong said North Korea is increasingly emboldened by its recent missile tests in which North Korea said it simulated the use of tactical nuclear weapons to attack South Korean and U.S. targets. He noted Pyongyang would also know Washington's strained relationships with Russia and China make it more difficult for the U.S. to draw cooperation from the two regional powers on the North Korean issue.

"The South Korean military needs to make thorough preparations to prevent fresh skirmishes from happening on the West Sea and prevent them from causing the worst case scenario like the North Korean military's artillery bombardments" on a South Korean border island, Cheong said.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the North Korean artillery firings Monday breached a 2018 inter-Korean accord on reducing military animosities and undermines stability on the Korean Peninsula. It said the North Korean shells didn't land in South Korean waters but South Korea is boosting its military readiness.

The General Staff of the North's Korean People's Army accused South Korea of provoking animosities near their land border as well as with its own artillery tests and propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts. South Korea has already confirmed it performed artillery firings last week as part of its regular military exercises, but denied that it resumed the loudspeaker broadcasts that both Koreas halted under the 2018 agreement.

"The KPA General Staff once again sends a grave warning to the enemies who made even naval intrusion in the wake of such provocations as the recent artillery firing and loudspeaker broadcasting on the ground front," the North's statement said.

North Korea has said its recent weapons tests involving nuclear-capable missiles and artillery shells were a response to joint South Korean-U.S. military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal.

Some observers say North Korea could extend its spate of testing, conduct its first nuclear test in five years or launch other provocations near the western sea border or elsewhere as South Korean and U.S. militaries continue their combined military exercises.

"Pyongyang's politics of blaming external threats and projecting confidence in military capabilities can motivate greater risk taking," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "North Korean probing of South Korean perimeter defenses could lead to a serious exchange of fire and unintended escalation."

The South Korean military is currently conducting its annual field exercises, which involve U.S. troops this year. As part of the drills, the South Korean and U.S. militaries began large-scale, four-day firing exercises off the peninsula's west coast on Monday. The drills would mobilize South Korean destroyers and fighter jets and U.S. helicopters and aircraft, the South Korean navy said in a statement.

Washington and Seoul had scaled back or canceled their regular drills in recent years to support their now-dormant nuclear diplomacy with North Korea or guard against the COVID-19 pandemic. But the allies have been reviving or expanding those trainings since the May inauguration of conservative South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who vows a tougher stance on North Korean provocation.

Next week, South Korea and the United States are to hold joint air force drills involving some 240 warplanes, including F-35 fighters operated by both nations. The drills are aimed at inspecting the two countries' joint operation capabilities and improving combat readiness, according to the South Korean military.

Some experts say the North Korean tests also suggest its leader Kim Jong Un has no intentions of resuming stalled nuclear diplomacy with Washington anytime soon as he would want to focus on further

modernizing his nuclear arsenal to boost his leverage in future negotiations with the United States.

## **Korean Air plane overshoots runway, shuts Philippine airport**

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A damaged Korean Air plane remained stuck in the grass at a central Philippine airport Monday after it overshot a runway in rainy weather the night before. No injuries were reported among the 162 passengers and 11 crewmembers who escaped from the aircraft using emergency slides.

Dozens of flights have been canceled and Mactan-Cebu International Airport, one of the country's busiest, remained closed due to the stalled aircraft at the end of its lone usable runway.

The terrifying close call prompted a public apology from Korean Air's president and a vow from one of Asia's most prominent airlines to take steps to prevent a recurrence.

"We always prioritize safety in all of our operations, and we truly regret the stress and inconvenience brought to our passengers," Korean Air President Woo Keehong said in a statement.

The front underbelly of the plane was sheared off and its nose was heavily damaged. The plane lay tipped forward on a grassy area with its front landing wheel not visible and emergency slides deployed at the doors. A ripped-open hole was also visible at the top of the plane near a front door.

Philippine officials said the plane's remaining fuel would be siphoned off before efforts begin to remove the aircraft at the runway's end. Authorities were also assessing if the other aircraft that are stranded at the airport could be allowed to fly out safely.

Dozens of flights to and from Cebu province were canceled, including those of flag carrier Philippine Airlines, which initially announced more than 50 canceled domestic flights.

A Philippine investigation of the accident was underway.

The Airbus A330 flying from Incheon, South Korea, attempted to land twice before overrunning the runway on the third attempt, Korean Air Lines Co. said in a statement.

"All passengers are safe and being attended by ground personnel," the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines said in a statement.

In 1981, A Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 jetliner overshot the runway while taking off from Manila's international airport and skidded to a stop at the edge of a major highway. The accident injured more than a dozen of about 350 people onboard.

The plane hit a concrete fence and skidded to a halt on its belly with its front section frighteningly protruding over a busy side road of a key highway south of metropolitan Manila.

## **Trial over Georgia's restrictive abortion law to begin**

ATLANTA (AP) — A trial to determine whether Georgia can continue to ban abortion as early as six weeks into a pregnancy is set to begin in an Atlanta courtroom Monday.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney has scheduled two days of testimony in a lawsuit that seeks to strike down the law on multiple grounds, including that it violates the Georgia Constitution's right to privacy and liberty by "forcing pregnancy and childbirth upon countless Georgians."

The state attorney general's office responded in a court filing that Georgia's privacy protections do not extend to abortion because it affects another "human life."

Georgia's law bans most abortions once a "detectable human heartbeat" is present. Cardiac activity can be detected by ultrasound in cells within an embryo that will eventually become the heart as early as six weeks into a pregnancy. That means most abortions in Georgia are effectively banned at a point before many women know they are pregnant.

The doctors and advocacy groups that filed the lawsuit before McBurney in July also argue the law was invalid from the start because it violated the U.S. Constitution and U.S. Supreme Court precedent when it was enacted.

Georgia's law was passed by state lawmakers and signed by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp in 2019 but it

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had been blocked from taking effect until the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, which had protected the right to an abortion for nearly 50 years. The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals allowed Georgia to begin enforcing its abortion law just over three weeks after the high court's decision in June.

The law includes exceptions for rape and incest, as long as a police report is filed, and allows for later abortions when the mother's life is at risk or a serious medical condition renders a fetus unviable.

The state has argued that the Roe decision itself was wrong and the Supreme Court ruling wiped it out of existence.

In August, McBurney rejected a request by the plaintiffs to immediately block the abortion law while the lawsuit was pending, though he stressed that decision did not touch on the merits of the case. Earlier this month, he denied a request by state officials to postpone the trial, which he will decide, not a jury.

## World Series teed up: Harper, Phillies go deep, face Astros

By BEN WALKER AP Baseball Writer

Bryce Harper and Kyle Schwarber breaking the Bank in Philly. Yordan Alvarez launching moonshots in H-Town.

Dusty Baker trying for a most elusive win. Justin Verlander, too. A fired-up Harper and All-Stars J.T. Realmuto and Zack Wheeler, stepping onto baseball's biggest platform for the first time.

Yo! The Philadelphia Phillies, of all teams, are headed to the World Series. Against those back-for-more Houston Astros, y'all.

A pretty tasty matchup starting Friday night at Minute Maid Park, a Fall Classic full of vibrant sights, scents and sounds.

Think cheesesteaks, hoagies and water ice vs. BBQ brisket, Tex-Mex and Blue Bell ice cream.

The Phanatic and Phils fans need a late rally at Citizens Bank Park? Dial up something from "Rocky." Want to party in Houston? Sing and clap along with mascot Orbit to Moe Bandy's bouncy "Deep in the Heart of Texas" during the seventh-inning stretch.

Harper already has hit five home runs this postseason. In the signature swing of his career, his eighth-inning drive against San Diego on Sunday in Game 5 sent the Phillies into the World Series for the first time since 2009 and earned him the NL Championship Series MVP.

The Astros are 7-0 this postseason after finishing off a four-game sweep of the New York Yankees in the AL Championship Series. Alex Bregman's go-ahead single keyed a 6-5 win Sunday night.

After losing the World Series last year, Houston opened as a solid favorite to win the title this year, according to FanDuel.

Odds are, crowd might witness a Schwar-bomb or the Chas Chomp along the way.

But no possibility of seeing a sibling rivalry. Astros reliever Phil Maton broke a finger on his pitching hand when he punched his locker after a shaky performance in the regular-season finale, an outing that included giving up a hit to his younger brother, Phils utilityman Nick Maton.

City of Brotherly Love, not so much. But a nice treat for fans in both cities: The Philadelphia Eagles, the NFL's only unbeaten team, visit the Houston Texans on the travel day between Games 5 and 6, if those are needed.

Weather won't be an issue with the retractable roof in Houston. No telling what the elements will be with the open air in Philly.

With the likes of Jose Altuve, ALCS MVP Jeremy Peña, Rhys Hoskins and Alec Bohm, this World Series is a best-of-seven matchup representing some of the game's best present and future. Plus a good piece of the past — remember, these teams have played each other nearly 600 times.

There was the thrilling 1980 NL Championship Series, when Mike Schmidt, Pete Rose, Steve Carlton and the Fightin' Phils outlasted Nolan Ryan at the Astrodome on the way to their first World Series title.

Years later, closers Brad Lidge, Billy Wagner, Mitch Williams and Ken Giles spent time with both clubs. So did future Hall of Famers Joe Morgan and Robin Roberts.

And this neat piece of history — the Phillies were the first team to ever beat Houston, back in 1962

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when the expansion Colt .45s lost at Connie Mack Stadium.

Funny, the Phillies are also the most recent team to beat the Astros. Way back on Oct. 3, Philadelphia opened the final series of the regular season with a 3-0 win at Houston, with Schwarber homering twice as Aaron Nola outpitched Lance McCullers Jr.

The Astros then closed out an AL-best 106-56 record by winning the next two behind Verlander and Framber Valdez — Philadelphia still leads 297-283 in their head-to-head matchups, mostly all before Houston moved from the National League to the American League in 2013.

Houston then swept Seattle in the AL Division Series and the Yankees in the ALCS featuring its winning formula of imposing starting pitching, a dominant bullpen and a lineup full of home run hitters such as Alvarez and Kyle Tucker.

This marks the Astros' fourth trip to the World Series in six years and their only title in 2017 was tainted by an illegal sign-stealing scandal. Last season, they lost to Freddie Freeman and the underdog Atlanta Braves in six games.

At 73 and in his 25th season as a manager, Baker is looking for a crown to cap his ample resume.

"I mean, victories drive me. And I'll get it," he said during the ALCS. "You can't rush it before it gets here because it ain't here yet. So you just got to put yourself in a position to do it."

Verlander, the likely AL Cy Young Award winner after bouncing back from Tommy John surgery, is hoping to improve his 0-6 mark in seven career World Series starts.

The Phillies, meanwhile, looked like a big zero this year before getting to this point in October.

Stuck at 21-29 going into June, they fired manager Joe Girardi a few days later and put the interim tag on bench coach Rob Thomson. Then suddenly, the Phillies took off.

They overcame Harper's broken thumb, sidelining the two-time NL MVP for two months, beat out Milwaukee for the final playoff spot in going 87-75, and quickly topped NL Central champion St. Louis in the wild-card round. Philadelphia eliminated defending World Series champ Atlanta in the NLDS and topped San Diego in the NLCS.

Now, with Thomson having been rewarded with a two-year contract, the Phillies are the first third-place team in baseball history to reach the World Series.

Philadelphia lost to the Yankees in its last trip this far. A year earlier in 2008, Lidge capped off his remarkable year of going 48 for 48 in save chances to close out the Phillies' second title as a team led by Chase Utley, Jimmy Rollins and Ryan Howard beat Tampa Bay in five games.

Spurred by their rollicking home crowd, Harper and this bunch of Phils hope to add another banner.

Thomson is trying to join Jack McKeon (Marlins, 2003) and Bob Lemon (Yankees, 1978) as the only managers hired in midseason to win the title. To the 59-year-old Thomson, it's not such a surprise his team is in this position.

"Coming out of spring training ... we knew we had a good ballclub. We knew our bullpen was good, rotation was good, we had great offense," he said earlier in the playoffs. "We just got off to a little bit of a slow start and kind of spiraled."

"And we had ups and downs during the season, just like any other club does. But they knew that they were going to come out of it at some point and start winning again. And we did," he said.

## China's economic growth accelerates but weak amid shutdowns

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's economic growth accelerated in the latest quarter but still was among the weakest in decades as the ruling Communist Party tries to reverse a downturn while enforcing anti-virus controls and a crackdown on debt in its vast real estate industry.

The world's second-largest economy grew by 3.9% over a year earlier in the three months ending in September, up from the previous quarter's 0.4%, official data showed Monday.

The planned release of data last week was postponed while the ruling Communist Party met to award President Xi Jinping a new term as leader. Investors and the Chinese public watched the meeting for ini-

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tatives to stimulate the economy or reduce the impact of the "Zero COVID" strategy that has shut down cities and disrupted business, but none were announced.

The improvement is "mainly a result of more flexible" anti-virus controls that isolate individual buildings or neighborhoods instead of cities, said Iris Pang of ING in a report. But she said more lockdowns are "still a big uncertainty."

"This uncertainty means the effectiveness of pro-growth policy would be undermined," Pang said.

No data were immediately released for growth compared with the previous quarter, the way other major economies are measured. In the quarter ending in June, the economy shrank by 2.6% from the previous three-month period.

Growth slid in the second half of 2021 after controls on debt that regulators worry is dangerously high caused a slowdown in real estate, one of China's biggest economic engines. Growth slumped to 4% over a year earlier in the final quarter.

Beijing has eased mortgage lending and local governments have taken over some unfinished projects to make sure buyers get apartments. But regulators are sticking to limits on debt that have forced developers into bankruptcy and caused some bigger competitors to miss payments to bondholders.

The ruling party's "Zero COVID" strategy has temporarily shut down Shanghai and other industrial centers despite rising costs and public frustration. That has boiled over into protests in some areas at a time when other countries are easing anti-virus controls.

For the first nine months of 2022, growth was 3% over a year earlier, barely half the ruling party's official 5.5% target. Leaders have stopped talking about that goal but promised easier lending and other measures to boost growth.

The International Monetary Fund and private sector forecasters have cut their outlooks for annual growth to as low as 3%. That would be the second-weakest since the 1980s after 2020, when growth plunged to 2.4% following the shutdown of much of the economy for two months to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

The slump hurts China's trading partners by depressing demand for imported oil, food and consumer goods.

Repeated shutdowns and uncertainty about business conditions have devastated entrepreneurs who generate wealth and jobs. Small retailers and restaurants have closed. Others say they are struggling to stay afloat.

Beijing is using cautious, targeted stimulus instead of across-the-board spending, a strategy that will take longer to show results, economists say. Chinese leaders worry too much spending might push up politically sensitive housing costs or corporate debt.

Growth for the first half of the year was 2.5% over a year earlier, one of the weakest levels in the past three decades.

## A swing state no more? GOP confidence grows in Florida

By STEVE PEOPLES, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

THE VILLAGES, Fla. (AP) — Democrats are increasingly concerned that Florida, once the nation's premier swing state, may slip away this fall and beyond as emboldened Republicans capitalize on divisive cultural issues and demographic shifts in crucial contests for governor and the U.S. Senate.

The anxiety was apparent last week during a golf cart parade of Democrats featuring Senate candidate Val Demings at The Villages, a retirement community just north of the Interstate 4 corridor. Once a politically mixed part of the state where elections were often decided, some Democrats now say they feel increasingly isolated.

"I am terrified," said 77-year-old Sue Sullivan, lamenting the state's rightward shift. "There are very few Democrats around here."

In an interview, Demings, a congresswoman and former Orlando police chief challenging Republican Sen. Marco Rubio, conceded that her party's midterm message isn't resonating as she had hoped.

"We have to do a better job of telling our stories and clearly demonstrating who's truly on the side of

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people who have to go to work every day," she said.

The frustration is the culmination of nearly a decade of Republican inroads in Florida, where candidates have honed deeply conservative social and economic messages to build something of a coalition that includes rural voters and Latinos, particularly Cuban Americans. Donald Trump's win here in 2016 signaled the evolution after the state twice backed Barack Obama. And while he lost the White House in 2020, Trump carried Florida by more than 3 percentage points, a remarkable margin in a state where elections were regularly decided by less than a percentage point.

President Joe Biden will visit the state Nov. 1, exactly one week before Election Day, to rally Democrats. Demings said she's had two conversations with the president about campaigning together, but she could not confirm any joint appearances. And Charlie Crist, the Democratic nominee for governor, said he would attend a private fundraiser with Biden on the day of the rally, but he wasn't sure whether they would appear together in public.

"If we could squeeze in a little public airtime, that'd be a wonderful thing I would welcome," Crist said in an interview.

Still, the GOP is bullish that it can keep notching victories, even in longtime Democratic strongholds. Some Republicans are optimistic the party could carry Miami-Dade County, a once unthinkable prospect that would virtually eliminate the Democrats' path to victory in statewide contests, including presidential elections.

And in southwest Florida's Lee County, a major Republican stronghold, not even a devastating hurricane appears to have dented the GOP's momentum. In fact, Republicans and Democrats privately agree that Hurricane Ian, which left more than 100 dead, may have helped Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis broaden his appeal. On Monday, he'll participate in a debate against Crist in which he'll likely highlight his stewardship of the state during a searing crisis.

But the 44-year-old Republican governor has spent much of his first term focused on sensitive social issues. He's signed new laws banning abortions at 15 weeks of pregnancy with no exceptions for rape or incest, along with blocking critical race theory and LGBTQ issues from many Florida schools. He has also stripped millions of dollars from a major league baseball team that spoke out against gun violence and led efforts to eliminate Disney's special tax status for condemning his so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill.

On the eve of the hurricane, DeSantis shipped dozens of Venezuelan immigrants from Texas to Martha's Vineyard to call attention to illegal immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Crist, a former congressman and onetime governor himself, acknowledged some voters "dig" DeSantis' focus on cultural issues, "but most Floridians are good, decent people." He noted that at least one Hispanic radio host has compared DeSantis to former Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

"Customarily, when you come out of a primary, people will move to the middle. He's clearly not doing that, to say the least," Crist said of his Republican rival.

But to the horror of many Democrats, DeSantis could become the first Floridian to win a governor's race by more than 1 point since 2006. That kind of showing might lift Rubio in the U.S. Senate election while helping the GOP win as many as 20 of the state's 28 U.S. House seats.

Should DeSantis win big as expected, his allies believe he would have the political capital to launch a successful presidential campaign in 2024 — whether Trump runs or not.

"It's shocking and it's scary," state Democratic Party Chair Manny Diaz said about DeSantis' repeated willingness to use the power of his office to attack political rivals, whether individual opponents or iconic corporations like Disney.

DeSantis, who declined an interview request, has found success by bucking the conventional wisdom before.

He beat Democrat Andrew Gillum four years ago by 32,436 votes out of more than 8.2 million cast, a margin so narrow that it required a recount.

But in the four years since then, Republicans have erased a voter registration advantage that Florida Democrats had guarded for decades. When registration closed for the 2018 election, Democrats enjoyed

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a 263,269-vote advantage. As of Sept. 30, Republicans had a lead of 292,533 voters — a swing of nearly 556,000 registered voters over DeSantis' first term.

"We're no longer a swing state. We're actually annihilating the Democrats," said Florida GOP Chairman Joe Gruters, a leading DeSantis ally.

And while he says his party has focused on traditional kitchen-table issues, such as gas prices and inflation, Gruters leaned into cultural fights — especially the Florida GOP's opposition to sexual education and LGBTQ issues in elementary schools — that have defined DeSantis' tenure.

"I don't want anyone else teaching my kids about the birds and the bees and gender fluidity issues," Gruters said.

Strategists in both parties believe Florida's political shift is due to multiple factors, but there is general agreement that Republicans have benefited from an influx of new voters since DeSantis emerged as the leader of the GOP resistance to the pandemic-related public health measures.

Every day on average over the year between 2020 and 2021, 667 more people moved into the state than moved away, according to U.S. Census estimates.

Part of the Republican shift can also be attributed people living in rural areas of north Florida, remnants of the deep South, changing their registration to reflect their voting patterns. Many people registered as Democrats because generations before them did, but the so-called Dixiecrats still voted solidly Republican.

But that alone does not explain the Democrats' challenge this fall.

Democrats are particularly concerned about the trend in Miami-Dade County, home to 1.5 million Hispanics of voting age and a Democratic stronghold for the past 20 years, where the GOP made significant gains in the last presidential election. In two weeks, the region could turn red.

"We have seen so many Hispanics flock to the Republican party here in Miami-Dade County," Florida Lt. Gov. Jeanette Núñez said at an event with other party leaders last week. "I'm going to make a prediction right now: We are going to win Miami-Dade County come Nov. 8."

Meanwhile in southwest Florida, thousands of Republican voters are literally picking up pieces of their shattered homes and vehicles in the wake of Hurricane Ian, which left more than 100 people dead and caused tens of billions of dollars in damage.

Mangled boats and massive chunks of concrete docks still litter the coastline in Fort Myers, the county seat of Lee County, one of the nation's most Republican-leaning counties. Thousands of homes were destroyed and several schools remain closed nearly a month after the Category 4 hurricane made landfall.

Still, Matt Caldwell, the county property appraiser and a member of the state GOP, was confident about his party's political prospects.

"Most of the people, 90% of the people who live in the county are more or less back to life at this point," he said as he toured a Fort Myers marina covered by twisted metal and crumpled yachts.

Caldwell praised the Republican governor for being a regular presence during cleanup efforts, suggesting that voters across the political spectrum will reward him on Election Day.

DeSantis himself was upbeat as he delivered a storm update not far away in Punta Gorda over the weekend. The governor referenced the upcoming election, but focused his remarks on relief efforts.

"We've had success with bridges and all these other things partially because we have the community rallying together," DeSantis said. "Everyone's rowing in the same direction. It makes a difference."

## One hug and one selfie at a time, Biden's mission to connect

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — One handshake, one hug and one selfie at a time. If President Joe Biden could greet every American this way, longtime allies say, his approval ratings would soar.

Biden has never been at his best in big speeches, where his delivery can be stilted, his stories sometimes meandering. It's the end of his speech that often marks the beginning of Biden's favorite part of an event — the rope line, in the parlance of political operatives. He whirls around, scans the crowd and zeroes in on his first target for a one-on-one connection.

It might be with someone like Tim Eichinger, a Milwaukee brewery owner who asked Biden a question

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during a TV town hall 20 months ago, and has since had a one-on-one videoconference with the president and seen Biden send a couple of letters to his grandson.

It might be a small child — Biden likes to carry some cash so he can discretely slip kids a few dollars and encourage them to buy ice cream. It might be someone who stutters — they come in for special attention from the president.

After Biden gave a speech on student loans on Friday at Delaware State University, there were plentiful handshakes and photos with the students on stage. Last Tuesday, at a Democratic National Committee event in Washington, Biden invited one audience member backstage for a private photo, autographed some of the abortion rights signs that participants had been waving and mugged in a handful of selfies.

Aides say the 79-year-old has perfected his selfie arm, the products of which are widely shared on social media.

At an August event for Maryland Democratic gubernatorial candidate Wes Moore, Biden spent more than 75 minutes across three different rooms greeting people after the speechmaking had ended. He drew cheers when he grabbed hold of a high school drum major's baton and then posed with it for a photo before the marching band.

It's all part of an approach Biden has largely perfected through decades of glad-handing in his home state of Delaware, whose population is just over 1 million and was about half that when Biden was first elected to the Senate in 1972.

Scaling that kind of personal politicking to the presidential level has been a challenge, first as Biden campaigned for the Oval Office in the COVID-19 pandemic that curtailed his public engagements and now that he's in the White House, where the demands on his time — and the security — are greater.

The hard fact, politically, is that one-on-one warmth and empathy only go so far. They helped him forge bipartisan bonds in the Senate but from the White House, most voters, most of the time, only see the president in scripted or staged moments. Biden aides have sought out ways to show voters the president's private interactions, with behind-the-scenes videos of some of the encounters, even if they are unlikely to ever have a chance at one themselves.

Still, Biden insists that time be built into his schedule so he can interact with people at his events — such encounters seem to energize him and help inform his policymaking.

There can occasionally be awkward moments, too, such as when a presidential quip lands poorly, that in today's partisan environment are often broadcast online by his political rivals. But they are outnumbered by the positive interactions that have defined Biden's career and tested the stamina of his aides.

"He outlasts us," White House deputy chief of staff Jen O'Malley Dillon told The Associated Press of Biden's penchant for spending 30 minutes, an hour, sometimes longer shaking hands.

"He's going to take as much time as he wants," added Stephen Goepfert, Biden's former personal aide, or "body man."

The president, whose poll ratings have risen in recent months but remain in negative territory, has held relatively few large political events in the leadup to midterm elections. Many Democratic candidates don't see a Biden appearance as a plus. Aides say his schedule — and the size of his audiences — will pick up as his party pivots to get-out-the-vote efforts.

But don't expect the small encounters to go away.

Biden, aides said, seems to detect when someone may be going through a personal or family crisis — perhaps informed by his own experiences with grief and challenge: the death of his first wife and daughter in a car crash, the loss of his son to cancer, his recovery from a pair of life-threatening brain aneurysms, a decades-long struggle to overcome a stutter.

"He just instinctually knows how to show up for what that person needs in whatever way that is," said O'Malley Dillon.

Goepfert followed steps behind Biden at hundreds of events during the campaign and in the White House before he left in August. "I've seen him comfort people who were in tears talking about their personal hardships, console somebody who's recently been diagnosed with cancer, honor a veteran servicemember with a handshake and one of his challenge coins, and also give a young person money for ice cream just



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for sitting through the speech — and all in the same rope line,” he said.

As Biden works his way through a crowd, he'll often summon an aide to take someone backstage for a photo, collect their information for follow-up, or jot down the phone number of a loved one who couldn't be there for a surprise call from the president.

In his armored limousine after an event, Biden “is ready to follow up with the people he met, and he's already making those phone calls,” said Goepfert.

Those fleeting encounters sometimes evolve into enduring relationships.

Before he became president, Biden would frequently give out his cell phone number to young people looking for advice overcoming the speech impediment. Now that he's in the Oval Office, Biden is still in touch with many of them by phone, and sends taped feedback and words of encouragement from Air Force One.

Thirteen-year-old Brayden Harrington's speech about how candidate Biden coached him to overcome his stutter was an emotional highlight of the 2020 Democratic National Convention.

Another 13-year-old boy, Ryan, from Arlington, Virginia, continues to trade texts and video messages with Biden through staff after meeting the president at a 2019 rally. Ryan, whose mother asked that his last name not be used, said Biden has “helped me be brave” and join his school's choir.

On another occasion, a brief Biden encounter with France's deputy ambassador about their shared connections to Ireland yielded a touching letter to the diplomat's “over the moon” son.

Annie Tomasini, director of Oval Office operations, and her staff track Biden's interactions and coordinate the phone calls and letters that often follow rope line meetings. Some of these relationships have been going more than a decade.

“He takes those engagements, and they stay with him,” Tomasini said, adding that they are reflected in Biden's policy goals.

“It really drives how he comes back and says, ‘Hey, listen, guys, we need to focus on these pieces,’” she said. His staff has gotten used to inquiries about specific issues that Biden hears about from Americans on the rope line or whom he's met when leaving church.

“It just truly is who he is,” said O'Malley Dillon. “He's been in many of the shoes that the American people are in.”

Eichinger, co-owner of Black Husky Brewing in Milwaukee, hadn't thought much about it when Biden promised to follow up on a question he asked the president during a cable news town hall. He got a call a couple of days later from Ashley Williams, deputy director of Oval Office operations, looking to put him in touch with Biden's economic staff for a briefing and to schedule a Zoom with Biden that ended up lasting 30 minutes.

“I said I really didn't expect them to do that,” Eichinger recalled. “She said ‘No, that's not how he is. When he says something, he expects us to follow up and to keep that relationship going.’”

Eichinger and his family later toured the White House over Christmas, and Biden sent his school-aged grandson a letter praising his violin playing after Williams showed him a video that Eichinger had sent.

“I'm just one of 330 million people out here,” Eichinger said. “They continue to feel that what I have to say is important.”

## Hurricane Roslyn makes landfall in Mexico, avoids resorts

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Hurricane Roslyn slammed into a sparsely populated stretch of Mexico's Pacific coast between the resorts of Puerto Vallarta and Mazatlan Sunday morning, then declined to tropical storm force and quickly moved inland.

By Sunday night, Roslyn had winds of 30 mph (45 kph), down from its peak of 130 mph. The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Roslyn was about 50 miles (80 kilometers) west-northwest of the northern city of Monterrey.

The hurricane was moving northeast at 22 miles per hour (35 kph) and was expected to lose strength further as it moves inland. The center expects Roslyn would dissipate before reaching Texas.

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Local media reported two people died after taking shelter in unstable structures that collapsed during the storm, but the Nayarit state civil defense office said it could not confirm those deaths.

While it missed a direct hit, Roslyn brought heavy rain and high waves to Puerto Vallarta, where ocean surges lashed the beachside promenade.

Roslyn came ashore in Nayarit state, in roughly the same area where Hurricane Orlene made landfall Oct. 3.

The hurricane made landfall around the village of Santa Cruz, near the fishing village of San Blas, about 90 miles (150 kilometers) north of Puerto Vallarta.

José Antonio Barajas, the mayor of San Blas, said in a video broadcast that some houses had been damaged and power was knocked out, but nobody was killed or seriously injured.

"The winds from this hurricane were, in truth, tremendous," Barajas said. "The sound of the wind was strong."

In Tepic, the Nayarit state capital, Roslyn blew down trees and flooded some streets; authorities asked residents to avoid going out Sunday, as crews worked to clear a landslide that had blocked a local highway.

The Federal Electricity Commission reported that over 150,000 homes had lost power as a result of the storm, and that by midday Sunday, service had been restored to about one-third of those customers.

Meanwhile, beachside eateries in Puerto Vallarta where tourists had lunched unconcerned Saturday were abandoned Sunday morning, and at some the waves had carried away railings and small thatched structures that normally keep the sun off diners.

The head of the state civil defense office for the Puerto Vallarta area, Adrián Bobadilla, said authorities were patrolling the area, but had not yet seen any major damage.

"The biggest effect was from the waves, on some of the beachside infrastructure," said Bobadilla. "We did not have any significant damage."

The state civil defense office posted video of officers escorting a large sea turtle back to the water, after it had been thrown up on the beach by the large waves.

The National Water Commission said rains from Roslyn could cause mudslides and flooding and the U.S. hurricane center warned that heavy rains could cause flash flooding and landslides over the rugged terrain inland.

## Harper's HR powers Phillies past Padres, into World Series

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Bryce Harper broke up the Phillies postseason party on the mound and directed his team to where the true revelry was about to begin for the National League champs.

"C'mon, let's go inside! Let's go!" he ordered.

With that, Harper walked toward the dugout and raised his arms in jubilation to the soundtrack of Phillies fans screaming "MV3! MV3!" The Phillies scrambled inside for the Broad Street Bubbly that awaited in the clubhouse.

Harper made the scene possible because he rose to the moment Philly demanded of him from the time he signed the richest free-agent deal in baseball history. Harper has made the monumental feat of hitting a baseball look so easy in the postseason and with the NL pennant at stake, he delivered with the defining moment of his four-year Philadelphia career.

Harper slugged his fifth homer of the postseason, a two-run blast in the eighth inning that turned Citizens Bank Park into a madhouse, and the \$330 million slugger powered the Phillies past the San Diego Padres 4-3 on Sunday and into the World Series for the first the time since 2009.

One swing. One opposite-field shot. One game-winning home run that about seemed destined from the moment he came to the plate in the eighth inning with the Phillies and their fans beckoning Bryce to deliver in the clutch just one more time.

"I hit the ball, and I just looked at my dugout and kind of it's for all of them," Harper said. "It's for this whole team. It's for this whole organization."

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Rhys Hoskins also hit a two-run homer in Game 5 of the NL Championship Series to spark Philadelphia's improbable run to the pennant and a shot at its first World Series championship since 2008.

Harper, Hoskins & Crew are coming for a most improbable World Series championship.

Houston held a 3-0 lead over the New York Yankees in the ALCS. Game 4 is Sunday night in New York. The World Series will begin Friday night at the home of the AL champion.

Harper was named NLCS MVP and he as parked the trophy on a dais, he made it clear the personal awards meant nothing to him without a ring.

"I don't really care about this but MLB is making me do it," Harper said.

Philadelphia trailed 3-2 when J.T. Realmuto began the eighth with a single off reliever Robert Suarez. Harper then lined a 2-2, 98 mph sinker the opposite way, into the left-field seats as another sellout crowd of 45,485 shook the stadium.

Harper hoped the homer set the stage for other highlights on deck in the next couple of weeks.

"We've got four more," the two-time NL MVP told the fans during an on-field celebration, and they roared again.

The lefty-swinging Harper connected off a righty — the Padres had left-handed closer Josh Hader warming in the bullpen, but didn't bring him in.

"It's a thought at this point, but that wasn't what we were thinking," Padres manager Bob Melvin said. "We were trying to get to four-out position for Hader, and we had a lot of confidence in Suarez."

The Phillies felt the same way about Harper.

"Pure chaos, right? I don't think anybody was surprised," Hoskins said. "This guy has a knack for coming up in the biggest moments. It's just what he's done his whole career, and we've seen it plenty of times."

Remember, too: When Harper's thumb was broken by a pitch from San Diego's Blake Snell in late June, there were some concerns that he might not return this season.

Instead, the star who signed a 13-year contract to play in Philadelphia delivered — in this season, in this game.

Even after Harper's homer put them ahead, it wasn't an easy ending for the Phillies.

Reliever David Robertson was pulled after a pair of one-out walks in the ninth. Ranger Suárez made his first relief appearance of the season and retired Trent Grisham on a bunt and got Austin Nola — brother of Phils ace Aaron Nola — on a routine fly to finish it for a huge save.

The Phillie Phanatic swayed a National League champions flag as the postseason banger "Dancing On My Own" blared throughout the stadium. Alec Bohm and Nick Castellanos stripped off their shirts and danced in the clubhouse. Cigars were lit. Cheap beer was sprayed. The alcohol puddles on the carpet went deeper than the ones caused by the rain in a sloppy, gusty Game 5.

Philly, get ready.

This sixth-seeded Phillies — yes, that is a thing this season — feel they're just getting started.

Harper, who turned 30 last week, is batting 439 (18 for 41) with six doubles, five homers, 11 RBIs and 10 runs scored over 11 postseason games. He has hit in 10 straight and has reached base in 11 straight.

And the feared designated hitter can keep those streaks alive when he plays in his first World Series.

"To a certain degree, it's getting overlooked because of who he is and the star that he is," Phillies manager Rob Thomson said. "He's a guy that's a big star that's delivered. Can't say enough about that."

Philadelphia finished third in the NL East at 87-75, a full 14 games behind the 101-win Braves this season, and were the last club in the majors to make the 12-team playoff field. After a 2-0 sweep of NL Central champion St. Louis in MLB's newly created wild-card round, the Phillies needed only four games to knock out Atlanta, the defending World Series champs.

Now they'll try to become the first team that finished in third place to win a World Series.

The Padres took a 3-2 lead in a sloppy seventh inning as rain pounded Citizens Bank Park and turned portions of the infield, notably around third base, into a mud pit.

But it was Phillies reliever Seranthony Dominguez's slippery grip that almost cost the Phillies.

Starter Zack Wheeler was fantastic again and struck out eight over six innings. He was lifted with a 2-1

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lead after Jake Cronenworth's leadoff single in the seventh.

Dominguez couldn't find his feel with the ball as the rain picked up, puddles formed near third base and the infield dirt turned to mush. He threw one wild pitch and Josh Bell lined a tying RBI double to right that made it 2-1.

Dominguez then threw two more wild pitches that allowed pinch-runner Jose Azocar to scamper home for the 3-2 lead. The righty reliever threw only three wild pitches in 51 innings all season -- then uncorked three in the seventh.

Things got tense in Philly.

But they always had Harper in their back pocket like a lucky charm.

"Harper had a huge moment there," Padres slugger Manny Machado said. "You just have to tip your hat."

Hoskins, Harper, Wheeler have left a trail of indelible moment at Citizens Bank as they improved to 5-0 at home, where they will play World Series Games 3, 4 and 5.

Game 5 of the NLCS was no exception.

The Phillies caught a break in the third when NL home run champion Kyle Schwarber was called out on a two-out stolen-base attempt. The call was overturned on replay, and the Phillies had new life.

Hoskins, who came hitting a quite memorable .171, smashed one into the left field seats off starter Yu Darvish as the crowd went wild. He hopped down the line as he mouthed some words to his teammates in the dugout and twirled his bat -- not unlike the steadily-spinning rally towels -- as he gave them a 2-0 lead.

Wheeler gave up Soto's solo homer in the inning that made it 2-1. Padres pitcher Joe Musgrove snapped a Polaroid picture of Soto in the dugout.

Try as they might, the Padres weren't ready for their close up.

The Phillies were picture perfect. Second baseman Jean Segura cleared a path on the infield as the rest of the Phillies sat near the mound, took off on a running start and slid head first into the team photo.

Then it was time to party.

Harper demanded it.

## Brazil pol and Bolsonaro ally refuses arrest, injures police

By BRUNA PRADO and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

COMENDADOR LEVY GASPARIAN, Brazil (AP) — A Brazilian politician attacked federal police officers seeking to arrest him in his home on Sunday, prompting an hours-long siege that caused alarm and a scramble for a response at the highest level of government.

Roberto Jefferson, a former lawmaker and an ally of President Jair Bolsonaro, fired a rifle at police and threw grenades, wounding two officers in the rural municipality Comendador Levy Gasparian, in Rio de Janeiro state. He said in a video message sent to supporters on WhatsApp that he refused to surrender, though by early evening he was in custody.

The events were stunning even for Brazilians who have grown increasingly accustomed to far-right politicians and activists thumbing their noses at Supreme Court justices, and comes just days before Brazilians go to the polls to vote for president.

The Supreme Court has sought to rein in the spread of disinformation and anti-democratic rhetoric ahead of the Oct. 30 vote, often inviting the ire of Bolsonaro's base that decries such actions as censorship. As part of those efforts, Jefferson was jailed preventatively for making threats against the court's justices.

Jefferson in January received permission to serve his preventative arrest under house arrest, provided he complies with certain conditions. Justice Alexandre de Moraes said in a decision published Sunday that Jefferson has repeatedly violated those terms — most recently by using social media to compare one female justice to a prostitute — and ordered he be returned to prison.

"I didn't shoot anyone to hit them. No one. I shot their car and near them. There were four of them, they ran, I said, 'Get out, because I'm going get you,'" Jefferson said in the video. "I'm setting my example, I'm leaving my seed planted: resist oppression, resist tyranny. God bless Brazil."

Later, Brazil's federal police said in another statement that Jefferson was also arrested for attempted

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murder.

Bolsonaro was quick to criticize his ally in a live broadcast on social media. He denounced Jefferson's statements against Supreme Court justices, including the threats and insults that led to his initial arrest, and Sunday's attack. He also sought to distance himself from the former lawmaker.

"There's not a single picture of him and me," Brazil's president said. His opponents promptly posted several pictures of the two together on social media.

Bolsonaro also said he dispatched Justice Minister Anderson Torres to the scene, without providing details on what his role would be.

Bolsonaro's base had mixed reactions, with some on social media hailing Jefferson as a hero for standing up to the top court. Dozens flocked to his house to show support as he remained holed up inside. They chanted, with one group holding a banner that read: "FREEDOM FOR ROBERTO JEFFERSON".

Former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is campaigning to return to his former job, told reporters in Sao Paulo that Jefferson "does not have adequate behavior. It is not normal behavior."

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court convicted lawmaker Daniel Silveira for inciting physical attacks on the court's justices as well as other authorities. Bolsonaro quickly issued a pardon for Silveira, who appeared beside the president after he cast his vote in the election's first round on Oct. 2.

The runoff vote between Bolsonaro and da Silva is set for Oct. 30

"Brazil is terrified watching events that, this Sunday, reach the peak of the absurd," Arthur Lira, the president of Congress' Lower House and a Bolsonaro ally, wrote on Twitter. "We will not tolerate setbacks or attacks against our democracy."

## Judge rules for California baker over same-sex wedding cake

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (AP) — A California judge has ruled in favor of a bakery owner who refused to make wedding cakes for a same-sex couple because it violated her Christian beliefs.

The state Department of Fair Housing and Employment had sued Tastries Bakery in Bakersfield, arguing owner Cathy Miller intentionally discriminated against the couple in violation of California's Unruh Civil Rights Act.

Miller's attorneys argued her right to free speech and free expression of religion trumped the argument that she violated the anti-discrimination law. Kern County Superior Court Judge Eric Bradshaw ruled Friday that Miller acted lawfully while upholding her beliefs about what the Bible teaches regarding marriage.

The decision was welcomed as a First Amendment victory by Miller and her pro-bono attorneys with the conservative Thomas More Society.

"I'm hoping that in our community we can grow together," Miller told the Bakersfield Californian after the ruling. "And we should understand that we shouldn't push any agenda against anyone else."

A spokesperson said the fair housing department was aware of the ruling but had not determined what to do next. The couple, Eileen and Mireya Rodriguez-Del Rio, said they expect an appeal.

"Of course we're disappointed, but not surprised," Eileen told the newspaper. "We anticipate that our appeal will have a different result."

An earlier decision in Kern County Superior Court also went Miller's way, but it was later vacated by the 5th District Court of Appeal, which sent the lawsuit back to the county.

The decision comes as a Colorado baker is challenging a ruling he violated that state's anti-discrimination law by refusing to make a cake celebrating a gender transition. That baker, Jack Phillips, separately won a partial U.S. Supreme Court victory after refusing on religious grounds to make a gay couple's wedding cake a decade ago.

## Macron: Ukraine to decide time, terms of peace with Russia

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

Rome (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday it's up to Ukraine to decide the time and terms of peace with Russia, and he cautioned that the end of war "can't be the consecration of the law

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of the strongest.”

Speaking at the opening of a three-day peace conference in Rome, Macron said the international community will be there when the Ukrainian government chooses that time.

“To stay neutral would mean accepting the world order of the strongest, and I don’t agree with this,” Macron said at the conference organized by a Catholic charity with close ties to the Vatican.

There is concern that support from Ukraine’s allies in Europe might be eroded due to soaring energy costs with the approach of winter.

Pope Francis is scheduled to conclude the Cry for Peace conference, sponsored by the Sant’Egidio Community, with a speech Tuesday at the Colosseum.

Throughout the war that began with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine eight months ago, the pope has warned against an arms buildup. But he has said Ukraine has the right to defend itself.

While Italy’s new premier, far-right leader Giorgia Meloni, is a staunch backer of helping Ukraine defend its sovereignty, her coalition allies have pro-Russia sympathies.

In the evening, Meloni and Macron met privately in Rome for talks.

The premier’s office said the two agreed to work together “on the big, common challenges on the European level and in the respect of reciprocal national interests.” The two discussed the need to give “rapid and common responses” to the problems of high energy costs, support for Ukraine, the difficult economic moment and managing migrant flows, the statement said.

Macron, a pro-European centrist, tweeted a photo of the meeting in the evening, writing that “as Europeans, as neighboring countries, as friendly peoples, with Italy we must continue all the work started.”

“We owe to our youth and our peoples to succeed together,” Macron added, saying that Sunday’s meeting “goes in that direction.”

The French presidency said both leaders had a “constructive,” “frank” and “open” discussion for over one hour and that they agreed on the need to have regular contacts at all levels in order to move forward the European agenda.

The French president’s visit to Italy includes an audience with the pope at the Vatican on Monday.

Macron addressed concern that any talk of peace could be taken as a sign of lack of support for Ukraine. “To speak of peace now, call for peace, might seem unbearable for those who are fighting for freedom, it seems like a betrayal” of Ukraine, the French leader said.

But peace cannot be “captured by Russian power,” he said. “Peace can’t be the consecration of the law of the strongest, nor can it be a cease-fire (marking) the state of affairs.”

“We want the Ukrainian people to decide at a certain point, peace, the moment and the terms of peace,” Macron said.

“Peace will be built with the other (party), who today is the enemy, around a table, and the international community will be there.”

Italy’s main populist opposition leader, former Premier Giuseppe Conte, last week said Italy shouldn’t send more arms to Ukraine.

Macron referred to his past meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the war’s architect.

Moscow’s aggression is “the fruit of exaggerated nationalism” and feeling isolated, the French leader said, noting the aggression was unjustified.

“They were convinced that there were threats, that the rest of the world, the Western world, at least, would have tried to destroy Russia,” he said.

Macron warned against growing sentiments on nationalism on the European continent, where far-right political forces have gained popularity in some nations.

With many religious leaders at the conference, the president exhorted them to foster “resistance against the folly of war.”

Macron decried that “the Orthodox religion is being manipulated by Russia.” He didn’t elaborate. But Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill has fervently backed Putin in the war against Ukraine, calling the invasion part of a “metaphysical” battle against the West.

Keenly aware of Kirill's closeness to Putin, Pope Francis has sought, so far in vain, to meet with the patriarch during the war.

Ultimately, said Macron, nurturing peace in Europe depends on "equilibrium of respect, reciprocity, justice." He cautioned against efforts in Europe to "drive out the 'other' in our society" in a quest for "ethnic purity, religious purity."

Meloni came to power after an election campaign in which she championed a Christian view of European civilization.

## **Boris Johnson drops out of race to be next UK prime minister**

By SYLVIA HUI and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced Sunday he will not run to lead the Conservative Party, ending a short-lived, high-profile attempt to return to the prime minister's job he was ousted from little more than three months ago.

His withdrawal leaves former Treasury chief Rishi Sunak the strong favorite to become Britain's next prime minister — the third this year — at a time of political turmoil and severe economic challenges. He could win the contest as soon as Monday.

Johnson, who was ousted in July amid ethics scandals, had been widely expected to run to replace Liz Truss, who quit last week after her tax-cutting economic package caused turmoil in financial markets, was rapidly abandoned and obliterated her authority inside the governing party.

Johnson spent the weekend trying to gain support from fellow Conservative lawmakers after flying back from a Caribbean vacation and held talks with the two other contenders, Sunak and House of Commons Leader Penny Mordaunt.

Late Sunday he said he had amassed the backing of 102 colleagues, more than the threshold of 100 needed to make a ballot of lawmakers on Monday.

But he was far behind Sunak in support, and said he had concluded that "you can't govern effectively unless you have a united party in Parliament."

The prospect of a return by Johnson had thrown the already divided Conservative Party into further turmoil. He led the party to a thumping election victory in 2019, but his premiership was clouded by scandals over money and ethics that eventually became too much for the party to bear.

In his Sunday statement, Johnson insisted he was "well placed to deliver a Conservative victory" in the next national election, due by 2024. And he said that he likely would have won a ballot of Conservative Party members against either of his rivals.

"But in the course of the last days I have sadly come to the conclusion that this would simply not be the right thing to do," he said. "Therefore I am afraid the best thing is that I do not allow my nomination to go forward and commit my support to whoever succeeds."

But he hinted he might be back, saying: "I believe I have much to offer but I am afraid that this is simply not the right time."

After Truss quit on Thursday, the Conservative Party hastily ordered a contest that aims to finalize nominations Monday and install a new prime minister — its third this year — within a week.

The clear favorite now is Sunak, who has support from more than 140 lawmakers, according to unofficial tallies. Mordaunt is backed by fewer than 30.

If both make the ballot, the 357 Conservative lawmakers will hold an indicative vote on Monday to show their preference before the choice goes to the 172,000 party members around the country. If Mordaunt does not reach 100 nominations, Sunak will win by acclamation.

Sunak, 42, was runner-up after Truss in this summer's Tory leadership race to replace Johnson. On Sunday, he confirmed he was running again in the latest leadership contest.

"There will be integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level of the government I lead and I will work day in and day out to get the job done," Sunak said in a statement.

Johnson's exit came only hours after allies insisted he would run. Business Secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg

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told the BBC on Sunday that he spoke with Johnson and “clearly he’s going to stand” after flying back to London Saturday from a vacation in the Dominican Republic.

But Northern Ireland minister Steve Baker, a former backer of Johnson and an influential politician within the Conservative Party, warned a Johnson comeback would be a “guaranteed disaster.” Baker noted that Johnson still faces an investigation into whether he lied to Parliament while in office about breaking his government’s own coronavirus restrictions during parties at Downing Street.

If found guilty, Johnson could be suspended as a lawmaker.

“This isn’t the time for Boris and his style,” Baker told Sky News on Sunday. “What we can’t do is have him as prime minister in circumstances where he’s bound to implode, taking down the whole government ... and we just can’t do that again.”

Truss quit Thursday after a turbulent 45 days, conceding that she could not deliver on her botched tax-cutting economic package, which she was forced to abandon after it sparked fury within her party and weeks of turmoil in financial markets.

Sunak, who was Treasury chief from 2020 until this summer, steered Britain’s slumping economy through the coronavirus pandemic. He quit in July in protest at Johnson’s leadership.

In the summer contest to replace Johnson, Sunak called promises by Truss and other rivals to immediately slash taxes reckless “fairy tales” and argued that soaring inflation must be controlled first.

Tory voters backed Truss over Sunak, but he was proved right when Truss’ unfunded tax-cutting package triggered chaos in the markets in September. Now the task of stabilizing Britain’s wobbling economy is likely to fall to him.

## **FBI: Person in custody after ‘barricade situation’ at base**

FORT BELVOIR, Va. (AP) — A person was taken into custody following what authorities described as a “barricade situation” at a U.S. Army base outside the nation’s capital, the FBI said in a statement Sunday.

A squad from the agency’s Washington field office responded to Fort Belvoir in northern Virginia at about 8 a.m., according to a statement from the FBI. The situation was resolved and the unidentified person was taken into custody at about 3 p.m.

The Army’s criminal investigation division is the lead agency, while the FBI has provided victim assistance services, the agency said. The FBI provided no further details.

WUSA9 reported that the situation was inside a home.

Fort Belvoir is located about 20 miles (32 kilometers) south of Washington along the Potomac River in Virginia’s Fairfax County. The base has more than 2,000 family housing quarters, according to Fort Belvoir’s 2022 strategic plan.

The base is home to several Army command headquarters, elements of the Army Reserve and Army National Guard and nine Department of Defense agencies, according to a Department of Defense website that serves the military community.

## **Cheney: 1/6 panel won’t let Trump turn testimony into circus**

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Capitol riot won’t give Donald Trump the chance to turn a possible live TV appearance of his subpoenaed testimony into a “circus” and “food fight” as lawmakers try to ensure he complies with their demands, the panel’s vice chair said Sunday.

The committee is demanding Trump’s testimony under oath next month as well as records relevant to its investigation. To avoid a complicated and protracted legal battle, Trump reportedly had told associates he might consider complying with the subpoena if he could answer questions during live testimony.

When asked if the committee would consider taking his testimony live, Rep. Liz Cheney on Sunday did not directly respond. She said the committee would not allow Trump’s testimony to turn into a “food fight” on TV — much as was seen, she said, in Trump’s broadcast appearances such as one of his 2020 presidential debates — and she warned that the committee will take action if he does not comply with the subpoena.



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"We are going to proceed in terms of the questioning of the former president under oath," Cheney, R-Wyo., said on "Meet the Press" on NBC. "It may take multiple days, and it will be done with a level of rigor and discipline and seriousness that it deserves. We are not going to allow — he's not going to turn this into a circus."

"We have many, many alternatives that we will consider if the former president decides he is not going to comply with his legal obligation, a legal obligation every American citizen has to comply with a subpoena," she said.

Her office made clear later that she and the Jan. 6 committee were not ruling out the possibility of live testimony. It did not indicate what form that might take to avoid the "food fight" or "circus" that Cheney said would not happen.

The subpoena, issued Friday, calls on Trump to hand over documents by Nov. 4 and provide testimony "on or about" Nov. 14.

It is unclear how Trump and his legal team will respond. He could comply or negotiate with the committee, announce he will defy the subpoena or ignore it altogether. He could go to court and try to stop it.

Last week, Steve Bannon, a longtime Trump ally, was sentenced to serve four months behind bars after defying a subpoena from the same committee. He remains free pending appeal. Former Trump trade adviser Peter Navarro also awaits a trial next month on similar contempt of Congress charges.

The subpoena includes requests for any communications referring to extremist groups who were coming to Washington, pressure on state legislators to overturn the 2020 election vote and messages about Vice President Mike Pence, whom Trump was pushing to object to President Joe Biden's victory.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Sunday that she doubted Trump would appear for his deposition and that the public should know "that no one is above the law."

"I don't think he's man enough to show up," Pelosi said on MSNBC. "I don't think his lawyers would want him to show up because he (would) had to testify under oath. ... We'll see."

There remains little legal advantage for Trump to cooperate with the committee at a time when he faces other legal battles in various jurisdictions, including over his family business in New York and the handling of presidential records at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

It's possible that Trump's lawyers could simply opt to run out the clock on the subpoena if they go to court to try to squash it as the committee of two Republicans and seven Democrats is required to finish its work by the end of the year.

Cheney, in the television interview, made her position clear that Trump had committed "multiple criminal offenses" and should be prosecuted. She cited his repeated efforts as outlined by the Jan. 6 committee to undermine democracy by denying his election loss to Biden and by spurring his supporters in the violent attack on the Capitol.

"We've been very clear about a number of different criminal offenses that are likely at issue here," Cheney said. "If the Department of Justice determines that they have the evidence that we believe is there and they make a decision not to prosecute, I think that really calls into question whether or not we're a nation of laws."

Cheney, who lost in Wyoming's August primary after becoming Trump's fiercest GOP critic and has signaled a possible 2024 presidential run, expressed dismay over the number of Republican candidates in the Nov. 8 midterms who deny the legitimacy of the 2020 election. She acknowledged that the Jan. 6 committee's investigation will be permanently ended in January if Republicans retake control of the House.

While saying it may take "a couple of election cycles," Cheney insisted the Republican Party can find its way back as a defender of democracy and the Constitution, as she put it. She pointed to the 2024 presidential campaign as a pivotal moment.

"I think that the party has either got to come back from where we are right now, which is a very dangerous, toxic place, or the party will splinter and there will be a new conservative party that rises," she said. "And if Donald Trump is the nominee of the Republican Party, the party will shatter and there will be a conservative party that rises in its place."

She said Trump has shown "his willingness to use force to attempt to stop the peaceful transition of

power. And there are simply many, many millions more Americans who, despite any party affiliation, understand how dangerous that is.”

On whether she could run in 2024, Cheney said: “I’m focused on what we’ve got to do to save the country from this dangerous moment we’re in ... not right now on whether I’m going to be a candidate or not.”

## Russia’s defense chief warns of ‘dirty bomb’ provocation

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia’s defense chief alleged Sunday that Ukraine was preparing a “provocation” involving a radioactive device, a stark claim that was strongly rejected by U.S., British and Ukrainian officials amid soaring tensions as Moscow struggles to stem Ukrainian advances in the south.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made the allegations in phone calls with his counterparts from the United States, Britain, France and Turkey.

Russia’s defense ministry said Shoigu voiced concern about “possible Ukrainian provocations involving a ‘dirty bomb,’” a device that uses explosives to scatter radioactive waste. It doesn’t have the devastating effect of a nuclear explosion, but could expose broad areas to radioactive contamination.

Russian authorities repeatedly have made allegations that Ukraine could detonate a dirty bomb in a false flag attack and blame it on Moscow. Ukrainian authorities, in turn, have accused the Kremlin of hatching such a plan.

British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace strongly rejected Shoigu’s claim and warned Moscow against using it as a pretext for escalation.

The British Ministry of Defense noted that Shoigu, in a call with Wallace, “alleged that Ukraine was planning actions facilitated by Western countries, including the UK, to escalate the conflict in Ukraine.”

“The Defense Secretary refuted these claims and cautioned that such allegations should not be used as a pretext for greater escalation,” the ministry said.

The U.S. also rejected Shoigu’s “transparently false allegations,” White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a statement. “The world would see through any attempt to use this allegation as a pretext for escalation.”

In a televised address Sunday evening, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy suggested that Moscow itself was setting the stage for deploying a radioactive device on Ukrainian soil.

“If Russia calls and says that Ukraine is allegedly preparing something, it means only one thing: that Russia has already prepared all of it,” Zelenskyy said.

The mention of the dirty bomb threat in Shoigu’s calls seemed to indicate the threat of such an attack has risen to an unprecedented level.

The French Ministry of the Armed Forces said Shoigu told his counterpart, Sebastien Lecornu, that the situation in Ukraine was rapidly worsening and “trending towards uncontrollable escalation.”

“It appears that there is a shared feeling that the tensions have approached the level that could raise the real threat for all,” said Fyodor Lukyanov, the Kremlin-connected head of the Council for Foreign and Defense policies, a Moscow-based group of top foreign affairs experts.

The rising tensions come as Russian authorities reported building defensive positions in occupied areas of Ukraine and border regions of Russia, reflecting fears that Ukrainian forces may attack along new sections of the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line of the war, which enters its ninth month on Monday.

In recent weeks, Ukraine has focused its counteroffensive mostly on the Kherson region. Their relentless artillery strikes cut the main crossings across the Dnieper River, which bisects the southern region, leaving Russian troops on the west bank short of supplies and vulnerable to encirclement.

Kirill Stremousov, the deputy head of the Russian-installed regional administration in Kherson, said Sunday in a radio interview that Russian defensive lines “have been reinforced and the situation has remained stable” since local officials strongly encouraged all residents of the region’s capital and nearby areas Saturday to evacuate by ferry to the river’s east bank.

The region is one of four that Russian President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed last month and put under

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Russian martial law on Thursday. Kherson city has been in Russian hands since the early days of the war, but Ukraine's forces have made advances toward reclaiming it.

About 20,000 Kherson residents have moved to places on the east bank of the Dnieper River, the Kremlin-backed regional administration reported. The Ukrainian military said Sunday that Russia's military also withdrew its officers from areas on the west bank, leaving newly mobilized, inexperienced forces.

The Ukrainian claim could not be independently verified.

As Ukraine presses south after liberating the Kharkiv region in the north last month, authorities in the western Russian provinces bordering northeastern Ukraine appeared jittery.

The governor of Russia's Kursk region, Roman Starovoit, said Sunday that two defensive lines have been built and a third one would be finished by Nov. 5.

Defensive lines were also established in the Belgorod region, Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

More defensive positions were being built in the Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine, said Yevgeny Prigozhin, a millionaire Russian businessman who owns the Wagner Group, a mercenary military company that has played a prominent role in the war.

Prigozhin said his company was constructing a "Wagner line" in the Luhansk region, another of the Ukrainian provinces Putin illegally annexed last month. Prigozhin posted images last week showing a section of newly built defenses and trench systems southeast of the town of Kreminna.

The British Defense Ministry said Sunday "the project suggests Russia is making a significant effort to prepare defenses in depth behind the current front line, likely to deter any rapid Ukrainian counteroffensives."

Russia's forces captured Luhansk several months ago. Pro-Moscow separatists declared independent republics in the region and neighboring Donetsk eight years ago, and Putin made controlling all of both provinces a goal at the war's outset.

The Institute for the Study of War, a think tank in Washington, said Sunday that Russia's latest strategy of targeting power plants appeared aimed at diminishing Ukrainians' will to fight and forcing the government in Kyiv to devote more resources to protecting civilians and energy infrastructure.

It said the effort was unlikely to damage Ukrainian morale but would have significant economic impacts.

President Zelenskyy said Sunday that utilities workers were well on their way to restoring electricity supplies cut off by large-scale Russian missile strikes Saturday, but acknowledged that it would take longer to provide heating.

Nine regions across Ukraine, from Odesa in the southwest to Kharkiv in the northeast, saw more attacks targeting energy and other critical infrastructure over the past day, the Ukrainian army's general staff said. It reported a total of 25 Russian airstrikes and more than 100 missile and artillery strikes around Ukraine.

In response, Zelenskyy appealed to mayors and other local leaders to ensure that Ukrainians heed official calls to conserve energy. "Now is definitely not the time for bright storefronts and signs," he said.

## 8 killed in Somalia as militants attack port city hotel

By OMAR FARUK Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — Eight people were killed after militants stormed a hotel in Somalia's port city of Kismayo, an attack that started with a suicide bombing Sunday before gunmen forcibly entered and exchanged fire with security forces.

The Islamic extremist group al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack, saying its fighters had penetrated the Tawakal Hotel.

Security forces from the southern Somali state of Jubaland later ended the siege, killing the gunmen and rescuing scores of people, state media reported.

There was no official word on casualties, but a doctor at Kismayo Hospital told The Associated Press of eight dead people, four of whom were security personnel.

At least 41 people were wounded in the attack, the doctor said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to divulge such information.

Journalists were prevented from getting close to the scene of the attack. Footage shared on social media

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showed ambulances collecting the wounded from outside the hotel in central Kismayo.

The city is located about 500 kilometers (310 miles) from the Somali capital, Mogadishu.

The attack began when a car driven by a suicide bomber rammed the entrance gate of the hotel and then exploded, police officer Abshir Omar said by phone. A number of small businesses along the street were destroyed.

Some government officials and traditional elders were eating lunch in the hotel at the time of the explosion, he said.

Mohamed Nasi Guled, a senior police official in Jubaland, said three attackers entered the hotel's premises.

The hotel is popular as a meeting place for government officials. Al-Shabab is believed to have a strong presence in the areas surrounding Kismayo, the largest city and commercial capital of Jubaland.

Al-Shabab, which has ties with al-Qaida, regularly carries out attacks in the Horn of Africa nation. Many of the group's attacks target popular hotels.

Al-Shabab opposes the Mogadishu-based federal government, which it perceives as a puppet of foreign governments. The group also opposes the presence of foreign troops in Somalia.

## AP Top 25: LSU re-enters at No. 18 ahead of visit from 'Bama

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

LSU re-entered The Associated Press College Football poll at No. 18 on Sunday and No. 25 South Carolina earned a ranking for the first time in four seasons.

The first six teams in the AP Top 25 presented by Regions Bank held their spots after either winning and not playing this past weekend.

Georgia is No. 1 for the third straight week, with No. 2 Ohio State gaining ground after it blew out Iowa. The Bulldogs, who were idle, received 31 first-place votes and 1,530 points, and the Buckeyes got 18 first-place votes and 1,513 points.

No. 3 Tennessee received 13 first-place votes. No. 4 Michigan, No. 5 Clemson and No. 6 Alabama also held their spots, with the Tigers receiving a first-place vote.

No. 7 TCU moved up a spot after remaining unbeaten with a second-half comeback against Kansas State. Oregon jumped two spots to a season-high No. 8 after routing UCLA.

Oklahoma State is No. 9, followed by Southern California and Wake Forest in a tie at No. 10.

The Demon Deacons had never reached the top 10 in the AP poll until peaking last season at No. 10. Now they have done it two years in a row.

LSU, in its first season under coach Brian Kelly, handed Mississippi its first loss of the season in emphatic fashion and moved back into the rankings ahead of its game against Alabama on Nov. 5 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The Tigers were ranked for a week earlier this month before losing to Tennessee. They improved to 6-2 by outscoring Ole Miss 42-3 after falling behind by 14 in the first half.

South Carolina, under second-year coach Shane Beamer, is ranked for the first time since a one-week stint after the opening weekend of the 2018 season. The Gamecocks beat Texas A&M to improve to 5-2. They have not been ranked this late in a season since 2013.

### POLL POINTS

LSU moving into the rankings before its off week ensures that Tigers-Tide will be a matchup of ranked teams for the first time since the SEC West rivals played a 1 vs. 2 game in 2019.

Alabama is off next week, too.

The Tigers backslid after winning the national title in '19 and were unranked when they played the Crimson Tide each of the last two seasons.

That snapped a string of 14 straight seasons in which LSU and Alabama were both ranked when they played.

—LSU and Tulane are both ranked for the first time since 1998, though the Louisiana schools were heading in different directions when they overlapped that season.

For two weeks at the beginning of October the Tigers and Green Wave were in the Top 25, but LSU fell

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out the next week and finished 4-7. The Green Wave went on to an unbeaten season and finished No. 7.  
OUT

—Texas is unranked again after blowing a second-half lead at Oklahoma State. The Longhorns fell to 5-3.

—Mississippi State once again had the misfortune of catching Alabama immediately after a Tide loss and was knocked out of the rankings. The Bulldogs did score a touchdown in Tuscaloosa for the first time since 2014. It came on the last play of the game.

## CONFERENCE CALL

SEC — 7 (Nos. 1, 3, 6, 15, 18, 19, 25).

ACC — 5 (Nos. 5, 10, 16, 21, 24).

Big Ten — 4 (Nos. 2, 4, 13, 17)

Pac-12 — 4 (Nos. 8, 10, 12, 14).

Big 12 — 3 (Nos. 7, 9, 22).

American — 2 (Nos. 20, 23).

## RANKED vs. RANKED

After having a total of 11 games matching ranked teams the past two weeks, the next slate is not quite so juicy.

—No. 2 Ohio State at No. 13 Penn State. Sixth straight meeting with both ranked. The Buckeyes have won the previous five.

—No. 19 Kentucky at No. 3 Tennessee. Last time the Wildcats and Volunteers were both ranked when they played was 1951.

—No. 9 Oklahoma State at No. 22 Kansas State. The second meeting out of 65 matchups with both ranked. The first was 2011, when the Cowboys won 52-45.

## 'Black Adam,' with Dwayne Johnson, debuts with \$67M

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Warner Bros.' "Black Adam" opened with an estimated \$67 million, according to studio estimates Sunday, handing Dwayne Johnson his biggest box-office weekend as a leading man and launching the D.C. Comics character he spent a decade to bring to the big screen.

"Black Adam" was a \$200-million bid to upset the power balance in a DC Extended Universe dominated by the likes of Batman, Wonder Woman and Superman. The \$67 million debut fell well shy of that stratosphere, even with the considerable draw of Johnson acting in his first superhero movie. Still, "Black Adam" managed the highest opening weekend since "Thor: Love and Thunder" debuted with \$143 million in July.

"Black Adam," which stars Johnson as an ancient Egyptian summoned to the modern day, was notably hobbled by poor reviews (40% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes). Moviegoers were kinder, giving the film a B+ CinemaScore. It collected \$73 million internationally for a \$140 million global haul.

"Black Adam" took a circuitous route to reach theaters. The character had originally been planned to launch as a villain in 2019's "Shazam!" before executives pivoted to give Black Adam a standalone feature. The goofier "Shazam!," which cost closer to \$100 million to make, opened with \$53.5 million in ticket sales and wound up an over-achieving success with \$366 million worldwide.

The stakes were higher for "Black Adam," though. While promoting the film, Johnson hasn't been shy about his desire to follow up "Black Adam" with a showdown with Superman. But whether the receipts for "Black Adam" are enough to warrant that remains unclear. Under new leadership, Warner Bros. is overhauling its approach to DC Comics adaptations.

Jeff Goldstein, distribution chief for Warner Bros., celebrated the results as a personal best for Johnson outside of the "Fast & Furious" films, and a PG-13 film with broad-based appeal that audiences responded to better than critics. Still, it's a time of transition for Warner Bros.' reorganizing DC unit as the studio seeks more Marvel-sized successes. Next on tap is "Shazam! Fury of the Gods" in March.

"It's all about making good movies. It's all about finding the right scripts," said Goldstein. "Our studio is definitely going through a major revamping of our production leadership and style and approach. I think

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that we'll be able to crack this nut. We're definitely focused in on doing that."

"Ticket to Paradise," the Bali-set romantic comedy starring Julia Roberts and George Clooney, proved smart counterprogramming. The Universal Pictures release debuted with \$16.3 million, well above recent sales for rom-coms, which have struggled in recent years at the box office. The film is already a hit abroad, where it's been in release for the last month, accruing \$80.2 million in ticket sales.

Earlier this month, Universal's R-rated "Bros," an LGBTQ milestone in the genre, debuted with a disappointing \$4.8 million. "Ticket to Paradise" had a notable advantage in its two stars, and appealed particularly to older audiences; 64% of ticket buyers were 35 and up, the studio said.

"It became an event film for all audiences this weekend but especially for older audiences that can be difficult to get into theaters," said Jim Orr, head of distribution for Universal. "We all know this is a demographic group that doesn't exactly run out to see films opening weekend. That gives us great encouragement for the weeks and months ahead."

Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for data firm Comscore, noted it was the first weekend with a \$65 million opener and more than \$100 million in overall domestic ticket sales since July. That was owed largely to star power, he said, in the appeal of both "Ticket to Paradise" and "Black Adam" with Johnson.

"He was the engine that really drove this box office despite some headwinds in terms of the DC brand and this not being as known a character," said Dergarabedian. "This is a very strong starting point for Dwayne Johnson in the mix of DC Comics. He's like a box-office supercharger. Forty-percent Rotten Tomatoes, but people just want to see Dwayne Johnson on the big screen because he is bigger than life."

Last week's top film, "Halloween Ends," dropped massively in its second weekend. The Universal horror sequel, which was simultaneously released on Peacock, declined 80% with \$8 million. Meanwhile, Paramount Pictures' "Smile," continued to defy the typical declines for horror releases. With \$8.4 million in its fourth week of release, "Smile" came in third and boosted its overall domestic sales to \$84.3 million.

As more acclaimed awards contenders land in theaters, Searchlight Pictures' "The Banshees of Inisherin" started its run with one of the best per-theater averages of the year. The Martin McDonagh drama, starring Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson, opened with \$181,000 in four theaters for a per-theater average of \$45,250. For A24, Charlotte Wells' "Aftersun," starring Paul Mescal and Frankie Corio as a father and daughter on vacation, also debuted solidly in four theaters, with a \$16,589 per-theater average.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Black Adam," \$67 million.
2. "Ticket to Paradise," \$16.3 million.
3. "Smile," \$8.4 million
4. "Halloween Ends," \$8 million.
5. "Lyle, Lyle Crocodile," \$4.2 million.
6. "The Woman King," \$1.9 million.
7. "Terrifier 2," \$1.9 million.
8. "Don't Worry Darling," \$880,000.
9. "Amsterdam," \$811,000.
10. "Triangle of Sadness," \$600,000.

## Battle for Congress could hinge on North Carolina district

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press/Report for America

FUQUAY-VARINA, N.C. (AP) — In the fast-growing suburbs of Raleigh, North Carolina, the 13th District has emerged as one of the nation's battlegrounds for congressional control, where a tight race between former President Donald Trump's favored young upstart and a Democratic state senator could determine the balance of power in the narrowly split U.S. House.

Each refuting accusations of extreme stances and loose ties to the district, Republican Bo Hines and Democratic state Sen. Wiley Nickel are vying for the open seat that spawned from a tumultuous redis-

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tricting battle during which North Carolina fashioned boundaries for the new congressional district it was awarded following the 2020 census.

Analysts say the existing congressional map favors Republicans in seven of the state's 14 districts, and favors Democrats in six. It was created by a panel of three judges after it declared the Republican-controlled legislature's proposed boundaries amounted to unlawful partisan gerrymandering.

The map is only good for the 2022 election and will be redrawn by the legislature for 2024.

Considered the state's lone swing district based on past elections, the 13th stretches from the southern border of the capital city beltline to the hog farms at the western edge of the coastal plain, aggregating a myriad of urban, suburban and rural communities. Its candidates are now seeking to portray themselves as moderate enough to represent the diverse constituency.

Political analysts, such as David McLennan of Meredith College in Raleigh, say the race is yet another test of Trump's influence in a crucial swing state. But he expects even a successful election year for North Carolina Democrats won't be enough to protect the party from losing control of the House.

In Fuquay-Varina, a right-leaning suburb, Hines turns heads as he enters a bustling coffee shop. A local contractor stands up to shake his hand, and two teenagers at the corner table chatter about his "frat boy charm." He's new to the neighborhood — he relocated to the district from Winston-Salem just a month before the May primary — but the 27-year-old former college football player asserts he understands the issues that matter to its residents.

"I feel like I have my finger on the pulse in this community, and North Carolina values are North Carolina values," Hines told The Associated Press earlier this month.

Democrats have criticized Hines for "district shopping," but the Republican, who lived in Raleigh for two years before transferring to Yale from North Carolina State University, said he always intended to run for the seat that Republican U.S. Senate candidate Rep. Ted Budd is vacating. Budd currently represents a 13th District that is located to the west.

Nickel, 46, who still resides in the neighboring 2nd District but has represented Raleigh and nearby Cary in the state Senate since 2019, is "one to talk" about residency, Hines said.

North Carolina congressional candidates are not required to live in the district they seek to represent.

Some unaffiliated voters, like Bambi Bishop Lockhart, a kindergarten teacher in the Raleigh suburb of Holly Springs, aren't convinced Hines has the experience or maturity to represent their interests in Congress.

"Bo Hines — he's young, he's immature and it's so evident that he moved to the district just to run for Congress," Lockhart, 47, said. "It reminds me of pageant hopping, like when girls from my childhood would move from place to place competing in local pageants until they finally qualify for Miss North Carolina. Bo's trying to do that here when he's actually an outsider who doesn't represent us."

She described Nickel — a two-term state senator, criminal defense attorney and former White House staffer under President Barack Obama — as "jovial" and "passionate about the issues that matter," namely education and abortion access.

Other voters, like Fuquay-Varina structural engineer Tommy Faulkner, 48, are less concerned by Hines' recent relocation. An unaffiliated voter who "leans conservative," Faulkner said he sees Hines as the best candidate for the economy.

"He's a North Carolina son, so no matter what area of North Carolina he decided to represent, I think he could represent well," he said. "On more of the moral issues, like abortion, I trust him to maintain traditional North Carolina values."

In a campaign cycle that has often framed abortion access and inflation reduction as mutually exclusive priorities, Nickel told the AP he is running a campaign focused on their intersections. The Democrat, who said federal abortion protections are the first policy he hopes to pass in Congress, argues people won't want to do business in a state without abortion access, which could hurt North Carolina's economy.

Hines said he supports a total ban on abortion, "but with the exception of life of the mother." Democrats called him out earlier in the campaign cycle for wiping any mention of abortion from his campaign website, accusing him of hiding his "extremist" stance to appeal to moderates. Hines told the AP he removed it because he was hearing from constituents that abortion wasn't among their primary concerns.

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The first bill Hines hopes to pass in Congress, he said, is a 10-year moratorium on immigration. He described it as "a pause" to allow the United States to completely redraw its immigration system.

"I'm not against immigration," Hines said. "I think we need to have an immigration system that allows us to properly vet people and allows us to expedite the process for folks, which, right now, it takes years if you do it correctly."

But Nickel argues his opponent's proposal runs counter to his platform of supporting the nation's economic revival. The Democrat, for his part, has outlined a 30-point inflation action plan he said offers bipartisan economic solutions.

"The things he says are so dangerous and so far outside the mainstream," Nickel said of Hines. "A 10-year moratorium on immigration would literally wreck our economy. People would go out of business, farmers wouldn't be able to put food on the table."

## Iran releases footage from prison fire, adding to mystery

By The Associated Press undefined

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran on Sunday released security footage that it said came from its notorious Evin Prison the night a fire broke out that killed at least eight inmates, an effort to clarify the government's narrative amid growing international pressure.

The purported CCTV footage of the mayhem last weekend only added to the mystery of what happened the night of the blaze at the detention facility. Evin Prison is known for holding political prisoners, including protesters from the demonstrations that have convulsed the country over the past five weeks. Rights groups estimate that thousands have been swept up since the unrest began over the Sept. 16 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman in police custody for allegedly not adhering to the country's strict Islamic dress code.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency aired an interview with an unnamed top prison guard who claimed a riot broke out as prisoners convicted of financial crimes tried to escape. However, no unrest or violence is visible in the released CCTV footage. The quick glimpses show crowds of detainees rushing through cell doors. Some men appear panicked as smoke fills the ward and a siren wails. A prisoner tries to break his cell lock with a fire extinguisher, while another tries with a mop. A man tries to damage a CCTV camera.

The cryptic video and shifting explanations for what happened last Saturday night at Evin Prison have sown doubt about the government's version of events. Officials first said the unrest was stoked by "enemy agents" and some inmates who attempted to escape. They also claimed inmates set a sewing workshop on fire. But in numerous videos shared on social media, gunshots, explosions and protest chants can be heard.

Iran's nationwide protests first focused on Iran's state-mandated hijab, or headscarf, for women but transformed into one of the most serious challenges to the country's ruling clerics. Protesters have clashed with police and even called for the downfall of the Islamic Republic itself. Security forces have fired live ammunition and tear gas to disperse demonstrations, killing over 200 people, according to estimates by rights groups.

Also on Sunday, Iran's atomic energy agency alleged that hackers acting on behalf of an unidentified foreign country broke into a subsidiary's network and had free access to its email system.

An anonymous hacking group claimed responsibility for the attack on Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, demanding Tehran release political prisoners. The group, calling itself "Black Reward," said it leaked 50 gigabytes of internal emails, contracts and construction plans related to Iran's Russian-backed nuclear power plant in Bushehr and shared the files on its Telegram channel. It was unclear whether the breached system contained classified material.

"Unlike Westerners, we do not flirt with criminal mullahs," the anonymous hacking group said in a Telegram post.

Iran did not specify which foreign country it believed to be behind the hack, but it has previously accused the United States and Israel for cyberattacks that have impaired the country's infrastructure.

"These illegal efforts out of desperation are aimed at attracting public attention," the Atomic Energy



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Organization said.

Meanwhile Iran's leading teachers' association reported that sit-ins canceled classes at multiple schools across the country in protest over the government's crackdown on student protesters.

The union shared photos of teachers holding protest signs saying "Woman, Life, Freedom" instead of teaching in classrooms in the Kurdish cities of Sanandaj, Marivan, Kermanshah and Saqez, as well as in the West Azerbaijan and mountainous Hamadan provinces, among others.

"Schools have become barracks and tear gas is thrown in the faces of elementary school students," one teacher wrote in a letter shared by the union.

Campuses have long been a flash point for unrest in Iran, including during the 1953 student protests under the Western-backed shah and during the 1999 pro-democracy demonstrations under former reformist President Mohammad Khatami.

Scattered demonstrations continued at universities across the country on Sunday, footage showed. At the prestigious Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, the scene of an hours-long siege by security forces earlier this month that ended with dozens of students arrested, protests erupted as students tore down the barrier dividing men from women in the campus cafeteria, a students' association said.

"Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!" the massive crowd shouted at the top of their lungs, footage showed, pumping their fists in the air.

## **Biden: 'Legitimate' for voters to weigh age as he nears 80**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del. (AP) — President Joe Biden joked that it's difficult acknowledging he's about to turn 80, but said he's physically and mentally capable of serving a potential second term in the White House.

Biden, who turns 80 on Nov. 20, said it's "totally legitimate" for voters to question whether someone his age can manage the demanding stresses of the American presidency. Biden made the comment in response to a question about his age during an MSNBC interview that aired Sunday.

He said people should judge for themselves whether he is up to the task as polls show that voters would rather not see a rematch with Donald Trump, the Republican ousted by Biden in 2020.

Biden would be 82 on Inauguration Day in January 2025; Trump would be 78.

A recent Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll shows only about 3 in 10 people questioned want either Biden or Trump to run for president in two years. Just 5 in 10 Democrats want Biden to seek a second term, while 6 out of 10 Republicans hope to see Trump seek the presidency again.

"I think the best way to make the judgement is to watch me. Am I slowing up? Am I going at the same pace?" Biden said in the interview that was taped Friday during a visit to the Delaware State University campus to promote his student loan debt forgiveness executive order.

Biden has yet to officially announce whether he will run for a second term, but has repeatedly said it is his intention to seek reelection.

During his 2020 campaign, Biden often presented himself as a "transition candidate" who would build a bridge to new Democratic talent.

The age and health of both Biden and Trump loomed throughout a race that was decided by a younger and more diverse electorate and at a moment when the nation is facing no shortage of issues of consequence.

In the MSNBC interview, Biden said voters should look at his "passion" for the work as they consider his age in factoring whether they should vote for him.

Biden joked that he's still coming to terms with becoming an octogenarian.

"I can't even say the age I am going to be. I can't even get it out of my mouth," Biden said.

Biden went through a battery of blood, physical, gastrointestinal, dental, vision and neurological examinations shortly before his birthday last year.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor, Biden's primary care physician, wrote in a six-page memo released by the White House after that exam that Biden was "healthy, vigorous" and "fit to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency."

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O'Connor said he investigated Biden for increased instances of "throat clearing" during public remarks and a stiffening of his gait.

O'Connor reported that Biden's coughing was the result of gastrointestinal reflux and that the stiffened gait was the result of a new diagnosis of "mild peripheral neuropathy," spinal arthritis and compensation for a broken foot sustained shortly before he took office.

## Report: Salman Rushdie lives, but loses use of eye and hand

NEW YORK (AP) — Salman Rushdie's agent says the author has lost sight in one eye and the use of a hand as he recovers from an attack from a man who rushed the stage at an August literary event in western New York, according to a published report.

Literary agent Andrew Wylie told the Spanish language newspaper El Pais in an article published Saturday that Rushdie suffered three serious wounds to his neck and 15 more wounds to his chest and torso in the attack that took away sight in an eye and left a hand incapacitated.

Rushdie, 75, spent years in hiding after Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a 1989 edict, a fatwa, calling for his death after publication of his novel "The Satanic Verses," which some Muslims consider blasphemous. Over the past two decades, Rushdie has traveled freely.

Hadi Matar, 24, of Fairview, New Jersey, has been incarcerated after pleading not guilty to attempted murder and assault in the Aug. 12 attack on Rushdie as he was being introduced at the Chautauqua Institution, a rurally located center 55 miles (89 kilometers) southwest of Buffalo that is known for its summertime lecture series.

After the attack, Rushdie was treated at a Pennsylvania hospital, where he was briefly put on a ventilator to recover from what Wylie told El Pais was a "brutal attack" that cut nerves to one arm.

Wylie told the newspaper he could not say whether Rushdie remained in a hospital or discuss his whereabouts.

"He's going to live ... That's the important thing," Wylie said.

The attack was along the lines of what Rushdie and his agent have thought was the "principal danger ... a random person coming out of nowhere and attacking," Wylie told El Pais.

"So you can't protect against it because it's totally unexpected and illogical," he said.

Wylie told the newspaper it was like Beatles member John Lennon's murder. Lennon was shot to death by Mark David Chapman outside his Manhattan apartment building Dec. 8, 1980, hours after the singer had signed an autograph for Chapman.

In a jailhouse interview with The New York Post, Matar said he disliked Rushdie and praised Khomeini. Iran has denied involvement in the attack.

## No. 3 Tennessee revival has Vol faithful believing like 1998

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Sports Writer

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Tennessee Volunteers are proving just how quickly a traditional powerhouse can rebound despite seeming lost for well over a decade.

Tennessee football hit the rockiest of bottoms in late January 2021. No athletic director, no coach after Jeremy Pruitt was among 10 fired for serious NCAA violations, and Volunteer players rushing toward the transfer portal to escape Knoxville.

"Those were some dark moments," Tennessee Chancellor Donde Plowman said.

Now the Southeastern Conference program is among six undefeated teams in the Football Bowl Subdivision, with the No. 3 Vols (7-0) off to their best start since winning the national championship in 1998 — all in the span of 21 months.

Neyland Stadium once again is the place to be, entertaining a fourth straight sellout for the first time since 2014 when Tennessee cruised to a 65-24 homecoming victory against UT Martin on Saturday.

Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback Peyton Manning smoked victory cigars with new Vols star Jalin Hyatt. Country stars Kenny Chesney and Kelsea Ballerini popped into town to watch last weekend's win

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over Alabama from the top of the stadium.

Athletic director Danny White, hired by Plowman, knew Tennessee had resources, tradition, passion and a strong fan base when he decided to leave UCF in January 2021. White also knew he and Josh Heupel, the coach he brought with him from UCF a few days later, had a plan that would work.

This fast?

No. White said Saturday the Vols are "way ahead of schedule" in their second season together.

"Just because this year is better than what people expected, it doesn't mean that we're there," White said. "And we have to build a program that's sustainable and built for the long haul. And that's exactly what Josh and the staff are focused on."

Before Plowman hired White, Tennessee went through Mike Hamilton, Dave Hart, John Currie and former football coach Phillip Fulmer as athletic directors. The revolving door of football coaches started in 2008 when Fulmer was fired and included Lane Kiffin, Derek Dooley, Butch Jones and Pruitt.

The chancellor had people urging her to hire a coach first with National Signing Day closing in. Plowman said no. Her job is hiring the athletic director, and she and Randy Boyd, the university system's president, flew to Orlando for a dinnertime meeting and hired White three days later.

White met with players to find out what they wanted in a new coach, and their answers made him feel bringing Heupel with him from UCF was the right move.

One big question was how Heupel's fast-paced offense, which uses almost every inch from sideline to sideline, would translate to the SEC. Boyd said everybody likes to score points but Tennessee is in the SEC.

"Sure enough, he's proved me wrong," Boyd said. "He actually knows something about putting some points up."

Tennessee was ranked first nationally with an average of 551 offensive yards, and then it rolled to 696 yards against UT Martin. The Vols also are scoring 50.1 points a game. White isn't surprised to see Heupel's offense translate easily to the SEC.

"If there's a better offensive mind in the game, I'd like to meet him," White said.

Heupel puts it even more simply: "Good teams get better throughout the course of the season, so we have to continue to get better."

Hendon Hooker, Tennessee's first Heisman Trophy candidate since Manning finished second in 1997, is the engine behind the gaudy offensive numbers. Hooker has thrown for 18 touchdowns with only one interception this season while piling up 2,093 yards passing.

Earl Brown of Knoxville has been a season-ticket holder since 1972; keeping the tickets was a condition before marrying Judy that Thanksgiving to make game day that week. Saturday was the 323rd straight game Brown has attended, even making each of the 10 SEC-only games in 2020 when the Vols went 3-7 in Pruitt's last year.

Yes, Earl Brown says it was tough to sit through those games. But it just added to the celebration of the Alabama win after 15 straight losses in the series.

"People all around us were actually, literally crying," Judy Brown said. "It was a big monkey off our back. This one felt like the national championship. We were there, and ... it wasn't the national championship, but it felt like it."

Tennessee is the only FBS program this season with wins over four AP Top 25 ranked teams at the time of the games, the first time since 1998 it has done that in the regular season.

The challenge gets tougher from here. Kentucky visits Saturday night, followed by the Volunteers going to Athens for a showdown with Georgia.

Boyd turns 63 on Monday. He has been watching Vols football since he was 7. He had thought that this year's team would be really good, but not at the level of reigning national champ Georgia and perennial threat Alabama.

"We no longer have to qualify it that way," Boyd said. "I think we can beat anybody in the country on any given day."

## Parade suspect's court antics won't help appeal, experts say

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — He stripped his shirt off in court. He complains that the prosecutors are “slick.” He won't let the judge get a word in. He won't even answer to his own name.

The Wisconsin man accused of killing six people by driving his SUV through a Christmas parade has worked to disrupt his trial since he decided to represent himself, dragging out a painful proceeding that appears destined to end with his conviction.

The evidence against Darrell Brooks is overwhelming and includes videos showing his red Ford Escape plowing through the parade and witnesses testifying they saw him behind the wheel. He would face multiple mandatory life sentences if convicted.

Brooks will certainly appeal any conviction, legal experts say, and his courtroom antics could be a ploy to frustrate Judge Jennifer Dorow into a misstep that would strengthen his case at that level. But they say Dorow has handled Brooks professionally and hasn't given him much to work with on appeal.

“I'm unaware of any issues that Dorow has created or anything like that,” said Thomas Grieve, a former prosecutor who now works as a criminal defense attorney in Madison. “I think the judge has done a fantastic job of patiently addressing all of Mr. Brooks' issues, which seem to have no end. He has gotten what he wanted. He has made his bed and tucked himself into it throughout this entire process. Now he's facing the consequences of it.”

Prosecutors allege that Brooks got into a fight Nov. 21 with his ex-girlfriend on the streets of Waukesha in suburban Milwaukee, fled the scene in his SUV and drove it into the parade. He plowed through groups, killing six people, including an 8-year-old boy, and injuring dozens of others, according to a criminal complaint.

He faces 76 charges, including six counts of first-degree intentional homicide and 61 counts of reckless endangerment. Each homicide count carries a mandatory life sentence. Each reckless endangerment count carries a maximum sentence of 17 1/2 years in prison.

Brooks initially pleaded not guilty by reason of mental disease but withdrew the plea in September without explanation. Just days before his trial began Oct. 3, he dismissed his public defenders and elected to represent himself.

People representing themselves in civil matters is not uncommon. But it's relatively rare for criminal defendants to act as their own attorneys and risk matching wits with trained, experienced prosecutors.

According to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, 4.8% of defendants in felony cases in the state were representing themselves when their cases ended last year. A number of high-profile criminals across the country have tried to represent themselves, though, including serial killer Ted Bundy and John Allen Muhammad, who was accused of launching sniper attacks in Washington, D.C., in 2002. Both Bundy and Muhammad were convicted and executed.

Dorow had little choice but to allow Brooks to represent himself, since he has that right under state law if he's mentally competent. Dorow noted that psychologists found he has a personality disorder but is competent.

During the lead-up to jury selection, Brooks often engaged in shouting matches with Dorow, insisting that his name isn't Darrell Brooks and that the state has no jurisdiction over him.

Things got so bad that she removed him from the courtroom several times and placed him in another room where he could watch the proceedings via video but she could mute his microphone if he became disruptive. One day, he stripped off his shirt and stuck a sign, given to him to signal objections, down his pants.

His behavior suggested painful cross-examinations with witnesses who had been hurt in the parade were on tap when testimony began. That hasn't materialized; Brooks has been largely respectful of every witness. He has mostly reserved his ire for Dorow. He has started most mornings demanding that she show him proof that the state has jurisdiction over him, resulting in Dorow and Brooks shouting at each other.

Each time anyone calls him by name, he interrupts to say he doesn't recognize Darrell Brooks. He has objected to almost every question prosecutors have asked witnesses, only for Dorow to shut him down

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and move on as he demands explanations.

He can often be heard muttering under his breath that the trial is unfair, at times calling it "mind-boggling" and griping to himself about how District Attorney Susan Opper pulls "slick" tricks. His cross-examinations, while respectful, have been meandering.

At one point he asked to have the case dismissed, reasoning that the state of Wisconsin can't physically testify and that only "a living human brain" can bring a lawsuit.

On Friday, he said he couldn't call a witness because he'd lost his file on that person. Dorow forced him to call the witness anyway, prompting Brooks to accuse her of violating her oath of office. Later that morning, he began screaming at her that she was treating his trial like a game.

"Nothing about this is a joke. That's what you don't understand. It's unfair. Your life is not on the line," he said. "I don't care what you talking about."

At one point, he fixed Dorow with an angry stare that, she told the court, frightened her so much she had to call a recess.

Dorow often talks over Brooks, accusing him of trying to delay the trial, telling him to sit down and ordering him to stop talking.

But since testimony began, she has mostly opted to take short breaks rather than moving Brooks to an alternative courtroom. She often recites the number of times he has interrupted her, notes that she has given him every opportunity to remain in the courtroom and issues him warnings to behave. She has avoided giving him lengthy legal explanations defending her rulings.

"To say that this has been the most challenging of my career would be an understatement," Dorow said Friday in court. "I've done my best, I believe, to be fair, to be unbiased, to protect the rights not only of Mr. Brooks as it relates to this trial, but those of witnesses, those of the victims, and of course, last but not least, the jurors."

"Judge Dorow is a smart person," said Julius Kim, a criminal defense attorney and former Milwaukee County prosecutor. "She has figured out how to approach Mr. Brooks so the case can run more smoothly. ... She's protecting the record so it shows she's doing her best to recognize he is a pro se defendant and at times latitude needs to be given to him."

Grieve said an appeal is a foregone conclusion, given the weight of the sentences Brooks potentially faces. Brooks could raise any number of issues, including whether he was competent, whether Dorow should have appointed an attorney to stand by and take over if needed and whether removing him from the courtroom was proper. But Dorow has managed to avoid giving him any additional fodder, he said.

"If he's going to disrupt the proceedings, as long as she doesn't jump the gun, which in my view she has not, there shouldn't be any issue," Grieve said. "You're entitled to a fair trial. You're not entitled to create your own mistrial."

## 2 cops head to trial for aiding George Floyd's killing

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Two former Minneapolis police officers charged in George Floyd's death are heading to trial on state aiding and abetting counts, the third and likely final criminal proceeding in a killing that mobilized protesters worldwide against racial injustice in policing.

J. Alexander Kueng and Tou Thao have already been convicted of federal counts for violating Floyd's civil rights and begun serving those sentences. Many witnesses expected to testify at their state trial have already done so at both their federal trial and at the state trial against their former colleague, Derek Chauvin.

While much of the evidence in this proceeding will look similar, there will be some key differences.

Here are a few things to know as jury selection gets underway Monday:

WHAT IS THIS TRIAL ABOUT?

Kueng, Thao and Thomas Lane were working with Chauvin on May 25, 2020, when Chauvin, who is white, used his knee to pin Floyd's neck to the pavement for more than nine minutes as the 46-year-old Black man said he couldn't breathe and eventually grew still. Kueng knelt on Floyd's back, Lane held his

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legs and Thao kept bystanders back.

Kueng, who is Black, and Thao, who is Hmong American, are each charged with aiding and abetting second-degree unintentional murder and aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter. Prosecutors will have to prove they intentionally helped Chauvin. They don't have to prove that they intended to kill Floyd or cause him great bodily harm.

## THE THIRD TRIAL

Chauvin was the first officer to face trial in a livestreamed, weekslong proceeding filled with emotional testimony from bystanders, graphic video of Floyd's dying moments and expert testimony about use of force as well as the mechanics of breathing. He was ultimately convicted of murder and manslaughter.

The second trial in Floyd's death came in federal court, where Lane, Kueng and Thao were all convicted of federal civil rights violations.

"It's going to be, I think, exhaustingly repetitive for the witnesses who have already testified multiple times and don't want to relive this," said Rachel Moran, a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law.

But there will be some nuances. Moran said this case could be more difficult for prosecutors: While Chauvin's offense was more direct because he had his knee on Floyd's neck, prosecutors in this case have to show what Kueng and Thao intentionally did to help him commit a crime.

Judge Peter Cahill has limited expert witnesses to try to avoid repetition. He's also ordered attorneys not to ask questions designed to elicit emotion.

## SOME NOTABLE DIFFERENCES

Witnesses won't be allowed to ask the jury to take actions and follow along with demonstrations – as lung and critical care specialist Dr. Martin Tobin did during Chauvin's trial. In that case, Tobin placed his hands on his own neck and encouraged jurors to do the same as he explained how he believed Floyd died. Jurors said later that Tobin provided some of the trial's most compelling evidence.

It's also unknown if a girl who was just 9 at the time of Floyd's killing will testify. Prosecutors want to call her to argue that even a young girl knew something was wrong – so the officers should have known as well. The defense has countered that her testimony isn't that different from that of other bystanders and will only play upon jurors' emotions. She previously testified at Chauvin's trial.

Cahill encouraged prosecutors not to call the girl because testifying in a murder trial can be traumatic, especially for children, but he didn't bar them from doing so.

## WERE PLEA DEALS OFFERED?

Yes. Both Kueng and Thao rejected offers for three-year sentences that would have been served at the same time as their federal sentences. Thao told Cahill: "It would be lying for me to accept any plea offer."

That set them apart from Lane, who pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting manslaughter and got three years. Kueng and Thao are risking significantly longer sentences; the murder charge has a recommended sentence of 12 1/2 years, and prosecutors say they intend to seek more.

"The reality is, it's their right (to go to trial) and Tou Thao in particular seems to just believe that he has done nothing wrong and therefore he can't admit to doing anything wrong," Moran said.

## JURY SELECTION

Hundreds of prospective jurors were sent a 17-page questionnaire that explored how much they know about the case, their views on police and whether they've participated in civil rights marches, among other things.

Sixteen people will be chosen; 12 will deliberate.

Jurors will be questioned individually about their views and whether they can be fair. An unlimited number of potential jurors can be dismissed "for cause," such as when a juror has shown that he or she can't be impartial.

Each side may also dismiss jurors with a limited number of peremptory strikes, which don't require a reason but can be challenged if the other side believes it's due solely to a potential juror's race or gender.

The defense gets 10 such strikes — five for each defendant — and the state gets six.

The key will be finding jurors who can be impartial. Moran said that while diversity on a jury is important,

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the idea that a jury's racial composition will affect the outcome has been called into question. She noted that the jury that convicted Kueng and Thao of federal charges was mostly white, as was the state jury that convicted Kim Potter, then an officer in the Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Center, in the 2021 fatal shooting of Black motorist Daunte Wright.

## TRIAL LOGISTICS

Opening statements begin Nov. 7. The trial won't be livestreamed. Cameras in courts are rare in Minnesota, and Chauvin's was livestreamed due to the high public interest and courtroom space limitations because of COVID-19 restrictions.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Kueng and Thao reported to federal prison earlier this month to begin serving their sentences for violating Floyd's rights. Kueng is serving three years at federal prison in Ohio and Thao is serving 3½ years at a facility in Kentucky.

They will be in custody in Minnesota during the trial.

Lane, who is white, is serving his 2 ½-year federal sentence at a facility in Colorado. He's serving a 3-year state sentence at the same time.

Chauvin was sentenced to 22 ½ years on the state murder charge and 21 years on a federal count of violating Floyd's rights. He's serving those sentences simultaneously at a federal prison in Arizona.

## Companies lure hourly workers with college tuition perks

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and ANNE DINNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — When Daniella Malave started working for Chipotle at 17, the main benefit she was seeking was free food. As it turned out, she also got a free college education.

While working full time for the chain, Malave completed two years of community college with annual stipends of \$5,250 from Chipotle. After that, she enrolled in the company's free online college program, through which she earned a bachelor's degree in business management from Wilmington University in 2020.

"I didn't have to pay for my education," said Malave, 24, who now works as a recruiting analyst for Chipotle in New Jersey. "Every time I say it out loud, I'm like, 'Is this real?'"

Chipotle is one of more than a dozen companies that have launched free or almost-free college programs for their front-line workers over the last decade. Since 2021 alone, Walmart, Amazon, Target, Macy's, Citi and Lowe's have made free college available to more than 3 million U.S. workers.

Companies see the programs as a way to recruit and retain workers in a tight labor market or train them for management positions. For hourly employees, the programs remove the financial barriers of obtaining a degree.

Thousands of people are now taking advantage of the benefits. Starbucks, which operates an online college program through Arizona State University, says 22,000 workers are currently enrolled in its program. Guild Education, which administers programs for Walmart, Hilton, Disney and others and offers online programs at more than 140 schools, says it worked with 130,000 students over the last year.

But some critics question whether the programs are papering over deeper problems, like pay so low that workers can't afford college without them or hours so erratic that it's too hard to go to school in person.

"I do think they are providing these programs to skirt around the issue of just paying people more, giving people more certainty, improving their quality of life," said Stephanie Hall, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, a nonpartisan think tank.

Hall said a lack of data also makes it difficult to judge the programs' effectiveness. Chipotle, Walmart, Amazon and Starbucks, for example, don't share graduation rates, in part because they're hard to calculate because students often take a semester off or take more than four years to earn a degree. Rachel Carlson, CEO for Guild Education, which also doesn't reveal graduation rates, says the more relevant data is whether college classes help employees get promotions or wage increases.

Others question the quality of the online programs and whether students' degrees will be marketable or help them pursue other careers, especially since many companies limit what employees can study.

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Discover only fully funds 18 bachelor's degrees at eight universities through Guild, for example.

"My sense is that most of these programs are hoping that employees would stay with the company," said Katharine Meyer, a fellow in the governance studies program for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution.

Amazon for its part touts college programs that offer opportunities outside the company, like nursing. But Walmart pared down the number of programs it offers to 60 from 100 because it wanted to focus on skills that would align with careers at the company.

More than 89,000 workers have participated in Walmart's college program and more than 15,000 have graduated, said Lorraine Stomski, Walmart's senior vice president of associate learning and leadership.

Tanner Humphreys is one of them. He started working at Walmart in 2016, bouncing around hourly jobs as he tried to accommodate his in-person class schedule at Idaho State University. But under the company's online program, which it launched with Guild in 2018, he transferred his credits to Southern New Hampshire University and graduated in February with a bachelor's degree in computer science. At 27, he now works at Walmart's headquarters for its cybersecurity team as a salaried employee.

"I was working paycheck to paycheck, living with a whole bunch of friends to pay my rent and stuff," he said. "The change from an hourly to salary is truly life changing."

Companies paying for college or graduate school isn't new. But for decades, the benefit was mostly offered to salaried professionals. In many cases, workers were required to spend thousands of dollars for tuition up front and then get reimbursed by their company.

Starbucks' program, which launched in 2014, was initially a tuition-reimbursement program, but in 2021, it began covering tuition costs upfront. Now, 85% of the company's stores have at least one employee in the program, which will celebrate its 10,000th graduate in December.

Carlson said companies see an average return of \$2 to \$3 for every dollar they put into education because it saves recruitment and retention costs. Walmart said participants leave the company at a rate four times lower than non-participants and are twice as likely to be promoted.

"If I know it's going to cost me \$7,000 to have my cashier not show up tomorrow, I would rather spend our average of our partners today — \$3,000 to \$5,000 — paying for her to go to college," Carlson said.

Companies say the programs also give opportunities to minorities. Macy's, which started its program with Guild earlier this year, said that half of the women enrolling are women of color.

Some companies, like Chipotle and JPMorgan Chase, offer online programs through Guild as well as stipends students can put toward in-person learning at local institutions. Amazon's college programs offer a mixture of online and in-person learning at local community colleges or universities.

Hall said she would like to see more companies offer that kind of flexibility, since online learning isn't ideal for everyone.

Zachary Hecker, 26, a Starbucks employee in New Braunfels, Texas, began working toward his bachelor's in electrical engineering last summer through the company's college program.

Hecker appreciates the free tuition, but he often wishes he could attend classes in person or have more choices beyond Arizona State. His classes are challenging, he said, and professors aren't always able to meet and offer guidance.

But Carlson said online classes are ideal for the average Guild enrollee, who is a 33-year-old woman with children. Carlson said students in its programs often lack consistent access to a car and need to be able to study anytime, like after kids are in bed.

The chance to earn a free degree can be life-changing. Angela Batista was 16 and homeless when she started working for a Starbucks in New York.

"College was never in my dream," Batista said, now 38. "I didn't even have the audacity to fantasize about it."

This December, she will graduate from Arizona State University with a degree in organizational leadership paid for by Starbucks. And now her son, who also works at Starbucks, is starting work toward his own degree.



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## Fears over Russian threat to Norway's energy infrastructure

By MARK LEWIS Associated Press

STAVANGER, Norway (AP) — Norwegian oil and gas workers normally don't see anything more threatening than North Sea waves crashing against the steel legs of their offshore platforms. But lately they have noticed a more troubling sight: unidentified drones buzzing in the skies overhead.

With Norway replacing Russia as Europe's main source of natural gas, military experts suspect the unmanned aircraft are Moscow's doings. They list espionage, sabotage and intimidation as possible motives for the drone flights.

The Norwegian government has sent warships, coastguard vessels and fighter jets to patrol around the offshore facilities. Norway's national guard stationed soldiers around onshore refineries that also were buzzed by drones.

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre has invited the navies of NATO allies Britain, France and Germany to help address what could be more than a Norwegian problem.

Precious little of the offshore oil that provides vast income for Norway is used by the country's 5.4 million inhabitants. Instead, it powers much of Europe. Natural gas is another commodity of continental significance.

"The value of Norwegian gas to Europe has never been higher," Ståle Ulriksen, a researcher at the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy, said. "As a strategic target for sabotage, Norwegian gas pipelines are probably the highest value target in Europe."

Closures of airports, and evacuations of an oil refinery and a gas terminal last week due to drone sightings caused huge disruptions. But with winter approaching in Europe, there is worry the drones may portend a bigger threat to the 9,000 kilometers (5,600 miles) of gas pipelines that spider from Norway's sea platforms to terminals in Britain and mainland Europe.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine in late February, European Union countries have scrambled to replace their Russian gas imports with shipments from Norway. The suspected sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in the Baltic Sea last month happened a day before Norway opened a new Baltic pipeline to Poland.

Amund Revheim, who heads the North Sea and environment group for Norway's South West Police force, said his team interviewed more than 70 offshore workers who have spotted drones near their facilities.

"The working thesis is that they are controlled from vessels or submarines nearby," Revheim said.

Winged drones have a longer range, but investigators considered credible a sighting of a helicopter-style bladed model near the Sleipner platform, located in a North Sea gas field 250 kilometers (150 miles) from the coast.

Norwegian police have worked closely with military investigators who are analyzing marine traffic. Some platform operators have reported seeing Russian-flagged research vessels in close vicinity. Revheim said no pattern has been established from legal marine traffic and he is concerned about causing unnecessary, disruptive worry for workers.

But Ulriksen, of the naval academy, said the distinction between Russian civilian and military ships is narrow and the reported research vessels could fairly be described as "spy ships."

The arrest of at least seven Russian nationals caught either carrying or illegally flying drones over Norwegian territory has raised tensions. On Wednesday, the same day a drone sighting grounded planes in Bergen, Norway's second-biggest city, the Norwegian Police Security Service took over the case from local officers.

"We have taken over the investigation because it is our job to investigate espionage and enforce sanction rules against Russia," Martin Bernsen, an official with the service known by the Norwegian acronym PST. He said the "sabotage or possible mapping" of energy infrastructure was an ongoing concern.

Støre, the prime minister, warned that Norway would take action against foreign intelligence agencies. "It is not acceptable for foreign intelligence to fly drones over Norwegian airports. Russians are not allowed to fly drones in Norway," he said.

Russia's Embassy in Oslo hit back Thursday, claiming that Norway was experiencing a form of "psychosis" causing "paranoia."

Naval academy researcher thinks that is probably part of the plan.

"Several of the drones have been flown with their lights on," he said. "They are supposed to be observed. I think it is an attempt to intimidate Norway and the West."

The wider concern is that they are part of a hybrid strategy to both intimidate and gather information on vital infrastructure, which could later be targeted for sabotage in a potential strike against the West.

"I do not believe we are heading for a conventional war with Russia," Ulriksen said. "But a hybrid war ... I think we are already in it."

## Trump company set for criminal trial in off-books pay scheme

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — More than three years after Manhattan prosecutors started investigating Donald Trump — after going to the Supreme Court twice to gain access to his tax records — the only criminal trial to arise from their efforts is about to begin.

No, the former president isn't going on trial. His company is.

The Trump Organization, the holding company for Trump's buildings, golf courses and other assets, is accused of helping some top executives avoid income taxes on compensation they got in addition to their salaries, like rent-free apartments and luxury cars.

Trump signed some of the checks at the center of the case but he is not charged with anything and is not expected to testify or attend the trial, which starts Monday with jury selection.

If convicted, the Trump Organization could be fined more than \$1 million — but that's not the only potential fallout.

Trump's ardent supporters aren't likely to abandon him, no matter the outcome, but a guilty verdict could hamper his company's ability to get loans and make deals. New York City, for one, could use the legal cloud as new justification for seeking to oust the company from running a city-owned golf course.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, has said that his office's investigation of Trump is "active and ongoing," and that no final decision has been made on whether he could face criminal charges in the future.

Trump, a Republican, has decried the probe as a "political witch hunt."

The Trump Organization has said it did nothing wrong and that it looks forward "to having our day in court."

Judge Juan Manuel Merchan expects the criminal tax fraud trial, heavy on financial records and expert testimony, to take at least four weeks once a jury is seated. Given Trump's fame as a businessman and polarizing politician, it could take a while to find jurors who feel they can judge the case impartially.

The star witness for the prosecution is expected to be Allen Weisselberg, one of Trump's most trusted senior executives.

Weisselberg pleaded guilty in August to taking in over \$1.7 million worth of untaxed perks from the company, including school tuition for his grandchildren, a Manhattan apartment and Mercedes cars for him and his wife.

His testimony comes as part of a plea agreement that requires him to serve up to five months in New York City's Rikers Island jail complex, though he could be released after a little more than three with good behavior. The former Trump Organization chief financial officer must also pay nearly \$2 million in taxes, penalties and interest and complete five years of probation.

Weisselberg, 75, has intimate knowledge of the Trump Organization's financial dealings from nearly five decades at the company, but he is not expected to implicate Trump or any members of the Trump family in his testimony.

In pleading guilty, Weisselberg pinned blame for the scheme on himself and other top Trump Organization executives, including senior vice president and controller, Jeffrey McConney.

McConney was granted limited immunity to testify last year before a grand jury and could also make an appearance on the witness stand at the trial. The company's director of security, Matthew Calamari Jr.,

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the son of chief operating officer Matthew Calamari Sr., also received immunity for grand jury testimony.

When the Trump Organization and Weisselberg were indicted in 2021, prosecutors called the tax scheme "sweeping and audacious" and said it was "orchestrated by the most senior executives."

Besides Weisselberg, two other Trump Organization executives, who were not identified by name, also received substantial under-the-table compensation, including lodging and the payment of automobile leases, the indictment said.

"The purpose of the scheme was to compensate Weisselberg and other Trump Organization executives in a manner that was 'off the books,'" the indictment said.

The Trump Organization is the entity through which the former president manages his many ventures, including his real estate investments, his many marketing deals and his TV pursuits.

Trump's sons, Donald Jr. and Eric, have been in charge of day-to-day operations since he became president. Because the criminal trial involves charges against the corporate entity, not any individuals, the Trumps won't be held personally liable if a jury returns a guilty verdict.

The criminal case is one of two legal cases working their way through the New York courts that threaten to chip away at the gold-plated façade of Trump's empire.

Last month, New York Attorney General Letitia James filed a civil lawsuit accusing Trump and the Trump Organization of misleading banks and others for years about the value of his assets. The civil suit seeks \$250 million and a permanent ban on Trump doing business in the state.

A court hearing is scheduled in that matter for Oct. 31 as James seeks an independent monitor to oversee the Trump Organization's activities after she alleged the company was taking steps to dodge potential penalties, such as incorporating a new entity named Trump Organization II.

Those aren't the only legal challenges Trump faces as he weighs a potential comeback campaign for president.

Last week, Trump gave sworn deposition testimony in a lawsuit brought by magazine columnist E. Jean Carroll, who says he raped her in the mid-1990s in a department store dressing room.

Meanwhile, the FBI is continuing to investigate Trump's storage of sensitive government documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

A special grand jury in Georgia is investigating whether Trump and others attempted to influence state election officials.

On Friday, the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection issued a subpoena to Trump.

## **Analysis: Year post-coup, cracks in Sudan's military junta**

By JACK JEFFREY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — On his return home from the U.N. General Assembly this year, Sudan's top general descended an airplane stairway in the country's capital to a flurry of cameras.

Waiting to greet Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan with a smile and handshake was his deputy and paramilitary leader Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo. It was a choreographed moment between Sudan's most powerful men, a show of unity amid rumors of discord.

A year after the two generals launched a military coup that upended the country's short-lived transition to democracy, their struggle for individual gain threatens to further destabilize the country.

"While the fear of a civilian government brought Burhan and Hemedti together, there remain many divisions between them," said Amjad Farid, a Sudan analyst and former aid to the country's prime minister deposed in the coup, Abdullah Hamdok. He used Dagalo's nickname, by which he is widely known.

The coup, and disharmony between its leaders, has meant the future of Sudan's governance looks increasingly unsure. It has left a power vacuum that allowed the paramilitary force led by Dagalo, known as the Rapid Support Forces, to assume a growing role.

As the respective leaders of Sudan's official army and largest paramilitary force, Burhan and Dagalo were meant to have overseen the democratic transition after former President Omar al-Bashir was toppled following three decades in power in a 2019 popular uprising.

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But on Oct. 25 last year, weeks before Burhan was supposed to step aside as head of the transitional council, he led a military coup, unseating the civilian half of Sudan's ruling Sovereignty Council. Dagalo backed him, his forces helping to detain dozens of civilian officials and politicians.

In the aftermath, near-weekly pro-democracy marches were ruthlessly suppressed. There has also been a resurgence of deadly tribal clashes in the country's neglected peripheries in which hundreds of people were killed in recent months. The coup has plunged Sudan's already inflation-riddled economy into deeper peril. International aid has dried up and bread and fuel shortages, caused in part by the war in Ukraine, have become routine.

Meanwhile, popular support for the military, the face of the coup, has dwindled. And in the absence of other options, the RSF, best known for its scorched-earth campaigns in the Darfur conflict, is seeking to portray itself as an alternative peacekeeper with deep pockets.

"Most Sudanese now believe that the military lacks the credibility or solutions to bring security and prosperity to Sudan," said Suliman Baldo, an analyst and director of Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker, a think tank.

Dagalo is trying to rectify the public image of his forces. Across social media, the group now presents itself as a mediator of tribal disputes and a participant in development projects, though many Sudanese continue to fear the group for its violent tactics. Its forces have been implicated in the killing of more than 100 protesters when they cleared a sit-in in June 2019 in the capital. An investigation into the deaths has since failed to reach any conclusions.

Two Sudanese rights workers who track the paramilitary said the size of the RSF has doubled over the past three years to at least 100,000 fighters and that it has purchased high-tech weapons. The group does not publish official personnel figures. With these increased capabilities, the rights researchers say the paramilitary force has been able to cement its control over Sudan's porous western and northern borders, allowing it to profit from the smuggling of weapons, drugs and migrants as the military's reach contracted.

Both rights researchers spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. The researchers have followed the paramilitary for years and have obtained first-hand accounts from inside its ranks. Their estimates for the force's size match other analysts' approximations.

A spokesman for the RSF did not reply to a request for comment on the body's role in the transitional period and plans for the future.

There are also questions over the paramilitary group's sources of financing, in addition to the state funds it receives. The Center for Advanced Defense Studies, a think tank, said in a June report that the group has amassed wealth through gradual acquisition of Sudanese financial institutions and gold reserves, some under the names of Dagalo's relatives. RSF forces deployed to Yemen to fight on behalf of the Saudi-led coalition at war with the Houthi rebels, a move the force is likely to have been compensated for by at least one of the coalition's members, the United Arab Emirates.

Burhan and Dagalo are both stepping out on the international stage. They have separately conducted a series of independent diplomatic meetings, in Cairo, at the Kremlin and in Abu Dhabi, but maintain they have no interest in running in future elections.

Under immense international pressure, recent talks between the military and pro-democracy forces have made some progress. But that could be overturned at any minute, as Burhan and Dagalo maintain vague yet dominant roles.

Their separate pledges to facilitate democracy have lacked detail and often conflicted on key issues. Among the uncertainties is what powers these military leaders would retain under civilian rule, and whether the RSF will merge with Burhan's military, a key condition of a 2020 peace agreement meant to end decades of fighting in Darfur.

The beginning of the power struggle lies in al-Bashir's legacy. Both generals were heavily involved in his Darfur military campaigns that killed some 300,000 people during the 2000s, rights groups estimate. Unlike al-Bashir, the International Criminal Court has not indicted Burhan or Dagalo for committing war crimes in that conflict.

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Burhan, a seasoned military veteran of the Sudanese Armed Forces, trained as an officer in Egypt. Dagalo, a former Darfuri camel trader, led the notorious janjaweed militias, spearheading devastating offensives against Darfur's African rebel groups in 2003. The janjaweed stand accused of mass rape and killing of civilians by the U.N. and rights groups. In an effort to contain and better utilize the fighting force, al-Bashir eventually recruited the janjaweed into the Rapid Support Forces in 2013, legitimizing them and instating Dagalo as an independent commander.

"The root cause of the current conflict between Hemedti and Burhan is the independence of RSF," said Farid, the former aid to Sudan's prime minister.

In recent months, in an effort to check the RSF's influence, Burhan has worked to reinstate his supporters, often Islamists who held positions under al-Bashir, in government. That's according to Baldo, the analyst, and Maher al Gokh, a former employee of Sudan's State Television who was detained in the coup but later released.

For now, a direct clash might be out of the question, because neither general can muster enough resources to rule alone.

"The survival of both groups depends on Hemedti and Burhan sticking it out together," said Baldo.

Cameron Hudson, former chief of staff to the U.S. special envoy to Sudan and an associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the two generals are engaged in "a big zero-sum game."

## Sheep, goats cross downtown Madrid in echo of past practice

Associated Press undefined

MADRID (AP) — The bleating and bells of some 1,200 sheep and 200 goats took over downtown Madrid on Sunday morning as part of a festival that recreates the pastoral practice of moving livestock to new grazing grounds.

Shepherds herded the animals through the paved streets of the Spanish capital while reenacting what their ancestors did for centuries: move flocks from cool highlands in the summer to lowland winter pastures.

Madrid, Spain's lively capital city has always been part of the 125,000-kilometer (78,000-mile) grid of farming paths that cover the Iberian Peninsula.

As part of the Transhumance Festival, organizers make a symbolic payment for the right to use the drovers' route that crosses the capital. The payment presented at Madrid's city hall in medieval Spain's currency consists of 50 maravedis, as stated in an agreement between the city and shepherds that dates back to 1418.

The closeness of the animals delighted the urban dwellers who gathered to watch the unfamiliar ritual. Children tried to touch the soft merino wool of the locally bred sheep.

Madrid has held the festival since 1994, and towns and smaller cities in Italy, France and California hold similar events.

In Spain, modern farming methods have reduced practicing transhumance - the seasonal movement of livestock - to a small group of farmers that keep the tradition alive through associations such as Concejo de la Mesta, who are responsible for the Transhumance Festival in Madrid.

They promote transhumance for advantages such as sustainability, cultural value and environmental protection since areas walked by sheep are less prone to wildfires.

According to the Transhumance and Nature Association, 52 families carry out the practice in Spain.

## Today in History: October 24, the UN charter takes effect

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Oct. 24, the 297th day of 2022. There are 68 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 24, 1945, the United Nations officially came into existence as its charter took effect.

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On this date:

In 1537, Jane Seymour, the third wife of England's King Henry VIII, died 12 days after giving birth to Prince Edward, later King Edward VI.

In 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph message was sent by Chief Justice Stephen J. Field of California from San Francisco to President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C., over a line built by the Western Union Telegraph Co.

In 1940, the 40-hour work week went into effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

In 1952, Republican presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower declared in Detroit, "I shall go to Korea" as he promised to end the conflict. (He made the visit over a month later.)

In 1962, a naval quarantine of Cuba ordered by President John F. Kennedy went into effect during the missile crisis.

In 1972, Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson, who'd broken Major League Baseball's modern-era color barrier in 1947, died in Stamford, Connecticut, at age 53.

In 1991, "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry died in Santa Monica, California, at age 70.

In 1992, the Toronto Blue Jays became the first non-U.S. team to win the World Series as they defeated the Atlanta Braves, 4-3, in Game 6.

In 1996, TyRon Lewis, 18, a Black motorist, was shot to death by police during a traffic stop in St. Petersburg, Florida; the incident sparked rioting. (Officer James Knight, who said that Lewis had lurched his car at him several times, knocking him onto the hood, was cleared by a grand jury and the Justice Department.)

In 2002, authorities apprehended John Allen Muhammad and teenager Lee Boyd Malvo near Myersville, Maryland, in the Washington-area sniper attacks. (Malvo was later sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, but Maryland's highest court has agreed to reconsider that sentence in 2022; Muhammad was sentenced to death and executed in 2009.)

In 2005, civil rights icon Rosa Parks died in Detroit at age 92.

In 2020, heavily protected crews in Washington state worked to destroy the first nest of so-called murder hornets discovered in the United States.

Ten years ago: Less than two weeks before Election Day, President Barack Obama set out on a 40-hour campaign marathon through battleground states; Republican Mitt Romney looked to the Midwest for a breakthrough in a close race shadowed by a weak economy. Hurricane Sandy roared across Jamaica and headed toward Cuba, before taking aim at the eastern United States. The San Francisco Giants took the first game of the World Series, 8-3, over the Detroit Tigers, as Pablo Sandoval became the fourth player to hit three home runs in a World Series game.

Five years ago: Republican Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona announced that he would not seek re-election in 2018; he'd been critical of the path the GOP had taken under President Donald Trump. Fats Domino, the rock 'n' roll pioneer whose hits included "Blueberry Hill" and "Ain't That a Shame," died in Louisiana at the age of 89. Actor Robert Guillaume, who won Emmy awards for his portrayal of the sharp-tongued butler in the sitcoms "Soap" and "Benson," died in Los Angeles at 89. In a game that began in 103-degree heat, the Los Angeles Dodgers opened the World Series with a 3-1 victory over the Houston Astros in Los Angeles; Clayton Kershaw was the winning pitcher in his World Series debut.

One year ago: Pope Francis called for an end to the practice of returning migrants rescued at sea to Libya and other unsafe countries. Denis Villeneuve's "Dune" debuted with \$40.1 million in ticket sales in its opening weekend in North America, drawing a large number of moviegoers to see the thundering sci-fi epic on the big screen despite it also being available to stream in homes. British pop star Ed Sheeran said he had tested positive for COVID-19 and would do interviews and performances from his house while he self-isolated. Tom Brady became the first player to throw 600 career touchdown passes and then tacked on two more in Tampa Bay's 38-3 rout over the Chicago Bears.

Today's Birthdays: Rock musician Bill Wyman is 86. Actor F. Murray Abraham is 83. Movie director-screenwriter David S. Ward is 77. Actor Kevin Kline is 75. Congressman and former NAACP President Kweisi Mfume (kwah-EE'-see oom-FOO'-may) is 74. Actor Doug Davidson is 68. Actor B.D. Wong is 62. Actor Zahn

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McClarnon is 56. Singer Michael Trent (Americana duo Shovels & Rope) is 45. Rock musician Ben Gillies (Silverchair) is 43. Singer-actor Monica Arnold is 42. Actor-comedian Casey Wilson is 42. R&B singer, actor and TV personality Adrienne Bailon Houghton is 39. Actor Tim Pocock is 37. R&B singer-rapper-actor Drake is 36. Actor Shenae Grimes is 33. Actor Eliza Taylor is 33. Actor Ashton Sanders (Film: "Moonlight") is 27. Olympic gold medal gymnast Kyla Ross is 26. Actor Hudson Yang is 19.