

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

Friday, Nov. 4

School Breakfast: Cereal

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.

Senior Menu: Sloppy joe on wheat bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit sauce.

SATURDAY CLEANER NEEDED IN FERNEY, SD, 830 am to 130 pm, \$16 an hour. Must be dependable and be willing to work around customers coming into the family owned business. Please call Stephanie at 605-381-1758. (1102.1109)

Diegel Family Thank You

We would like to thank everyone for your kind words, generous gifts, meals, flowers, visits, love and offers of help during a very difficult time. Your acts of friendship and love have not gone unnoticed. It is comforting to know that we are not alone in our grief. We really appreciate your thoughtfulness. We would also like to thank Dr. Richard Conklin and the entire team at the Avera Cancer Institute where she received excellent medical care.

Love,
The Becky Diegel Family

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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SoDak16 Pairings

Class A - SoDak 16

#1 -  1 Wagner 30-3  16 Winner 12-19 11/8 TBD	STATE QUALIFIER	STATE QUALIFIER	#5 -  5 Sioux Falls Christian 29-5  12 Redfield 19-12 11/8 TBD
#2 -  2 Miller 31-2  15 Groton Area 14-14 11/8 TBD	STATE QUALIFIER	STATE QUALIFIER	#6 -  6 Dakota Valley 25-7  11 Baltic 21-5 11/8 TBD
#3 -  3 Elkton-Lake Be... 29-3  14 Lakota Tech 23-9 11/8 TBD	STATE QUALIFIER	STATE QUALIFIER	#7 -  7 Belle Fourche 31-6  10 Mobridge-Pollo... 26-6 11/8 TBD
#4 -  4 Rapid City Christian 29-6  13 Elk Point-Jeffer... 23-9 11/8 TBD	STATE QUALIFIER	STATE QUALIFIER	#8 -  8 Hamlin 26-4  9 Platte-Geddes 26-7 11/8 TBD

Seed Point Averages

#1 Wagner 45.452 - #2 Miller 45.419 - #3 Elkton-Lake Benton 45.300 - #4 Rapid City Christian 45.000 - #5 Sioux Falls Christian 44.781 - #6 Dakota Valley 44.667 - #7 Belle Fourche 44.457 - #8 Hamlin 44.357 - #9 Platte-Geddes 43.935 - #10 Mobridge-Pollock 43.400 - #11 Baltic 43.208 - #12 Redfield 42.241 - #13 Elk Point-Jefferson 42.167 - #14 Lakota Tech 41.367 - #15 Groton Area 40.269 - #16 Winner 38.448

Groton stuns Roncalli; advances to SoDak16

It was an atmosphere like no other. It was a volleyball match like no other. Two teams grappling for the opportunity to advance to the SoDak16. Two teams who wanted their season to continue. And when all was said and done, the Groton Area Tigers stunned Aberdeen Roncalli with a 3-2 win.

Even when you add up the points of all five matches, Roncalli had the edge, 108-101. Groton Area had huge plays. Roncalli had huge plays. Even the officials had to meet a few times which resulted in reversal of the earned point or a redo. And it was all captured on GDILIVE.COM and has been archived to the site. Coach Chelsea Hanson said, "I feel like the atmosphere tonight was top 3 that I've ever been a part of, we might be high school girls, but it felt like a D1 national championship!"

In the first set, the Tigers found themselves battling back. It was tied at two and 11, but Roncalli would then score six straight points to take a 17-11 lead and would go on to win, 25-18.



Aspen Johnson
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Lydia Meier
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Anna Fjeldheim
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Groton Area would score first in the second set, but the Cavaliers would keep battling back. The set was tied at one, two, three, 12 and 14 with three lead changes up to this point. Roncalli would open up a 20-16 lead, but now it was the Tigers making the move. Groton Area tied the set at 21 and 22 before taking the lead, 23-22. Groton Area would squeak out a 25-23 second set win to even the match at one.

Then came the the third set. Roncalli pounded away at Groton Area as Ella Hanson single handedly had seven kills of her own in that set. Groton Area closed to within one, 21-20, but Roncalli then closed to one point of winning, 24-20. Coach Hanson called time-out. "In that third set comeback they really broke down each point into one contact at a time and did the job they needed to do individually. As a coach I'm not sure it could have been any more stressful hoping that the practices, matches, and conditioning we have done would have been enough to provide the girls with the knowledge, confidence and skill sets they need to win a match like that!" Groton rallied to tie the set at 24, but Roncalli got the upper hand again, 25-24. Groton would tie the



Carly Guthmiller
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Emma Kutter
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Elizabeth Flihs
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Jaedyn Penning
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

set at 25 and then take the lead, 26-25 and would score the game winning point for the two-point, 27-25 win. Groton Area would now take a 2-1 lead.

The fourth set was tied six times with two lead changes. Groton Area led in the early part of the set, but Roncalli would take the lead after the set was tied at 11 and would go on for the 25-16 win.

Roncalli would take a 1-0 lead in the fifth set, but the Tigers then gained the upper hand to take a 3-1 lead. Roncalli battled back, tying the set at three, four, five, nine and 10, but the Cavaliers were unable to regain the lead. The Tigers would score the last five points of the set to get a 15-10 lead.

"This was a very gutsy win for us," Hanson said. "We were down 20-16 (in the second set) and 24-20 (in the third set) and came back and won both of



Jerica Locke
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Laila Roberts
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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those sets and that is not an easy feat. I can honestly say other than making subs, the only coaching I could do was between sets and that was just telling them to breathe and relax.”

Groton Area had 12 players who saw action and scored while Roncalli had eight players who saw floor time.

Anna Fjeldheim led the Tigers with 11 kills and an ace serve while Sydney Leicht had nine kills and an ace serve, Aspen Johnson had eight kills and five blocks, Lydia Meier had five kills, Elizaeth Flihs four kills, Jerica Locke three ace serves, Emma Kutter two kills, having one kill each were Laila Roberts, Hollie Frost, Jaedyn Penning and Rylee Dunker, and Carly Guthmiller had an ace serve. Groton Area had 116 digs with Fjeldheim having 29, Guthmiller 23 and Flihs 18. Flihs had 41 assists while Locke had two.

Ella Hanson led the Cavaliers with 15 kills and a block, Maddie Huber had eight kills and seven ace serves, Jaidyn Feickert had eight kills and an ace, McKenna O’Keefe had six kills and four aces, Jazmine



Rylee Dunker
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Sydney Leicht
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Hart-Crissman had four kills, Rylee Voeller had three kills, Ava Danielson had two ace serves and Camryn Bain had an ace serve.

Groton Area, 14-14, now advances to the SoDak16 to take on the 31-2 Miller Rustlers.

Justin Hanson and Ryan Tracy provided the play-by-play action on GDILIVE.COM. Sponsors were Bahr Spray Foam, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Dan Richardt - Groton Ford, Groton Chamber Commerce, Groton Chiropractic Clinic, Groton Legion, Heavy Hitter Detailing with Cyrus DeHoet, Hefty Seed, John Sieh Agency, Karma Salon, Rutgear605, Lori's Pharmacy, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc, SD Army National Guard with Brent Wienk, Thunder Seed - John Wheeting, Weismantel Insurance Agency.

- Paul Kosel



Aspen Johnson got a big block late in the match and the players and fans went wild as the Tiger excitement filled the Roncalli gym. (Photos

by Paul Kosel)





2023 DOG LICENSES due by Dec. 30, 2022

Fines start January 1, 2023

Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog

Proof of rabies shot information is **REQUIRED!!**

Email proof to city.kellie@nvc.net,

fax to (605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

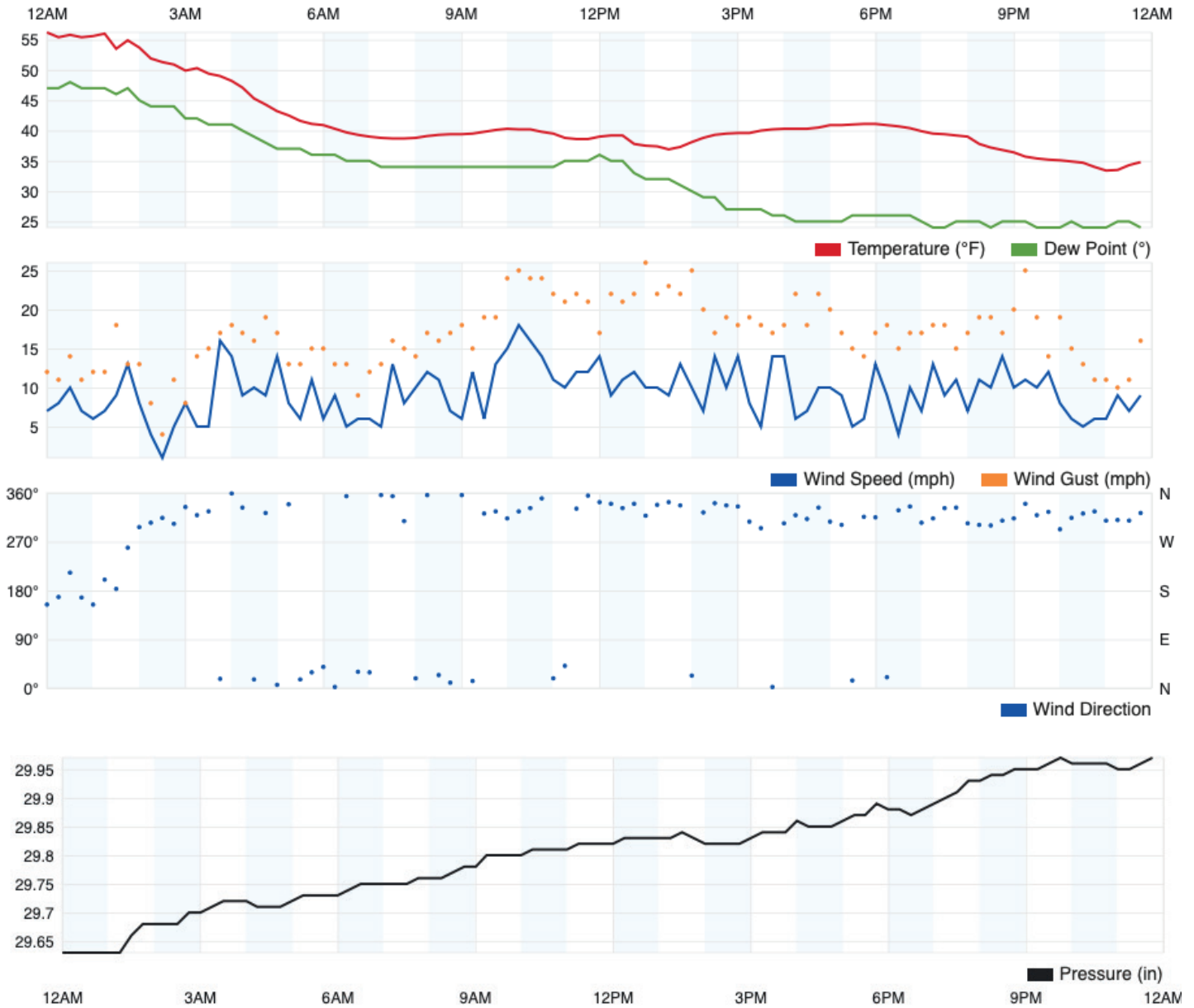
Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Decreasing
Clouds

High: 44 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 17 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 49 °F

Saturday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 32 °F

Sunday



Sunny and
Breezy

High: 48 °F

Mostly Dry

Today

Nov 4th, 2022



40 to 48°

Saturday

Nov 5th, 2022



48 to 56°

Sunday

Nov 6th, 2022



45 to 50°

- **Elevated grassland fire danger this weekend**
- Breezy to windy at times this weekend
- Seasonable temperatures



The next several days will feature mostly dry conditions, and winds will be on the increase this weekend. As a result, grassland fire danger will be elevated. The next best chance for precipitation arrives in the form of rain on Tuesday, with a 20 to 50 percent chance mainly east of the Missouri River.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 56 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 33 °F at 11:01 PM

Wind: 28 mph at 1:33 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 5 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 78 in 2020

Record Low: -2 in 1991

Average High: 49°F

Average Low: 25°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.14

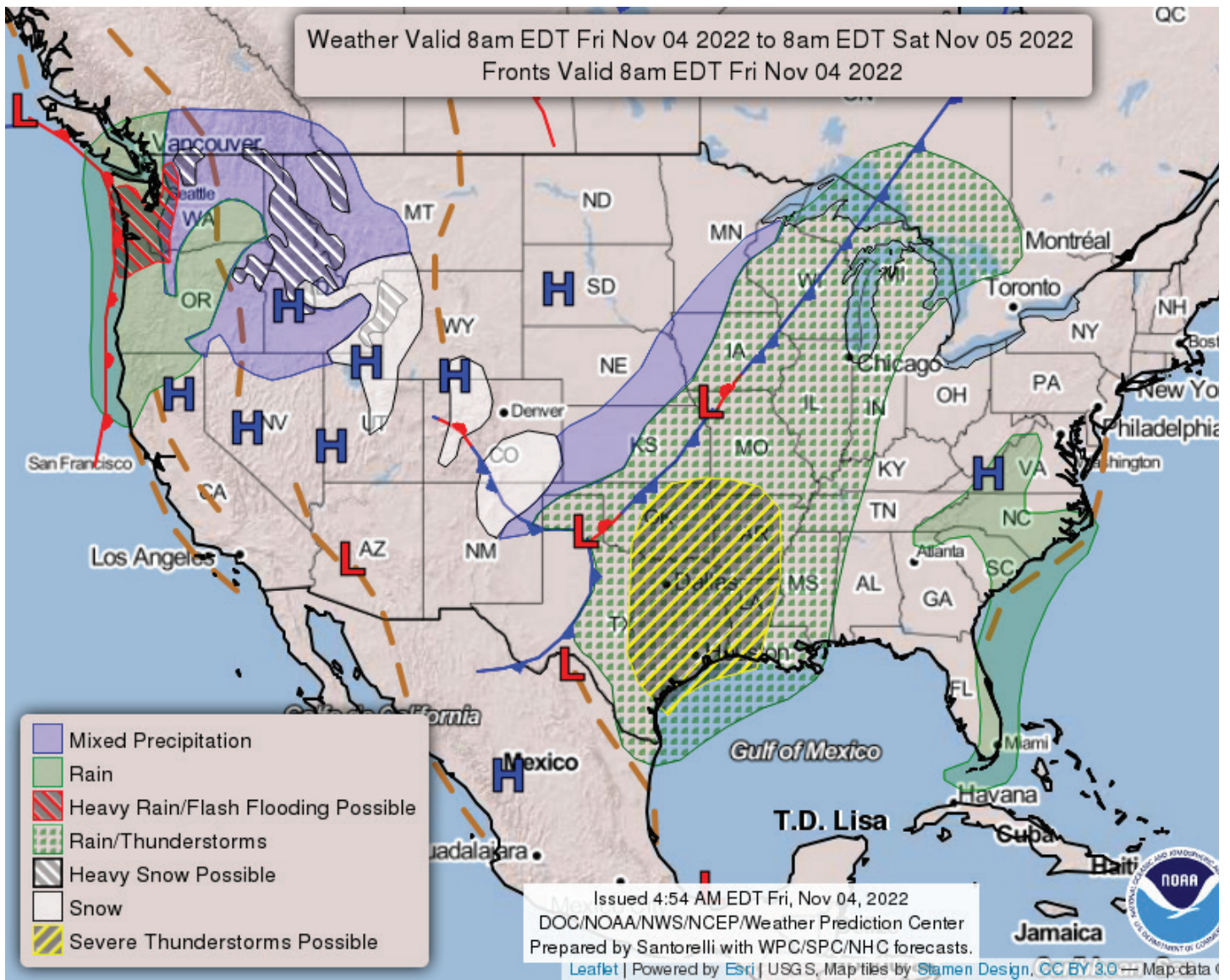
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.61

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 6:17 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:17 AM



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Today in Weather History

Significant snow blanketed much of the state except the southwest between November 1st and November 4th. The snow and slush caused numerous minor traffic accidents and further delayed the fall harvest in many areas. The highest snowfall amounts included over a foot in north-central and northeast South Dakota, and the northern Black Hills, generally 3 to 7 inches reported elsewhere. Some of the more significant storms total snowfall reports were 25.2 inches at Lead, 15 inches at Eureka, 14 inches near Summit, 13 inches near Victor, 12.6 inches at Roscoe, and 12 inches in Leola and 23 miles north of Highmore.

1935: Called the Yankee Hurricane, this Category 2 storm affected the Bahamas and South Florida. The storm remains the only tropical cyclone to hit Miami from the Northeast in November.

1959: A rare F0 tornado caused minor damage near Cape St. Elias Light Station on Kayak Island, Alaska.

1927 - A great Vermont flood occurred. Tropical rains deluged the Green Mountain area of Vermont causing the worst flood in the history of the state. Torrential rains, up to 15 inches in the higher elevations, sent streams on a rampage devastating the Winooski Valley. Flooding claimed 200 lives and caused 40 million dollars damage. The town of Vernon reported 84 deaths. Flooding left up to eight to ten feet of water in downtown Montpelier VT. (2nd-4th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1985: Heavy rains from the remnants of tropical storm Juan dropped 10 to 19 inches of rain on West Virginia and surrounding states, causing 62 deaths. A maximum rainfall amount of 19.77 inches was recorded near Montebello in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia. The flood in West Virginia was considered the worst in the state's history.

1985 - A super wet Gulf storm dumped upwards of fifteen inches of rain in the mountains of Virginia and West Virginia causing devastating damage and claiming forty lives. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - Thirty-two cities in the eastern and south central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 74 degrees at Portland ME and 86 degrees at Fort Smith AR equalled November records. It was the fourth day of record warmth for Beckley WV, Memphis TN and Paducah KY. A cold front ushered much colder air into the north central U.S. Gale force winds lashed all five Great Lakes. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a fast moving cold front produced severe weather over the Tennessee Valley and the Central Gulf Coast States during the afternoon and evening hours, and into the next morning. Thunderstorms spawned nineteen tornadoes, including eleven in Mississippi. The last of the nineteen tornadoes killed a woman in her mobile home in Lee FL. A tornado in Culbert AL injured sixteen people, and caused two million dollars damage. Thunderstorms also produced baseball size hail in Alabama. Unseasonably hot air prevailed south of the cold front. McAllen TX was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Snow and high winds plagued parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Winds gusted to 71 mph near Wheatland WY, and reached 80 mph west of Fort Collins CO. Up to five inches of snow blanketed Yellowstone Park WY closing many roads. Snow also blanketed northern Minnesota, with seven inches reported at Baudette. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

GOD FORGETS NO ONE

Birthdays and anniversaries are special days and times in the lives of most people. We look forward to being remembered when a friend sends a card or letter, phone call or bouquet of flowers, a special meal or perhaps even a cake.

Poor Mrs. Hattie Hollowell spent three years, four months, and sixteen days in a New York jail, and no one seemed to know she was there. Fortunately, someone started an investigation for some reason and in the process discovered her. As a result of the search, she came to be known as "The Forgotten Woman." When asked, a judge blamed the tragedy on the "slipshod work" of an attorney. "Instead of helping her, he hurt her," he said.

The Psalmist wrote that "All creatures look to You to give them their food at the proper time." Our Psalmist wants us to know that our God cares for us and will, at the right time, provide for our every need. But there is a very interesting statement about God and our relationship to Him in this verse that is completed in the following verse: "When You open Your hand they are satisfied with good things."

Notice that "At the proper time," "He will open His hand," and "satisfy us with good things." We are to be completely dependent on God. There is His time, His hand and good things. Often, we try to force the hand of God: We want what we want when we want it. But that is not how He works. He knows what we need and when we need it. We must wait upon Him for what is best for us.

Prayer: Help us Lord, to wait patiently on You, trusting Your love and your heart, knowing that You are doing what is best for us - always. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: All creatures look to You to give them their food at the proper time. When You open Your hand they are satisfied with good things. Psalm 104:27-28



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
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

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

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Harrisburg def. Brookings, 31-29, 25-12, 25-22

Huron def. Brandon Valley, 25-12, 25-19, 25-20

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Aberdeen Central, 25-12, 28-26, 25-21

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Mitchell, 25-14, 25-20, 25-21

Watertown def. Yankton, 25-16, 23-25, 25-17, 25-20

SDHSAA Playoff=

Semifinal=

Class A=

Region 1=

Groton Area def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 18-25, 25-23, 27-25, 16-25, 15-10

Redfield def. Milbank, 25-21, 25-21, 25-20

Region 2=

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Sioux Valley, 19-25, 25-13, 25-23, 25-17

Hamlin def. Flandreau, 25-16, 25-20, 25-23

Region 3=

Baltic def. McCook Central/Montrose, 26-24, 16-25, 25-20, 25-22

Sioux Falls Christian def. Garretson, 25-4, 25-4, 25-15

Region 4=

Dakota Valley def. Tea Area, 25-15, 25-22, 25-15

Elk Point-Jefferson def. Canton, 25-17, 25-22, 26-24

Region 5=

Platte-Geddes def. Kimball/White Lake, 25-15, 25-15, 25-11

Wagner def. Mt. Vernon, 25-14, 25-13, 25-10

Region 6=

Miller def. Dupree, 25-11, 25-12, 25-9

Mobridge-Pollock def. Stanley County, 25-9, 25-12, 25-18

Region 7=

Lakota Tech def. Little Wound, 25-15, 18-25, 25-22, 25-11

Winner def. Pine Ridge, 25-15, 27-25, 27-25

Region 8=

Belle Fourche def. Hill City, 25-15, 25-21, 25-19

Rapid City Christian def. St. Thomas More, 25-23, 25-14, 26-24

Class B=

Region 1=

Northwestern def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-20, 25-12, 25-16

Warner def. Leola/Frederick, 25-10, 25-15, 25-11

Region 2=

Castlewood def. Arlington, 25-21, 25-10, 25-23

Wolsey-Wessington def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 25-17, 25-19, 25-22

Region 3=

Chester def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-13, 25-15, 25-16

Colman-Egan def. Ethan, 20-25, 25-16, 25-17, 25-17

Region 4=

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Freeman def. Scotland, 25-12, 25-20, 25-19

Viborg-Hurley def. Gayville-Volin, 26-24, 17-25, 25-20, 21-25, 15-13

Region 5=

Burke def. Gregory, 25-8, 25-13, 25-6

Tripp-Delmont/Armour def. Wessington Springs, 25-23, 25-20, 21-25, 25-27, 16-14

Region 6=

Herreid def. Potter County, 25-20, 27-25, 25-21

Ipswich def. Faulkton, 10-25, 25-20, 24-20, 25-20, 10-15

Region 7=

Jones County def. Wall, 25-13, 25-10, 25-14

Kadoka Area def. Philip, 25-18, 14-25, 25-12, 25-20

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

South Dakota GOP legislative candidate charged with abuse

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Republican candidate for the South Dakota Legislature was charged Thursday with child abuse for allegedly exposing a minor to sexual grooming behavior.

A criminal complaint filed Thursday by the state attorney general's office charged Joel Koskan with exposing an unnamed person to "sexual grooming behaviors" over a period of several years. He faces a class 4 felony, which is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

The court sealed an affidavit from a Division of Criminal Investigation agent.

Koskan is required to appear in a Mellette County court on Monday.

Koskan did not immediately respond to requests for comment at a listed phone number and email address. His campaign site was set to private and social media pages were not publicly available.

The South Dakota Democratic Party called on Koskan to end his campaign.

Koskan is running in a state Senate district that includes parts of the Rosebud, Crow Creek and Lower Brule Indian Reservations. His opponent is Democrat Shawn Bordeaux, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe who has served three terms in the state House.

North Dakota high court to weigh judge's abortion ban ruling

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota's Supreme Court will hear arguments later this month on the state's abortion ban after the attorney general appealed a judge's ruling that kept it from taking effect.

The high court on Wednesday scheduled oral arguments for Nov. 29 on South Central District Judge Bruce Romanick's opinion that there's a "substantial probability" a constitutional challenge to the law will succeed. The legal wrestling continues even though the state's lone abortion clinic, located in Fargo, has moved across the border to neighboring Minnesota.

Romanick's ruling keeps a preliminary injunction in place until the heart of the case is resolved. State Attorney General Drew Wrigley declined Thursday to say which part or parts of Romanick's findings he planned to highlight in front of justices.

"We're working on our supplemental briefing materials, eager to address the substance of this matter before the Supreme Court," Wrigley said.

Specifically, Romanick took issue with the fact that the ban allows cases of rape or incest to be raised as an affirmative defense to administering an abortion, but that doctors would first be charged with a felony and then have to plead their cases. That puts unreasonable burdens on doctors and pregnant women, the judge said.

Romanick last month rejected a request from Wrigley to let the law take effect while the Red River Women's Clinic lawsuit went forward. Wrigley argued that the judge had not sufficiently considered the clinic's chances of prevailing in court. The state Supreme Court agreed and told Romanick to take another look.

Romanick stood his ground, saying the question on whether the state constitution “conveys a fundamental right to abortion is an issue that is very much alive and active” and does not have a “clear and obvious answer.”

The judge’s decision drew mixed reviews from legal experts. Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University law professor, said the ruling is “strikingly conclusory on critical points” and shows that Romanick is “heavily committed” toward striking down the law.

“It rejects, for example, that the state could not even satisfy the lowest constitutional standard of a rational basis test for the statute,” Turley said. “While the court says that it is going out of its way to supply additional analysis to support the injunction, this is pretty thin soup for the state Supreme Court.”

Laura Hermer, law professor at Mitchell Hamline, said Romanick took a “moderate and well-reasoned approach” on his opinion, especially when noting that women are likely to suffer harm because doctors could opt against performing abortions even when they believe it’s necessary to save the mother’s life.

“We’ve already seen this sort of harm in jurisdictions subject to abortion bans,” Hermer said.

Schools clash with parents over bans on student cellphones

By BROOKE SCHULTZ Associated Press/Report for America

Cellphones — the ultimate distraction — keep children from learning, educators say. But in attempts to keep the phones at bay, the most vocal pushback doesn’t always come from students. In some cases, it’s from parents.

Bans on the devices were on the rise before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since schools reopened, struggles with student behavior and mental health have given some schools even more reason to restrict access.

But parents and caregivers who had constant access to their children during remote learning have been reluctant to give that up. Some fear losing touch with their kids during a school shooting.

Shannon Moser, who has students in eighth and ninth grades in Rochester, New York, said she felt parents were being pushed away when the Greece Central School District this year began locking away student phones. There’s a form of accountability, she said, when students are able to record what goes on around them.

“Everything is just so politicized, so divisive. And I think parents just have a general fear of what’s happening with their kids during the day,” Moser said. She said she generally has liberal views, but many parents on either side of the political divide feel the same way.

Amid heightened scrutiny of topics such as race and inclusion, some parents also view cellphone restrictions as a way of keeping them out of their kids’ education.

Over a decade ago, around 90% of public schools prohibited cellphone use, but that shrank to 65% in the 2015-2016 school year. By the 2019-2020 school year, bans were in place at 76% of the schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. California and Tennessee recently have passed laws allowing schools to prohibit phones.

Now, in particular, educators see a need to keep students on task to recover from pandemic shutdowns, when many students lost the equivalent of months of learning.

And many school officials may feel empowered to ban the devices, given growing concern among parents about pandemic-era screen time, said Liz Keren-Kolb, clinical associate professor of education technologies at the University of Michigan. But she said parent views on the debate run the gamut.

“You still have the parents that want to have that direct line of communication and have concerns over their child not being able to have that communication,” she said. “But I do think that there’s more of an empathy and an understanding toward their child being able to put away their device so they can really focus on the learning in the classroom, and wanting that face-to-face experience.”

Washington School District in western Pennsylvania implemented a ban this year as educators increasingly found cellphones to be an obstacle. Students were on their cellphones in the hallways and at the cafeteria tables. Some would call home or answer calls in the middle of a class, high school English teacher Treg Campbell said.

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The superintendent, George Lammay, said the ban was the right choice.

"We're looking to increase engagement and academic progress with kids — not try to limit their contact with families. That's not the point," he said.

In some cases, pushback from parents has led to adjustments in policy.

At the Brush School District in Colorado, cellphones were banned after teachers flagged concerns over online bullying. When parents spoke out, the district held a community meeting that lasted over two hours, with most testimony against the ban. The biggest takeaway, Superintendent Bill Wilson said, was that parents wanted their children to have access to their phones.

The policy was adjusted to allow cellphones on campus, although they must be turned off and out of sight. The district also said it would accommodate a handful of students with unique circumstances.

"There's not an intention to say cell phones are evil," Wilson said. "It's a reset to say, 'How do we manage this in a way that makes sense for everybody?'"

At the Richardson Independent School District, near Dallas, student cellphone use had been prohibited during instructional time before officials proposed buying magnetic pouches to seal them away during the school day. Parent feedback around the cost of the pouches and concerns about safety in emergencies led to a scaled-back plan to pilot the pouches at one of the district's eight middle schools, Forest Meadow Junior High.

"We used to get in touch with our kids when we wanted to," said Louise Boll, president of the Forest Meadow parent-teacher association. "There was a lot of pushback and a lot of concern in the beginning of what this would look like, how this would unfold, how is it going to affect us getting in touch?"

Kids and their parents have largely adapted to the new policy, she said.

In parent activists' online discussions, there are plenty of defenders of cellphone bans. Some others, however, have railed against bans as efforts to keep parents from seeing "violence" and "indoctrination" inside schools.

Legal action by parents remains rare, with one exception being an unsuccessful lawsuit by several parents against New York City's school cellphone ban in 2006, which ultimately was lifted in 2015. Still, petitions against school cellphone bans have increased on Change.org this year, a spokesperson said.

There's no perfect formula for cellphones in schools, said Kolb, who said the pendulum will likely swing back away from bans depending on how attitudes change regarding technology in schools.

"It really comes down to making sure that we're educating students and parents about healthy habits with their digital devices," she said.

Employees at Elon Musk's Twitter brace for layoffs

The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Employees braced for widespread layoffs at Twitter Friday as new owner Elon Musk overhauls the social platform.

In a letter to employees obtained by multiple media outlets, the company said employees would find out by 9 a.m. Pacific Standard Time if they had been laid off. The email did not say how many people would lose their jobs.

Several employees tweeted early Friday that they had already lost access to their work accounts.

Twitter's roughly 7,500 employees have been expecting layoffs since Musk took the helm of the company. Already, the billionaire Tesla CEO has fired top executives, including CEO Parag Agrawal, on his first day as Twitter's owner.

He also removed the company's board of directors and installed himself as the sole board member. On Thursday night, many Twitter employees took to Twitter to express support for each other -- often simply tweeting blue heart emojis to signify Twitter's blue bird logo -- and salute emojis in replies to each other.

As of Thursday, Musk and Twitter had given no public notice of the coming layoffs. That's even though the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification statute requires employers with at least 100 workers to disclose layoffs involving 500 or more employees, regardless of whether a company is publicly

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traded or privately held.

Barry C. White, a spokesperson for California's Employment Development Department, said Thursday the agency has not received any recent such notifications from Twitter.

The layoffs come at a tough time for social media companies, as advertisers are scaling back and newcomers -- mainly TikTok -- are threatening the older class of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

Meta Platforms Inc., Facebook's parent company, recently posted its second quarterly revenue decline in history and its shares are trading at their lowest levels since 2015. Meta's disappointing results followed weak earnings reports from Google parent Alphabet and even Microsoft.

In the 5 states without lotteries, a case of Powerball envy

By KIM CHANDLER and MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

WEST POINT, Ga. (AP) — Loretta Williams lives in Alabama but drove to Georgia to buy a lottery ticket for a chance at winning the \$1.5 billion Powerball jackpot.

She was one of many Alabama ticket-buyers flooding across state lines Thursday. The third-largest lottery prize in U.S. history has people around the country clamoring for a chance to win. But in some of the five states without a lottery, envious bystanders are crossing state lines or sending ticket money across them to friends and family, hoping to get in on the action.

"I think it's ridiculous that we have to drive to get a lottery ticket," Williams, 67, said.

Five states — Utah, Nevada, Hawaii, Alaska and Alabama — do not have a lottery. A mix of reasons have kept them away, including objections from conservatives, concerns about the impact on low-income families or a desire not to compete with existing gaming operations.

"I'm pretty sure the people of Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi and Georgia appreciate all of our contributions to their roads, bridges, education system and many other things they spend that money on," said Democratic legislator Chris England, from Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Several times weekly, England hears from constituents asking when Alabama will approve a lottery: "Especially when people look on TV and see it's \$1.5 billion dollars."

In 1999, Alabama voted down a lottery referendum under a mix of opposition from churches and out-of-state gambling interests. Lottery proposals have since stagnated in its legislature, the issue now intertwined with debate over electronic gambling.

In Georgia, a billboard along Interstate 85 beckons motorists to stop at a gas station billing itself as the "#1 LOTTERY STORE" — 2 miles (3 kilometers) from the Alabama-Georgia line. Alabama car tags outnumbered Georgia ones in the parking lot at times and a line for ticket purchases stretched across the store.

Similarly, anybody in Utah wanting a lottery ticket must drive to Idaho or Wyoming, the two nearest states to the Salt Lake City metro area, where most of the population resides. Lotteries have long been banned in Utah amid stiff opposition to gambling by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known widely as the Mormon church. The faith has its headquarters in Salt Lake City and the majority of lawmakers and more than half of the state's residents belong to the religion.

In Malad, Idaho, 13 miles (21 kilometers) from the Utah line, KJ's Kwik Stop is taking advantage of Powerball's absence in Utah, advertising directly to Utah residents to cross over for tickets. "Just because Utah doesn't participate in the lottery doesn't mean you can't!" their website read recently.

KJ's sold hundreds of Powerball tickets to Utah residents on Thursday alone, said Cassie Rupp, a Kwik Stop cashier.

In Alaska, when oil prices slumped in recent years, legislative proposals to generate revenue through lottery games, including possibly Powerball, faltered. A 2015 report suggested annual proceeds from a statewide lottery could be around \$8 million but cautioned such a lottery could negatively affect charitable gaming activities such as raffles.

Anchorage podcast host Keith Gibbons was in New York earlier this week but forgot to buy a Powerball ticket, even though he didn't know the size of the jackpot. His response when told it could be \$1.5 billion: "I need a ticket."

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He believes even though Alaska is extremely diverse — Anchorage School District students speak more than 100 languages besides English in their homes — offering Powerball would appeal to everyone.

“There’s a little bit of everybody here, and so when you bring things like that, it doesn’t just speak to our culture, it speaks to all cultures because everybody wants money, everybody wants to win, everybody wants to be part of the scene,” Gibbons said.

Not everyone agrees.

Bob Endsley is no fan of Powerball. He says Alaskans shouldn’t have the opportunity to buy tickets. “It’s a waste of money,” said Endsley, also finding fault with the taxes that have to be paid on winnings and the increasing jackpots.

Taking a break from shoveling snow off his sidewalk, the Anchorage man said he once won \$10,000 in a Canadian lottery. But it was so long ago, he said, that he doesn’t remember what he did with the windfall other than “paid taxes.”

Hawaii joins Utah as the two states prohibiting all forms of gambling. Measures to establish a Hawaii state lottery or allow casinos are periodically introduced in the Legislature but routinely fail in committee.

Opponents say legalized gambling would disproportionately harm Hawaii’s low-income communities and encourage gambling addictions. Some argue the absence of casinos allows Hawaii to maintain its status as a family-friendly destination. Gambling is popular among Hawaii residents, however, with Las Vegas one of their top vacation destinations.

Wearing a University of Alabama cap, John Jones of Montgomery, Alabama, bought a Powerball ticket on Thursday in Georgia. He voted for an Alabama lottery in 1999 and said he hopes lawmakers there try again. A retired painter, Jones said he usually doesn’t buy a lottery ticket, but decided to take a chance.

He said many Alabamians seem to be doing the same at the Georgia store. “I even met some friends over here,” said Jones, 67.

Ukraine’s president accuses Russia of ‘energy terrorism’

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has accused Russia of engaging in “energy terrorism” after Russian strikes on Ukraine’s energy network left millions of residents without power.

About 4.5 million people were without electricity across the country, Zelenskyy said in his nightly address Thursday. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said 450,000 apartments in the capital alone did not have electricity on Friday.

“I appeal to all residents of the capital: save electricity as much as possible, because the situation remains difficult!” the mayor wrote on Telegram. State-owned grid operator Ukrenergo reported on Friday that emergency blackouts would be taking place across Kyiv.

Russia has repeatedly carried out missile and drone attacks on Ukrainian power facilities, particularly in recent weeks. In his address, Zelenskyy described the targeting of energy infrastructure as a sign of weakness.

“The very fact that Russia is resorting to energy terrorism shows the weakness of our enemy,” he said. “They cannot beat Ukraine on the battlefield, so they try to break our people this way.”

Zelenskyy’s spoke soon after Moscow-appointed authorities in southern Ukraine’s occupied Kherson region said Russian troops were likely to leave the city of Kherson — a claim that Ukrainian officials greeted with some skepticism.

The Kremlin-installed regional administration already has moved tens of thousands of civilians out of the city, citing the threat of increased shelling as Ukraine’s army pursues a counteroffensive to reclaim the region. Authorities removed the Russian flag from the Kherson administration building on Thursday, a week after the regional government moved out.

Ukraine’s southern military spokeswoman, Natalia Humeniuk, said the flag’s removal could be a ruse “and we should not hurry to rejoice.” She told Ukrainian television that some Russian military personnel are disguising themselves as civilians.

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Neither side's claims could be independently verified.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian officials reported shooting down drones launched by Russian forces. Dnipropetrovsk Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko said eight drones were shot down in the Nikopol area, which was also subjected to artillery shelling. Another drone was shot down over the western Lviv region, Gov. Maksym Kozytskyy said.

The commander of Ukraine's armed forces, Valeriy Zaluzhny, said Thursday night that Russian forces had "tripled the intensity of hostilities on certain areas of the front" and were carrying out "up to 80 attacks every day."

Zelenskyy's office said Friday that at least nine civilians were killed and 16 injured in Ukraine over the past 24 hours.

The Russian army attacked four cities close to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant with drones and heavy artillery. Governor of the Dnipropetrovsk province Valentyn Reznichenko said Friday that houses, cars and a gas pipeline had been damaged overnight in Chervonohryhorivka, and that the town was without electricity.

In the eastern Donetsk province, the town of Pokrovsk was the hardest hit, with rocket attacks damaging a school and at least 22 residential buildings, killing one civilian and wounding another six. Donetsk province governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said 12 towns and villages were shelled, including Bakhmut and Avdiivka, which have been particularly hard hit in recent weeks.

In the southern province of Kherson, which has been occupied and illegally annexed by Russia, the Ukrainian army shelled Russian bases and logistics facilities, destroying two ammunition warehouses, Ukrainian army officials said.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces also said that in the Black Sea, "the functioning of grain corridors continues" according to plan. Russia agreed Wednesday to rejoin a wartime agreement brokered by the United Nations and Turkey allowing Ukrainian grain and other commodities to be shipped to world markets. Moscow had suspended its participation in the grain deal over the weekend, citing an alleged drone attack against its Black Sea fleet in Crimea.

As one condition for its return to the deal, Russia demanded the grain be sent to poorer countries, arguing that most of it was currently ending up in richer nations.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday he had discussed the issue of prioritizing less developed countries for the grain shipments through the Black Sea during a call with U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

Erdogan said he also discussed the possibility of sending the grain to nations facing famine for free, during a recent call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Erdogan said Putin proposed sending free grain to countries that could face famine such as Somalia, Djibouti and Sudan. The two leaders would hold further talks on the issue at a G-20 meeting in Bali later this month, Erdogan said.

"Should we send this grain and fertilizer to developed countries, or to underdeveloped, poor countries?" Erdogan said during a speech to a business group. "Let's give this support to less developed, down and out countries."

"We will ensure that grain ships reach all needy countries, primarily Somalia, Djibouti and Sudan, which are struggling with a serious food crisis," Erdogan said.

Germany's Scholz urges Xi to exert influence on Russia

BEIJING (AP) — In a much-scrutinized meeting Friday with President Xi Jinping in Beijing, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz urged China to exert its influence on Russia, while the Chinese leader repeated a call for talks between Moscow and Ukraine and warned against the conflict going nuclear.

Scholz is in Beijing for a one-day visit that has drawn criticism over China's tacit support for Russia, lingering controversies over economic ties and human rights issues, as well as the timing of the trip.

It comes after Xi further cemented his authoritarian rule at a major Communist Party congress last month

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and as China continues to refuse to criticize Russia.

Scholz's visit reflects the importance of Germany's trade ties with China, the world's second-largest economy, particularly in the auto and manufacturing sectors. Mercedes Benz alone sold 758,863 cars in China last year, more than in any other country, according to company figures.

Scholz, who is traveling with several top German business leaders, received a formal welcome from Xi, who was recently reappointed head of the ruling Communist Party for a third term, at the Great Hall of the People in the heart of Beijing.

"At present, the international situation is complex and changeable," Xi was quoted as telling Scholz by state broadcaster CCTV. "As influential powers, China and Germany should work together in times of change and chaos to make more contributions to world peace and development."

On Ukraine, Xi "pointed out that China supports Germany and the EU in playing an important role in promoting peace talks and promoting the building of a balanced, effective and sustainable European security framework," CCTV reported. That was apparently a nod to Russia's anger over NATO's eastern expansion, largely a result of Moscow's increasingly belligerent policies toward its neighbors.

The international community should "create conditions for the resumption of negotiations (and) jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons," Xi said.

Without offering evidence, Russian leader Vladimir Putin has repeated Moscow's unproven allegation that Ukraine is plotting a false-flag attack involving a radioactive dirty bomb that it would try to pin on Russia.

Ukraine has strongly rejected the accusation, and its Western allies have dismissed it as "transparently false." Ukraine argued that Russia might be making the allegation to serve as a cover for its own possible plot to detonate a dirty bomb.

Scholz is the first leader from the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations to meet with Xi since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was first detected in China in 2019, and the first European leader to visit China since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which Germany has strongly opposed.

The diplomatically delicate trip comes as Germany and the European Union work on their strategy toward an increasingly assertive and authoritarian China.

Meanwhile on Friday, G-7 diplomats met in Germany to rally support for Ukraine and coalesced around suspicion of China's increasing assertiveness amid a wide range of global crises.

Beijing has provided Moscow with diplomatic backing by repeatedly calling for peace talks while refusing to support measures at the United Nations criticizing Russia's invasion. It has also accused the U.S. and NATO of provoking the attack and scathingly criticized economic sanctions imposed on Russia.

In his opening remarks, Scholz referred directly to the conflict that has created millions of refugees and upended world food and energy markets, saying, "We come together at a time of great tension."

"In particular, I want to highlight the Russian war against Ukraine, which poses many problems for our rules-based world order," Scholz said.

Scholz also touched on global hunger, climate change and developing-world debt as important issues.

At a later news conference, Scholz said he told Xi that "it's important for China to exert its influence on Russia." He gave no details on what the West precisely wanted China to do.

"President Xi and I agree that nuclear threats are irresponsible and highly dangerous. By using nuclear weapons, Russia would cross a line that the international community has drawn together," he said.

Scholz also said he brought up human rights and market access, and told Xi that any change in the status of self-governing Taiwan "can only happen peacefully and by mutual agreement." China claims the island republic as its own territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

In an apparent reference to European lawmakers and the Baltic state of Lithuania that China has banned and boycotted over their relations with Taiwan, Scholz said, "It is also important to be clear that economic measures against individual EU member states are directed against the entire EU single market, and sanctions against EU lawmakers are not acceptable for us."

Scholz has come under criticism for making the visit to China so soon after Xi's triumph at last month's congress, at which he promoted allies who support his vision of tighter control over society and the economy and a more confrontational approach to the West.

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The visit is also occurring amid rising tensions over Taiwan and follows a U.N. report that said Chinese human rights violations against Uyghurs and other ethnic groups in its Xinjiang region may amount to crimes against humanity.

Scholz is accompanied on the trip by about a dozen top German business leaders, including the CEOs of Volkswagen, BMW, BASF, Bayer and Deutsche Bank, most of which are doing a thriving business in China. Scholz will also meet company representatives in Beijing.

That has some German observers questioning whether the country is becoming overly reliant on the Chinese market, just as it did with Russia for energy supplies.

In a statement, VW's China head, Ralf Brandstatter, said Scholz's visit is important during "politically and economically challenging times like these."

China is Germany's most important trading partner, with 5,000 German companies active in the country and hundreds of thousands of German jobs tied to the Chinese market. More than 14 million jobs in China depend on business with European companies, Brandstatter said.

Scholz also met with Premier Li Keqiang, who nominally has responsibility over China's economy.

In an article for the German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Scholz said he was traveling to Beijing "precisely because business as usual is not an option in this situation."

Scholz's messages will face close scrutiny, particularly at home where some have criticized him for normalizing China's behavior. While his nearly year-old government has signaled a departure from predecessor Angela Merkel's firmly trade-first approach, his trip follows domestic discord over a Chinese shipping company's major investment in a container terminal in Germany's crucial port of Hamburg.

With China still imposing tough COVID-19 restrictions, his delegation is moving in an anti-virus bubble, undergoing testing and won't stay in Beijing overnight. At just 11 hours, it is the shortest trip ever to China by a German leader. The aircrew who brought him to Beijing flew to South Korea to wait out the visit and avoid having to be quarantined.

German officials say the trip is intended to probe where China is going and what forms of cooperation are possible.

Biden to plug tech bill in California, campaign in Illinois

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday is set to tour a southern California communications company that is expected to benefit from his legislative push to bolster American semiconductor manufacturing — and he's taking a vulnerable Democratic congressman with him.

Biden will be joined by Rep. Mike Levin for the visit to Carlsbad-headquartered Viasat as he looks to highlight the CHIPS and Science Act, a \$280 billion legislative package, ahead of Tuesday's midterm elections. The bill is one of the Biden administration's most significant legislative achievements.

Levin, a two-term congressman representing a San Diego-area district that was once a GOP stronghold, is locked in a tight race with former San Juan Capistrano Mayor Brian Maryott. Biden headlined a rally Thursday night in Oceanside, California, for Levin.

Coronavirus pandemic-era supply disruptions and a dearth of domestic chip manufacturing hampered Viasat, which relies on such components for services it provides to industrial customers and the U.S. military. Biden intends to use the event to highlight how the CHIPS act will help companies like Viasat reduce their reliance on overseas chip manufacturers, according to the White House.

Later Friday, Biden will head to Chicago to participate in a political reception. Biden is heading to the Democratic stronghold amid signs that some House members representing suburban Chicago districts may be facing more competitive than expected reelection battles.

The Congressional Leadership Fund, a super political action committee, or super PAC, aligned with the GOP House leadership, this week announced a \$1.8 million ad buy targeting Democratic Rep. Sean Casten, who represents a district that Biden won by about 11 percentage points in 2020. Rep. Kevin McCarthy of

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California, the House minority leader, is due to campaign with GOP challenger Keith Pekau in the district Friday.

EXPLAINER: How impoverished N. Korea finances testing spree

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

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea's recent barrage of missile tests, including Wednesday's record of at least 23 launches, is raising an important question about its weapons program: How does the impoverished country pay for the seemingly endless tests?

While some experts say each North Korean launch could cost \$2 million to \$10 million, others say there is no way to estimate accurately given the North's extremely secretive nature. They say North Korea likely manufactures weapons at a much cheaper cost than other countries because of free labor and possible clandestine Chinese and Russian support.

Whichever is correct, there are no signs that North Korea's economic hardships are slowing its weapons tests. Instead, its testing spree signals that leader Kim Jong Un is determined to show he has the ability to launch nuclear strikes on South Korea and the United States in order to wrest future concessions.

Here is a look at the financial dimensions of North Korea's missile tests.

HOW MUCH DOES EACH TEST COST?

North Korea launched at least 23 missiles on Wednesday and six more on Thursday, adding to its already record-breaking pace of weapons tests this year. Many were nuclear-capable ballistic missiles designed to destroy South Korean and U.S. targets.

They likely include a developmental Hwasong-17 intercontinental ballistic missile, surface-to-air missiles and a variety of short-range ballistic missiles. North Korea has a reputation for frequent missile tests, but it has never launched that many missiles in a single day.

Soo Kim, a security analyst at the California-based RAND Corporation, said the cost of a North Korean missile test could range between several million dollars to \$10 million, which would be lower than similar tests in other countries, partly because North Korean labor is cheap.

Bruce Bennet, another expert at the RAND Corporation, told Radio Free Asia that the short-range missiles Wednesday cost between \$2 million to \$3 million each and the total cost for the day was somewhere between \$50 million and \$75 million. RFA said the maximum estimate is about the amount of money that North Korea spent to import rice from China in 2019 to cover grain shortages that year.

Lee Illwoo, an expert with the Korea Defense Network in South Korea, said it's impossible for outsiders to accurately estimate weapons production costs in North Korea. "There are no ways for us to find at what cost North Korea produces certain weapons parts. They could have manufactured them by themselves, or China might have given them for free or at an extremely cheap price," he said.

In a report to the office of South Korean lawmaker Shin Won-sik in September, the state-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses in Seoul said North Korea was estimated to have spent up to \$1.6 billion on its nuclear program since the 1970s. The report used analyses of nuclear development programs in other countries. Some observers cautioned against the use of foreign data because the North Korean government doesn't have to pay for labor or land.

HOW ARE THE LAUNCHES FUNDED?

North Korea's economic difficulties have worsened because of COVID-19, but there have been no reports of substantial social unrest or food shortages.

Its weapons development is being driven by a Soviet-style party-military complex in which the party leadership surrounding Kim Jong Un exercises full control over defense industries and faces little budgetary constraint in concentrating national resources on arms development, said Hong Min, an analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification.

In addition to the record number of missile tests this year, there are also signs that North Korea is ex-

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panding its munition facilities in a possible attempt to mass-produce newly developed weapons, Hong said.

Soo Kim, the RAND Corporation analyst, said it is crucial to track how North Korea is financing its weapons programs despite U.S.-led economic sanctions and its own self-imposed isolation.

"This is where sanctions-violating activities, including (North Korea's) recent foray into cybercrime and cryptocurrency hacking, comes into play," she said. "And of course, having witting partners in Beijing and Moscow aid in sanctions violations also helps the regime's weapons development prosper."

Hong said Russia's war in Ukraine appears to have opened a new opportunity for North Korea amid U.S. accusations that the North is covertly shipping a "significant" number of artillery shells to Russia. Hong said in return North Korea may seek Russian technology transfers and supplies needed to expand its military capabilities.

WHAT DOES NORTH KOREA GAIN?

Each of North Korea's missile and nuclear tests gives its scientists "precious data" on weapons development and also helps cement Kim Jong Un's leadership while rattling the South Korea-U.S. alliance, said Kim Taewoo, former head of Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification.

"Some people say we should let North Korea keep firing missiles toward the sea so that they would use up their resources. But I would say that is an extremely naive opinion," he said.

South Korean media reported that the Hwasong-17 launch on Thursday ended in failure because it didn't follow a normal flight and crashed into the ocean after a stage separation. In an earlier test launch in March, the Hwasong-17 exploded soon after liftoff.

"The missile is under development. So it's not the time to call its launch 'a failure' and laugh at it," said Lee, the Korea Defense Network expert. "This time, the missile had a stage separation, and I think they've achieved quite a big technological progress."

North Korea has argued its missile tests are meant as a warning against a series of U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises that it views as an invasion rehearsal. Given that, North Korea's testing activities are likely to continue since Washington and Seoul regularly conduct drills.

North Korea is estimated to have about 1,000 ballistic missiles, more than enough for it to continue its pressure campaign through the 2024 U.S. presidential election to try to win sanctions relief and other concessions, said Go Myong-hyun, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

"What North Korea wants to demonstrate before 2024 is that its nuclear weapons arsenal is very advanced, has been completed and represents a much more significant threat than before," Go said. "It's crucial for them to maintain that threat perception with the United States and they aren't suddenly going to quiet down."

Supreme Court more diverse than lawyers who argue before it

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court looks more like America than it ever has. The lawyers who argue at the nation's highest court? Not so much.

The current two-week session of arguments features 25 men and just two women, an imbalance so stark that the Biden administration's top Supreme Court lawyer made a point of it in her defense of race-conscious college admissions Monday.

Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar argued to the court that extreme racial or gender disparities between certain groups "can cause people to wonder whether the path to leadership is open."

Prelogar and Morgan Ratner, a lawyer in private practice, are the lone women who began arguments this week as attorneys customarily do, "Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the court."

No woman will argue a case in the second week of the court session.

The glaring lack of women was a "common sense example," Prelogar said, that she hoped would resonate with the court, especially when women make up roughly half of law school graduates.

"And I think it would be reasonable for a woman to look at that and wonder, is that a path that's open

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to me, to be a Supreme Court advocate? Are private clients willing to hire women to argue their Supreme Court cases? When there is that kind of gross disparity in representation, it can matter and it's common sense," she said.

The month before wasn't much different. Eighteen men and four women, including Prelogar, argued eight cases.

The racial and ethnic disparity among lawyers also is stark, at a time when there are four women, two African-Americans and a Latina among the nine justices. Just one Black man has made a Supreme Court argument this term, and the last time a Black woman appeared before the justices was in 2019.

Prelogar is in the enviable position of choosing which cases to argue on behalf of the U.S. government. The solicitor general typically argues the most important case each month the court is in session. Prelogar is only the second woman to hold the position on a permanent basis, following now-Justice Elena Kagan.

Women also serve as the top appellate lawyers for Louisiana and New York and argue regularly before the court.

Lisa Blatt, the woman in private practice who appears most frequently at the court, delivered her 43rd high court argument last month in support of photographer Lynn Goldsmith in a dispute with the Andy Warhol Foundation. Blatt chairs the Supreme Court and appellate practice at the Williams and Connolly law firm.

But as Prelogar noted, there are few women with similar authority at private firms and in state offices.

That partially explains why so few Supreme Court advocates are women and minorities. There also are a relatively small number of slots every year at a court that has been hearing around 60 cases a year recently.

The private parties whose cases are before the court often pick lawyers with previous Supreme Court experience, which means the same lawyers come before the court again and again.

Christina Swarns, formerly the litigation director of the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund, is one of the few Black women to argue before the court in recent years.

Though it's been six years since her successful appearance on behalf of a Black death row inmate in Texas, Swarns said people "all the time, all the time, all the time" say to her: "I heard your argument. I saw your argument. I can't tell you how proud you made us that day."

Swarns said she is "acutely aware of the singularity" of her argument as a Black woman and felt pressure "not wanting to falter" and feeling that if she did, "it would make it harder for the people who came behind me."

When Justice Sonia Sotomayor was asked at an appearance earlier this year about the lack of diversity among advocates, she said that "to fix this problem we're going to have to work at every level." Sotomayor, who became the court's first Latina justice in 2009, said that meant reaching out to minority students in law school to encourage them to apply for clerkships with judges, which will get them into law firms that can put them in a position to argue before the court.

The Appellate Project, a not-for-profit created in 2019, aims to create that pipeline to feed minority lawyers into appellate legal work. This year, the Supreme Court's own clerk class is about two-thirds male; it appears six of the 38 clerks are minorities, according to research by court watcher David Lat.

But Sotomayor said judges in particular have "have the power and have the responsibility to reach out to law school professors whose judgment we trust and to tell them that it is our expectation that they will give us diverse recommendations" for law clerks and that "we expect them to actually mentor students of color from their very first day in law school."

Pakistan's ex-PM Khan stable after shooting

By MUNIR AHMED and RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan is in a stable condition after being shot and wounded during a protest march, a senior leader from his party said Friday.

Khan's protest march and rallies were peaceful until Thursday afternoon's attack, raising concerns about

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growing political instability in Pakistan, a country with a history of political violence and assassinations.

One of Khan's supporters was killed and 13 others, including two lawmakers, were wounded in the attack.

"There is no doubt about it," said Fawad Chaudhry, a senior leader from Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf party. "We are convinced that it was a well-planned assassination attempt on Pakistan's most popular leader Imran Khan, who is now in stable condition at the Shaukat Khanum hospital in Lahore after undergoing surgery there."

He said the party leadership was meeting in Lahore later Friday. "We will announce today exactly when our march will resume from Wazirabad," Chaudhry told The Associated Press. He provided no further details, but Khan's party in a brief statement urged supporters to hold nationwide rallies to condemn the shooting.

Asad Umar, a senior figure from Khan's party, blamed the shooting on Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the country's interior minister, and an army general without offering any evidence.

The government called the allegation baseless, saying it has ordered a high-level probe and that the attacker is being questioned.

Police are still questioning the alleged attacker, who is shown in a video saying he carried out the shooting and acted alone.

Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif on Friday said the Punjab government suspended the police officials who released the video to the media.

The attack took place as the former cricket star-turned-politician was traveling in a large protest convoy of trucks and cars toward Islamabad. Video footage shows him and his team ducking for cover on top of a vehicle as gunfire rings out.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan said some political elements from Khan's party were trying to create chaos in the country following the attack.

His comments came after scores of Khan's supporters demonstrated in various parts of the country, with some chanting slogans against the military and vowing to avenge the attack. The interior minister called the alleged gunman a "religious extremist" who had accused the ex-premier of comparing himself to prophets in some of his recent public speeches.

Khan, 70, is likely to be allowed to go home soon, according to Faisal Sultan, who is heading the team of doctors who treated Khan. He told reporters Thursday that Khan's surgery continued for two hours, and he had a bullet wound in his right leg.

He maintains that his April ouster from Parliament was unlawful and a conspiracy by his political opponents orchestrated by the United States, a charge denied by both Washington and Sharif.

Khan wants the government to announce snap elections. He led the protest from Lahore last Friday along with thousands of supporters, saying his protest will continue until his demands are accepted. Pakistan says elections will take place as scheduled in 2023.

His supporters rallied overnight in different parts of the country after the shooting.

Pope blasts 'childlike' wars at Bahrain interfaith summit

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — With Russia's war in Ukraine raging, Pope Francis joined Muslim, Christian and Jewish leaders Friday in calling for the world's great religions work together for peace, telling an interfaith summit that religion must never be used to justify violence and that faith leaders must counter the "childlike" whims of the powerful to make war.

On his second day in the Gulf kingdom of Bahrain, Francis closed out a conference on East-West dialogue sponsored by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. It was his second such conference in as many months, following one in Kazakhstan, evidence of Francis' core belief that moments of encounter among people of different faiths can help heal today's conflicts and promote a more just and sustainable world.

Sitting around him in the Sakhir royal palace grounds were leading Muslim imams, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, and U.S. rabbis who have long engaged in interfaith dialogue, as well

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as the king. Speaker after speaker called for an end to Russia's war in Ukraine and the start of peace negotiations. The Russian Orthodox Church, which sent an envoy to the conference, has strongly supported the Kremlin in its war and justified it on religious grounds.

Francis told the gathering that, while the world seems to be heading apart like two opposing seas, the mere presence of religious leaders together was evidence that they "intend to set sail on the same waters, choosing the route of encounter rather than that of confrontation."

"It is a striking paradox that, while the majority of the world's population is united in facing the same difficulties, suffering from grave food, ecological and pandemic crises, as well as an increasingly scandalous global injustice, a few potentates are caught up in a resolute struggle for partisan interests," he said.

"We appear to be witnessing a dramatic and childlike scenario: in the garden of humanity, instead of cultivating our surroundings, we are playing instead with fire, missiles and bombs, weapons that bring sorrow and death, covering our common home with ashes and hatred," he said.

King Hamad, for his part, urged a coherent effort to stop Russia's war in Ukraine and promote peace negotiations, "for the good of all of humanity."

The visit is Francis' second to a Gulf Arab country, following his 2019 landmark trip to Abu Dhabi, where he signed a document promoting Catholic-Muslim fraternity with a leading Sunni cleric, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb. Al-Tayeb is the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the seat of Sunni learning in Cairo, and has become Francis' key partner in promoting greater Christian-Muslim understanding.

Al-Tayeb joined Francis in Bahrain and was on hand last month in Kazakhstan too. In his prepared remarks, called Friday for an end to Russia's war "to spare the lives of innocents who have no hand in this violent tragedy."

Al-Tayeb also called for Sunni and Shiite Muslims to engage in a similar process of dialogue and try to heal their centuries of divisions, saying Al-Azhar was prepared to host such an encounter.

"Let us together chase away any talk of hate, provocation and excommunication and set aside ancient and modern conflict in all its forms and with all its negative offshoots," he said. Bahrain is ruled by a Sunni monarchy that has been accused by human rights groups of systematic discrimination against its Shiite majority, charges the government rejects.

Later Friday, al-Tayeb was to meet privately with Francis and participate in a larger encounter at the mosque in the royal palace with the Muslim Council of Elders, which he heads.

Francis was also bringing his message of dialogue to Bahrain's Christian leaders by presiding over an ecumenical meeting and peace prayer at the Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral, the largest Catholic Church in the Gulf, which was inaugurated last year on land gifted to the church by Al Khalifa.

Francis opened his visit to Bahrain on Thursday by urging Bahrain authorities renounce the death penalty and ensure basic human rights are guaranteed for all citizens — a nod to Bahraini Shiite dissidents who say they have been harassed and detained, subject to torture and "sham trials," with some sentenced to death for their political activities. The government denies discriminating against Shiites.

Francis also aimed to highlight Bahrain' tradition of religious tolerance: Unlike neighboring Saudi Arabia, where Christians cannot openly practice their faith, Bahrain is home to several Christian communities as well as a small Jewish community.

In his prepared remarks to the forum, U.S. Rabbi Marc Schneier, who has long worked to promote Jewish-Muslim understanding and serves as Al Khalifa's special advisor on interfaith matters, praised Bahrain as a "role model in the Arab world for coexistence and tolerance of different faith communities."

War fallout, aid demands overshadow climate talks in Egypt

By FRANK JORDANS and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — When world leaders, diplomats, campaigners and scientists descend on Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt next week for talks on tackling climate change, don't expect them to part the Red Sea or other miracles that would make huge steps in curbing global warming.

Each year there are high hopes for the two-week United Nations climate gathering and, almost inevitably,

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disappointment when it doesn't deliver another landmark pact like the one agreed 2015 in Paris.

But those were different days, marked by a spirit of cooperation between the world's two biggest pol-
luters — the United States and China — as well as a global realization that failure to reach an agreement
would put humanity on a self-chosen track to oblivion.

This November the geopolitical tiles have shifted: a devastating war in Ukraine, skyrocketing energy and
food prices, and growing enmity between the West on the one hand and Russia and China on the other
make for difficult conditions at a gathering that requires cooperation and consensus.

"There's a lot of high and low expectations around this Egypt COP, a lot of mix of ambition and fatalism,"
said Avinash Persaud, special envoy for the Barbados prime minister.

Here's what to look out for during the 27th Conference of the Parties, or COP27, from Nov. 6-18 and why
it might still end up being a success.

SCIENCE WARNINGS

Scientists are more concerned about global warming than three decades ago, when governments first
came together to discuss the problem because the pace of warming in the past decade is 33% faster
than in the 1990s.

Greenhouse gas emissions are still rising, while tangible impacts from climate change are already being
felt around the world.

But there is some progress. Before Paris, the world was heading for 4.5 degrees Celsius (8.1 Fahrenheit)
of warming by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times.

Recent forecasts have that down to 2.6 C (4.7 F), thanks to measures taken or firm commitments gov-
ernments have already made. That's far above the 1.5 C (2.7 F) limit countries agreed to seven years ago,
however, and the time for keeping that target is fast running out.

Researchers say the world has already warmed by 1.2 C (2.2F) and capping temperatures at 1.5 C would
require emissions to drop by 43% by the end of the decade, a highly ambitious goal. To get to the less
ambitious 2 C (3.6 F) goal emissions have to fall 27%.

"The 1.5 degrees is in intensive care and the machines are shaking. So, it is in high danger. But it is still
possible," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "My objective in Egypt is to make sure
that we gather enough political will to make this possibility really moving forward, to make the machines
work ... We're getting close to moments where tipping points might, at a certain moment, make it irre-
versibly impossible to achieve. Let's avoid it at all costs."

ENERGY SCRAMBLE

Prices for oil, coal and natural gas have jumped since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Some countries have
responded by trying to tap new sources of fossil fuel.

This has raised concerns about governments backsliding on their commitments to cut emissions, including
the agreement at last year's climate talks to "phase down" the use of coal and sharply reduce the amount
of methane — a powerful greenhouse gas — released into the atmosphere.

At the same time, rising fossil fuel prices have made renewable energy more competitive. Building solar
and wind power plants remains more expensive for developing countries though. To help them cut their
emissions quickly, rich nations are negotiating aid projects known as 'just transition energy partnerships',
or JET-Ps, with several major emerging economies including Indonesia and India that could be finalized
during or shortly after COP27.

CLIMATE FINANCE

One of the big sticking points in past negotiations concerned the financial support poor countries receive
from rich nations to cope with climate change.

A deadline to provide \$100 billion annually by 2020 was missed and now looks set to be achieved only
next year. Future funding needs are likely to be in the trillions, not billions, said Mohamed Nasr, Egypt's
lead negotiator.

"The gap on finance is huge," he said, noting that half the population of Africa doesn't yet have access
to electricity, much less clean energy.

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Developed countries including the United States have also yet to make good on a pledge to double the amount they provide for adaptation, and make that half of the overall funding.

Discussions on climate finance also include the highly contentious issue of countries being compensated for the irreparable harm they've suffered as a result of global warming. Big polluters have strongly opposed demands for 'loss and damage' payments in the past, but observers say they've seen a softening of positions recently, including by the United States.

"I think that people are not expecting miracles in terms of a huge fund just miraculously appearing, but they are expecting a credible, meaningful pathway," said Inger Andersen, head of the U.N. Environment Programme.

This would give countries that have done very little to cause the climate crisis but are on the front line of dealing with it "something to hold on to," she said.

ACTIVIST VOICES

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg is not coming to this year's gathering and recently called the U.N. process a "scam."

Other activists have also voiced frustration at the slow pace of negotiations, given the scale of the threat posed by climate change. But Harjeet Singh of Climate Action Network International said there is no other space where all countries are equal.

"Tuvalu theoretically is as powerful as the U.S. and Malawi as powerful as the European Union," he said of the talks. "For us as civil society it's also a place to call out these countries, to call their bluff, to put a spotlight on those polluters and raise our voices."

University of Maryland social scientist Dana Fisher, who studies the environmental movement, said given Egypt's authoritarian government and an escalation of in-your-face tactics by frustrated protesters, especially youth, she would not be surprised if there are clashes.

"There's going to be a vanguard of them who are going to be willing to break the law and engage in probably what will start out as civil disobedience, peaceful civil disobedience," Fisher said. "And they're probably going to get beaten up. And it's going to be very good for mobilizing sympathizers."

Egypt has insisted that campaigners will have "full opportunity of participation, of activism, of demonstration, of voicing that opinion."

EYE ON AFRICA

The gathering in Egypt will be the first time since 2016 that U.N. climate talks have taken place in Africa. Experts say it is important the continent gets more attention, given how heavily it is affected by rising temperatures.

"If we look at the 50 countries that are most vulnerable to climate change impacts and who have the least resilience, these are low income countries and most of them are in Africa," said Preeti Bhandari of the World Resources Institute. "So it is fortuitous that we are having this particular COP in Africa to highlight what the vulnerable countries are asking from the climate regime."

Campaigners say that recognizing the challenges Africa faces and prioritizing the needs of vulnerable countries is essential for a successful outcome this year.

Climate negotiations: 30 years of melting hope and US power

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Thirty years ago there was hope that a warming world could clean up its act.

It didn't.

The United States helped forge two historic agreements to curb climate change then torpedoed both when new political administrations took over. Rich and poor nations squabbled about who should do what. During that time Earth warmed even faster.

Hope melted, along with 36 trillion tons of ice, scientists calculate.

Since 1992, when world leaders first came together to address global warming, humanity has spewed more than a trillion tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide from fossil fuels into the air. The world got 1.1

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degrees (0.6 degrees Celsius) hotter.

As climate negotiators gather in Egypt to try to limit future warming to just a few more tenths of a degree long-time officials and historians see recurring themes in past efforts that still echo today. Those themes involve the outsized footprint of the United States and the tug-of-war between nations that got rich thanks to fossil fuels and yet-to-develop countries that feel disproportionate pain from climate change and are being told not to develop much coal, oil and natural gas.

"The U.S. has been the absolute dominant force throughout all of this," said climate negotiations historian Joanna Depledge of the University of Cambridge in England. "I'm afraid the U.S. has been both the best and the worst thing, really, about negotiations."

It started on a high note. In 1992, five years after a historic environmental agreement to ban ozone-munching chemicals, world leaders signed a treaty in Rio de Janeiro at the "Earth Summit." It started the formal United Nations process to negotiate dial back carbon emissions. The world recognized that climate change "is going to affect us all and we all have to deal with it," recalled the first UN climate secretary, Michael Zammit Cutajar.

Oren Lyons, faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation in New York, decades later called it the greatest meeting he attended: "There was a huge feeling of well-being, of being able to do something ... There was a lot of hope there."

Inger Andersen, a young United Nations development official at the time, said the summit got three different programs going and nothing was going to stop them.

"I mean this was it. We fixed it," recalled Andersen, now the executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. "I mean that was it. It was amazing, right?"

The Cold War had just ended and "the global environment was seen as a way of bringing previously warring countries together," said Depledge. "It was seen as a kind of benign, you know motherhood-and-apple-pie way of cooperating."

"Yes it was naïve, but it could have been done," Depledge said. "Such innovative, exciting proposals were put forward in the early years, which if they had been implemented, we would be in a so much better situation."

That included an insurance fund for mass disaster idea that would have been just ideal for Pakistan's devastating flood this summer that put one-third of the nation under water, Depledge said.

Running through negotiations was the idea of differentiated responsibilities, with developed countries taking the lead. The key country that had to accept this was the No. 1 emitter at the time: The United States.

"When I look back on that now, not just then but beyond then I see the negotiation very much as an effort to bring the U.S. on board and keep it on board, right through," Cutajar said.

In 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, the United States negotiated a deal that would have developed nations reduce their heat-trapping gas emissions to 1990 levels and below. Cutajar had the most hope of his career. It was a step in the right direction that would be followed by even more steps, he figured.

"The flexibility that defines the Kyoto Protocol was very much designed in the USA," he said.

"That optimism lasted for quite a long time ... the real hammer blow to it all, was the decision by President (George) W. Bush" to scuttle the Kyoto deal, Depledge said. "It really did sound the very slow death knell of that all important legally binding treaty, which we had thought would be the beginning — the beginning of a long lasting solution to climate change."

The Kyoto deal limped along, Cutajar said. Finally a new non-binding deal, where every country came up with its own emission targets, was forged in Paris in 2015, after a side agreement between the United States and China. Again, the U.S. took a leadership role. The Paris deal was delicately worded so that the Republican-controlled U.S. Senate wouldn't need to ratify it.

Negotiators literally danced in celebration.

Again, a new Republican administration, this time the president was Donald Trump, pulled out of the deal. Then Joe Biden put the U.S. back in again and negotiations resume with the United States now balking about the idea of paying for the damage done to poorer countries that didn't spew much carbon pollution, like Pakistan.

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"U.S. continues to be a difficult but essential partner," Cutajar said.

Longtime climate change activist Bill McKibben said "the one thing I couldn't have predicted was how little our society would react when faced with a clear warning from scientists about the greatest danger we ever faced, that we would conspire to do almost nothing for 30 years. Chalk it up to the extraordinary work of the fossil fuel industry."

Extensive academic and other research has credited the fossil fuel industry with slowing or stopping climate change fighting efforts, particularly in the United States.

Cutajar, long retired and living in Switzerland, no longer has that hope that blossomed in the 1990s.

"I can't say I'm optimistic," Cutajar said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The human race is not going to be wiped out, but there's going to be displacement — movement of people — on a historical scale. There already is. There will be more."

Ukrainians face nuclear threat with grit and dark humor

By HANNA ARHIROVA and ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Dmytro Bondarenko is ready for the worst.

He's filled the storage area under his fold-up bed and just about every other nook of his apartment in eastern Kyiv with water and nonperishable food. There are rolls of packing tape to seal the windows from radioactive fallout. He has a gas-fired camping stove and walkie-talkies.

There's even an AR-15 rifle and a shotgun for protection, along with boxes of ammo. Fuel canisters and spare tires are stashed by his washing machine in case he needs to leave the city in a hurry.

"Any preparation can increase my chance to survive," he said, wearing a knife and a first-aid kit.

With the Russian invasion in its ninth month, many Ukrainians no longer ask if their country will be hit by nuclear weapons. They are actively preparing for that once-unthinkable possibility.

Over dinner tables and in bars, people often discuss which city would be the most likely target or what type of weapon could be used. Many, like Bondarenko, are stocking up on supplies and making survival plans.

Nobody wants to believe it can happen, but it seems to be on the mind of many in Ukraine, which saw the world's worst nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1986.

"Of course Ukraine takes this threat seriously, because we understand what kind of country we are dealing with," presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said in an interview with The Associated Press, referring to Russia.

The Kremlin has made unsubstantiated claims that Ukraine is preparing a "dirty bomb" in Russian-occupied areas — an explosive to scatter radioactive material and sow fear. Kyiv strenuously denied it and said such statements are more probably a sign that Moscow is itself preparing such a bomb and blame it on Ukraine.

MEMORIES OF CHERNOBYL

The nuclear fears trigger painful memories from those who lived through the Chernobyl disaster, when one of four reactors exploded and burned about 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Kyiv, releasing a plume of radiation. Soviet authorities initially kept the accident secret, and while the town near the plant was evacuated, Kyiv was not.

Svitlana Bozhko was a 26-year-old journalist in Kyiv who was seven months pregnant at the time of the accident, and she believed official statements that played it down. But her husband, who had spoken to a physicist, convinced her to flee with him to the southeastern Poltava region, and she realized the threat when she saw radiation monitors and officials rinsing the tires of cars leaving Kyiv.

Those fears worried Bozhko for the rest of her pregnancy, and when her daughter was born, her first question was: "How many fingers does my child have?" That daughter, who was healthy, now has a 1-year-old of her own and left Kyiv the month after Russia invaded.

Still living in Kyiv at age 62, Bozhko had hoped she would never have to go through something like that again. But all those fears returned when Russian President Vladimir Putin sent in his forces on Feb. 24.

"It was a *deja vu*," she told AP. "Once again, the feelings of tragedy and helplessness overwhelmed me."

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The capital again is preparing for the release of radioactivity, with more than 1,000 personnel trained to respond, said Roman Tkachuk, head of the capital's Municipal Security Department. It has bought a large number of potassium iodide pills and protective equipment for distribution, he added.

CASUAL TALK AND DARK HUMOR ABOUT NUKES

With all the high-level talk from Moscow, Washington and Kyiv about atomic threats, Ukrainians' conversations these days are studded with phrases like "strategic and tactical nuclear weapons," "potassium iodide pills," "radiation masks," "plastic raincoats," and "hermetically sealed food."

Bondarenko said he started making nuclear survival plans when Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant — the largest in Europe — was affected by Russian attacks.

The 33-year-old app designer figures he's got enough supplies to survive for a couple of weeks and more than enough fuel to leave the country or move deep into the mountains if nuclear disaster strikes.

He moved from the Donetsk region several years ago after it was threatened by pro-Moscow separatists. He hoped for a calm life in Kyiv but the COVID-19 pandemic forced a more isolated life in his apartment, and the war accelerated his survival plans.

His supplies include 200 liters (53 gallons) of water, potassium iodide pills to protect his thyroid from radiation, respirator face masks and disposable booties to guard against contaminated soil.

Bondarenko said he can't be sure he would be safe from a Russian nuclear strike but believes it's better to be prepared because "they're crazy."

Websites offer tips for surviving a dirty bomb while TikTok has multiple posts of people packing "nuclear luggage" to make a quick getaway and offering advice on what to do in case of a nuclear attack.

October has seen "huge spikes" of Ukrainian visits to NUKEMAP, a website that allows users to simulate an atomic bomb dropped on a given location, according to its creator, Alex Wellerstein.

The anxiety has prompted dark humor. More than 8,000 people joined a chat on the Telegram messaging service after a tweeted joke that in case of a nuclear strike, survivors should go to Kyiv's Schekavytsia Hill for an orgy.

On the serious side, mental health experts say having a support network is key to remaining resilient during uncertain times.

"That's often the case in Ukraine and also you need to have the feeling that you can cope with this. And there is this group feeling (that is) quite strong," said Dr. Koen Sevenants, lead for mental health and psychosocial support for global child protection for UNICEF.

However, he said extended periods under threat can lead to a sense of helplessness, hopelessness and depression. While a level of normalization can set in, that can change when threats increase.

FRONT-LINE FATIGUE

Those living near the war's front line, like residents of Mykolaiv, say they often are too exhausted to think about new threats, since they have endured almost constant shelling. The city 500 kilometers (310 miles) south of Kyiv is the closest to Kherson, where battles are raging.

"Whether I believe it or not, we must prepare" for the nuclear threat, the head of regional administration, Vitalii Kim, told AP. He said regional officials are working on various scenarios and mapping evacuation routes.

More than half the prewar population of 500,000 has fled Mykolaiv. Many who stayed, like 73-year-old Valentyna, say they are too tired to leave now.

She sleeps in a windowless basement shared with about 10 other neighbors in conditions so humiliating that she asked not to be fully identified. Of the threat of a nuclear attack, she says: "Now I believe that everything can happen."

Another woman in the shelter, who wanted to be identified only as Tamara for the same reasons, said that while trying to sleep at night on a bed made from stacked wooden beams, her mind turns to what fate awaits her.

"During the First World War, they fought mainly with horses. During the Second World War, with tanks," she said. "No one excludes the possibility that this time it will be a nuclear weapon."

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"People progress, and with it, the weapons they use to fight," Tamara added. "But man does not change, and history repeats itself."

In Kyiv, Bozhko feels that same fatigue. She has learned what to do in case a missile hits, keeps a supply of remedies for various kinds of chemical attacks, and has what she calls her "anxiety luggage" — essentials packed in case of sudden evacuation.

"I'm so tired of being scared; I just keep living my life," she says, "But if something happens, we will try to fight and survive."

And she said she understands the difference between 1986 and 2022.

"Back then, we were afraid of the power of atoms. This time, we face a situation when a person wants to exterminate you by any means," Bozhko said, "and the second is much more terrifying."

Verlander gets World Series win, Astros lead Phillies 3-2

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Justin Verlander beamed like a first-time big leaguer, and the Houston Astros feted the 244-game winner like a baby-faced rookie.

"They put me in the cart and rolled me in the shower and just doused me with all sorts of stuff," he said. "And it was one of the best feelings in my career."

After 16 years of trying, Verlander finally gritted out his elusive first World Series win.

Expected to win his third Cy Young Award this month, Verlander overcame an early jolt and rookie Jeremy Peña hit a go-ahead homer and drove in two runs as the Astros beat the Philadelphia Phillies 3-2 Thursday night to head home with a 3-2 Series lead.

"I can say I got one," Verlander proudly proclaimed.

Buoyed by defensive gems from Trey Mancini in the eighth inning and Chas McCormick in the ninth, the Astros moved to the brink of their second championship — the other was a scandal-tainted title in 2017. They can close out the Phillies on Saturday night at Minute Maid Park.

"There's going to be a lot of energy in our park," said Houston's 73-year-old Dusty Baker, one win from his first title in 25 seasons as a major league manager.

Philadelphia, wearing vintage powder blue uniforms in the Series for the first time since 1983, lost consecutive games for the first time this postseason.

Of previous Fall Classics tied 2-2, the Game 5 victor has won 31 of 47 times. Three years ago, the Astros lost Games 6 and 7 at home to Washington.

"I think it matters that we've already won there this series," the Phillies' Rhys Hoskins said. "Should give us a little more confidence."

Verlander is among just five Astros remaining from the team caught using video to steal signs in '17. He had been 0-6 with an unseemly 6.07 ERA in eight Series starts dating to his rookie season with Detroit in 2006, a blotch in a likely Hall of Fame career.

Pitching with an extra day of rest for his arm and stubble on his face, the 39-year-old right-hander gave up just one run and four hits over five innings with four walks and six strikeouts. He lowered that Series ERA to 5.63, a celebratory cap on a season in which he returned from Tommy John surgery and re-emerged as the AL's best starter.

Houston went ahead just four pitches in against Noah Syndergaard on Peña's run-scoring single. Then Kyle Schwarber hit his fifth postseason homer leading off the bottom half, harkening to the five-run lead Verlander wasted in Houston's opening 6-5, 10-inning loss.

"It just sucks because of the moment and obviously all the questions and weight," Verlander said. "But you have to rely on the hundreds of starts and the thousands of pitches I've thrown before and just kind of say, 'OK, I've given up leadoff home runs before. Let me bear down.'"

Philadelphia loaded the bases in the second on Jean Segura's single and a pair of walks. After a visit from pitching coach Bill Murphy, Verlander wiggled out of trouble by striking out Hoskins on a slider.

"It was kind of a tricky thing because my first start, my slider and curveball was what I got hurt on

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most," Verlander said. "Once we started leaning on them a little bit, it was almost like testing the water, sticking your foot in the pool and seeing how cold it is."

Verlander threw exclusively fastballs in 17 pitches to Bryce Harper, who doubled with two outs in the fifth. Baker left in Verlander to face Nick Castellanos.

"He's been one of the best of getting out of trouble and, to me, that was his game," Baker said. "Who can you bring in that's better than the guy that's out there?"

Castellanos, whose single off a slider started Verlander's Game 1 downfall, followed with an epic 10-pitch at-bat. After trying two fastballs, two curveballs and his only changeup of the night, Verlander threw his fifth slider of the plate appearance and retired Castellanos on a flyout to short left, pumping a fist twice in excitement.

"It's a game of centimeters," Castellanos said. "If I'm on top of that ball a little bit more, we're in a different situation."

Peña had three hits: an RBI single through a drawn-in infield in the first after Jose Altuve's leadoff double, a homer in the fourth on a hanging curveball (his fourth longball of the postseason) for a 2-1 lead and an eighth-inning single that set up Yordan Alvarez's run-scoring groundout. The shortstop also made a leaping catch to foil Castellanos in the third.

After Segura's one-out RBI single off Rafael Montero in the eighth, Ryan Pressly escaped a first-and-third jam by striking out Brandon Marsh and retiring Schwarber on a nearly 100 mph one-hopper that was snagged over first base by Mancini.

Mancini, the backup first baseman, pinch hit in the top half after 2021 Gold Glove winner Yuli Gurriel hurt his right knee in a collision during a rundown. Playing defense for the first time since the regular-season finale, Mancini fell into foul territory and reached back with his left foot to touch the bag.

"I just tackled it basically," Mancini said.

McCormick, who grew up a Phillies fan in the Philadelphia suburbs, helped Pressly finish a five-out save. The center fielder ran 91 feet to make a leaping backhand catch against the chain-link fence in front of the right-center scoreboard on J.T. Realmuto for the second out of the ninth.

"I was going to run through a wall and catch it no matter what," McCormick said.

After Harper was hit by a pitch, Castellanos bounced to shortstop, ending a 3-hour, 57-minute thriller.

"Zero complacency," Verlander said. "We've been in this situation before. You can see how quickly momentum can change in this game."

GETTING LATE

This was the third game in November, marking the first time a majority of the Series was played in that month.

UP NEXT

Houston LHP Framber Valdez is set to face Phillies RHP Zack Wheeler. Valdez allowed one run, four hits and three walks over 6 1/3 innings in Game 2, while Wheeler gave up five runs — four earned — and three walks over five innings, including Alex Bregman's two-run homer.

Conflict, crisis fuel cholera surge across Mideast hot spots

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BHANINE, Lebanon (AP) — Shadia Ahmed panicked as rainwater flooded her shack one night, drenching her seven children. The next morning, the kids were seized by vomiting, diarrhea and other symptoms.

After an aid group administered tests for cholera in Ahmed's Syrian refugee encampment in the northern Lebanese town of Bhanine, her youngest, 4-year-old Assil, tested positive.

Cholera has swept across Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq as the countries struggle with devastated infrastructure, turmoil and housing large populations of people who have been displaced by conflict. Lebanon last month reported the first cholera case in nearly 30 years.

The bacterial infection has surged globally across dozens of countries this year, with outbreaks in Haiti and across the Horn of Africa as well as the Mideast. The outbreaks of hundreds of thousands of cases driven

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by conflict, poverty, and climate change are a major setback for global efforts to eradicate the disease. "Cholera thrives in poverty and conflict but is now turbocharged by climate change," said Inas Hamam, a regional spokeswoman for the World Health Organization. "Regional and global health security is in jeopardy."

Anti-cholera efforts focus on vaccination, clean water and sanitation. Last month, WHO announced the temporary suspension of a two-dose vaccination strategy because production couldn't meet surging demand. Officials are now administering single doses so that more people can benefit from the vaccine in the short term.

A cholera infection is caused by consuming food or water infected with the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium. While most cases are mild to moderate, cholera can cause death if it's not treated correctly.

"I would spend the whole night taking her to the bathroom, giving her medication, washing and sterilizing her," Ahmed, 33, said of Assil, her child who got cholera. "I couldn't sleep, and was up all night just looking at her. I feared the worst."

Assil and her siblings eventually got better; she was the only confirmed cholera case in the family.

Across the border in Syria, officials and U.N. agencies announced last month that a cholera outbreak was sweeping the entire country. The outbreak in Syria is due to people drinking unsafe water from the Euphrates River and using contaminated water to irrigate crops, according to the U.N. and the Syrian Health Ministry.

In the government-held areas of Syria and in the country's northeast, held by U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces, there have since been roughly 17,000 cases of cholera and 29 deaths.

In the rebel-held Idlib province of Syria, most of the 4 million residents are displaced from the conflict. They depend on international aid and live in tent camps.

Over half of Idlib does not have regular access to water. Many families use polluted water from wells are that close to sewage.

There have been 3,104 cholera cases and five deaths in Idlib province. Dr. Abdullah Hemeidi of the Syrian American Medical Society anticipates a surge this winter.

"The health care system in the area is weak," Hemeidi said. "Medical organizations and local councils are trying to sanitize water and they are holding workshops to limit the spread."

In the Salaheddine camp in the opposition-held countryside northwest of Aleppo, children play near sewage. Community workers hold awareness sessions for residents.

"We're worried it will spread in our camp," resident Jamil Latfo said.

Iraq has struggled with cholera outbreaks for years. In Lebanon, the disease was rare for decades.

Three years ago, Lebanon fell into an economic crisis. Most Lebanese now rely on water trucked in by private suppliers, and private generators for electricity. Utilities can't buy fuel and pump water into households.

Since last month, Lebanon has reported 2,421 cases and 18 deaths. About a quarter of these cases are children under the age of five. The *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria has been found in drinking-water, sewer systems, and irrigation water.

The country hosts more than a million Syrian refugees. Most cases of cholera have been detected in refugee camps, Lebanon's Health Ministry says.

In Bhanine, Ahmed and her children are tucked between apartment buildings, along with dozens of other Syrian refugees. The families live in weak wooden shacks with tarp walls and ceilings. They share three toilets and three sinks.

Like most households in Lebanon, camp residents buy water trucked in by private suppliers. The state does not test the water for safety.

"The water was contaminated but we had no choice but to use it," resident Ali Hamadi said. "There was no drinking water, let alone water to clean, wash the dishes, wash our clothes or for the shower."

U.N. aid agencies started providing clean water for the camp, while disinfecting walls and doors and holding information sessions. They're also donating fuel to the Lebanese government so that authorities can pump water again.

"The support we offer cannot replace the service lines and the national electricity grid, which is basically not functioning most of the time," said Ettie Higgins, deputy representative for Lebanon of the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF.

WHO has been working with Iraqi health authorities to help bolster their cholera response, visiting water-treatment plants and testing laboratories in Baghdad last month.

UNICEF said it urgently needs \$40.5 million to continue its work in Lebanon and Syria for the next three months.

"These camps are fertile ground for the outbreak of an illness," said Hemeidi, of the Syrian American Medical Society. "We won't be able to properly respond to it unless there is an intervention with medical equipment and aid."

Abortion clinic that opened days after Roe fell is inundated

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — When Planned Parenthood decided four years ago to open a new clinic in a medically underserved working-class neighborhood here, it envisioned a place that would save women living nearby from having to take hourslong bus rides to obtain birth control, testing or an abortion.

The U.S. Supreme Court's June decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* — four days before the clinic opened — changed all that. Because Kansas is one of the few states in the region where abortion remains legal, the clinic soon found itself inundated with calls not just from panicked patients in Kansas and nearby Missouri, but also in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas — even as far away as Louisiana.

This clinic and other Planned Parenthood centers in Kansas have been doing their best to help by lengthening hours, hiring staff and flying in physicians. Still, they have only been able to take about 10% to 15% of the patients seeking abortions.

"The ecosystem, it's not even fragile. It's broken," said Emily Wales, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Great Plains. "I think there's a perception that if you are seeking care, you can find it somewhere. And that's not true."

Haley Ruark, of Platte City, Missouri, was able to get an appointment on a recent Wednesday after a two-week wait — longer than she wanted but better than driving hundreds of miles west to Colorado.

Ruark had panicked after a series of birth control mishaps. First a condom broke and then, despite using the morning-after pill, a pregnancy test came back positive. Missouri bans abortion in all cases but medical emergencies.

"It was just idiotic for a law to be put in place that you can't do what you feel is necessary for your body and not even your body, but your mental health also," Ruark said.

She already balances working 12-hour shifts as a patient care technician at a hospital with caring for her 2- and 6-year-olds.

"The two kids, like they're good, you know, ends are met," she said. "Bringing a baby into that, I just don't think that that would be a good idea right now."

Ruark walked past shouting protesters to get inside the new clinic. It took her almost two hours to get the abortion pill after meeting with Dr. Elizabeth Brett Daily. By law, Daily only needed to wait 30 minutes after Ruark's arrival to dispense the medication, but the clinic was busy.

Thousands of patients likely aren't getting appointments at all, according to a national tracking effort called #WeCount, which is led by the Society of Family Planning, a nonprofit organization that promotes research on abortion and contraception.

The society's report, released in October, found 6% fewer abortions were administered nationwide in August — when many of the more-restrictive bans on abortion had taken effect — compared with the number of abortions administered nationwide in April, before *Roe* was overturned.

Some of the states with bans saw the number of abortions drop from as many as 2,770 in April to below 10 in August, while bordering states that still permit the procedure saw their abortion numbers ramp up, the survey found. In Kansas, Colorado, Montana, Nebraska and North Carolina, the number of abortions

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administered in August was at least 30% higher than the number administered in April. In Illinois, 28% more abortions were administered in August than in April.

The study had some limitations, including that only 79% of all identified abortion providers — including clinics, private medical offices and hospitals — provided data. The society says the figures represent an estimated 82% of all abortions provided nationwide.

Few outside Kansas anticipated the state would take on this larger role providing abortions, said Elizabeth Nash, principal policy associate for state issues for the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

"It's a pretty conservative place. You know, it's not like Colorado or Illinois where people have been thinking these will definitely be access points," Nash said.

Abortion opponents have been influential in Kansas politics since the 1991 Summer of Mercy protests in Wichita, when thousands of anti-abortion activists gathered in Wichita, sparking protests that led to nearly 2,700 arrests.

The picture may be changing. Voters continue to elect large anti-abortion majorities to the Legislature, but in August they overwhelmingly rejected a constitutional amendment that would have cleared the way for tougher abortion restrictions or a ban.

Abortion demand in Kansas promises only to grow. While the procedure remains legal in neighboring Iowa and Nebraska, both are conservative and Nash described the states as "bans in waiting."

Routinely, staff are turning away patients seeking appointments at the new clinic and the two other abortion clinics Planned Parenthood operates in Kansas, telling them they don't keep a waiting list, and if they can get an appointment in Colorado or New Mexico to take it.

But there are no guarantees in those two states either, said Dr. Kristina Tocce, medical director for Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains.

"I hypothesize that for every patient that can get to us and that we can see there are many patients who are not able to access care," Tocce said, adding that the number of out-of-state patients has soared.

Getting an appointment in Kansas City is luck of the draw. Local patients aren't prioritized, but have an advantage because it is easier for them to make it to mid-week consultations. Planned Parenthood leaders said adding a fourth clinic is among the options under consideration to increase access, but they haven't released details.

Daily, of the new Kansas clinic, said she was drawn to the work after a stint with the Peace Corps in the West African nation of Togo. She saw sexual assault victims and "many, many" women and their babies die during childbirth.

The doctor sees horrific stories here, too. A recent abortion patient was 13, her face so bruised from the assault she endured that she could barely open one of her eyes in the waiting room.

Daily likens getting an appointment for an abortion these days to winning the lottery.

"Think about our current health care system and how hard it is just to get like a primary care visit," she said. "Times that by a thousand because that's how hard it is for abortion care nowadays."

Among the patients Daily saw recently was a 29-year-old mother of two who asked that her name not be used because she didn't want her family and acquaintances to know. The woman said she initially had planned to carry her pregnancy to term. But then her 3-year-old daughter had a terrifying 40-minute seizure, which temporarily paralyzed her. It was her 13th major seizure in the past year.

Doctors intubated the little girl, and the woman hastily arranged for her 9-month-old son to be with his father. The couple had separated, so she sat by her daughter's bedside alone.

"I thought to myself, 'It's not fair, you know, to not be able to give another child my full attention.'"

She knows some people won't understand her decision.

"People are just quick to judge," she said. "A lot of people have religious beliefs. 'Oh, no. You can't do that.' But for me, I just don't think people take the time to get to know somebody and realize what their situation really is."

Alex Jones trial moves to punitive damages phase

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By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Infowars host Alex Jones is facing the possibility of having more penalties heaped onto the amount he already owes for spreading conspiracy theories about the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, as the punitive damages phase of his Connecticut trial is set to begin Friday in a lawsuit filed by the victims' families.

A jury last month ordered Jones and his company, Free Speech Systems, to pay nearly \$1 billion in compensation to the Sandy Hook families for the harm they suffered when he persuaded his audience that the 2012 shooting that killed 26 people was a hoax perpetrated by "crisis actors."

The jury also said punitive damages should be awarded. That amount will be determined by Judge Barbara Bellis following evidentiary hearings set for Friday and Monday.

The plaintiffs' lawyers, in court filings, suggested punitive damages could total \$2.75 trillion based on one hypothetical calculation, but have not asked for a specific amount.

"Justice requires that the Court's punitive damages award, punish and deter this evil conduct," attorneys Alinor Sterling, Christopher Mattei and Joshua Koskoff wrote in a motion. "Only a punitive damages assessment of historic size will serve those purposes."

Jones' lawyer, Norm Pattis, is arguing that any punitive damages should be minimal, in part because the \$1 billion compensatory damages award is the functional equivalent of punitive damages due to its extremely large amount.

"Few defendants alive could pay damages of this sum," Pattis wrote. "Indeed, most defendants would be driven into bankruptcy, their livelihood destroyed, and their future transformed into the bleak prospect of a judgment debtor saddled for decades with a debt that cannot be satisfied. To regard this as anything other than punishment would be unjust."

Pattis did not return a message seeking comment. Mattei declined to comment.

All the plaintiffs, including relatives of eight of the shooting victims and an FBI agent who responded to the school, gave emotional testimony during the trial, describing how they have been threatened and harassed for years by people who believe the shooting didn't happen.

Strangers showed up at some of their homes and confronted some of them in public. People hurled abusive comments at them on social media and in emails. And some said they received death and rape threats.

Jones was found liable last year for damages to the families for defamation, infliction of emotional distress and violating Connecticut's Unfair Trade Practices Act. Although punitive damages are generally limited to attorneys' fees for defamation and infliction of emotional distress, there are no such limits for punitive damages under the Unfair Trade Practices Act.

In a calculation in a plaintiffs' court filing, they said Jones' comments about Sandy Hook were viewed an estimated 550 million times on his and Infowars' social media accounts from 2012 to 2018. They said that translated into 550 million violations of the Unfair Trade Practices Act.

"If each of the 550 million violations were assessed at the \$5,000 statutory maximum, the total civil penalty would be \$2,750,000,000,000 (\$2.75 trillion)," their attorneys wrote.

They also said punitive damages for violations of the unfair trade practices law typically are multiple times more than compensatory damages.

As for legal fees, the plaintiffs and their lawyers have a retainer agreement stipulating the law firm, Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder, will get one-third of any compensatory damages recovered from Jones and Free Speech Systems. The firm says its legal costs in the case have been nearly \$1.7 million so far.

Jones has said on his Infowars show that it doesn't matter how large the damages awards are, because he doesn't have \$2 million to his name and he wouldn't be able to pay the full amounts.

That contradicted testimony at a similar trial in Texas in August, when a jury ordered Jones to pay nearly \$50 million to the parents of one of the children killed in the Sandy Hook shooting due to his lies about the massacre.

A forensic economist testified that Jones and Free Speech Systems, Infowars' parent company, have a combined net worth as high as \$270 million, which Jones disputes. Free Speech Systems filed for bank-

ruptcy protection in the middle of the trial in Texas, while a third trial over the hoax conspiracy is planned around the end of the year.

Jones hawked nutritional supplements, survival gear and other products on his show. Evidence at the Connecticut trial showed his sales spiked around the time he talked about the Sandy Hook shooting — leading the plaintiffs' lawyers to say he was profiting off the tragedy.

In documents recently filed in Free Speech Systems' bankruptcy case, a budget for the company for Oct. 29 to Nov. 25 estimated product sales would total \$2.5 million, while operating expenses would be about \$740,000. Jones' salary was listed at \$20,000 every two weeks.

Jones has vowed to appeal all the verdicts against him related to Sandy Hook.

FBI warns of 'broad' threat to synagogues in New Jersey

By RYAN KRYSKA and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

HOBOKEN, N.J. (AP) — The FBI said Thursday that it had received credible information about a "broad" threat to synagogues in New Jersey, a warning that prompted some municipalities to send extra police officers to guard houses of worship.

The nature of the threat was vague. The FBI's Newark office released a statement urging synagogues to "take all security precautions to protect your community and facility," but wouldn't say anything about who made the threat or why.

The alert was posted after officials discovered an online threat directed broadly at synagogues in New Jersey, a law enforcement official said. The posting did not target any specific synagogue by name, the official said. The official could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Messages left with the FBI's Newark office weren't returned.

Public warnings about nonspecific threats against Jewish institutions, made by a variety of groups including Christian supremacists and Islamist extremists, aren't unusual in the New York City metropolitan area, and many turn out to be false alarms. But the area has also seen deadly attacks.

In Jersey City, Mayor Steven Fulop said police would be posted at the city's seven synagogues and foot patrols would be added in the broader Jewish community. In 2019, two assailants motivated by anti-Jewish hate killed a police officer, then drove to a kosher market in Jersey City and killed three more people, before being slain in a gunbattle with police.

Police officers armed with rifles guarded a synagogue one city over, in Hoboken, where the public safety director also announced increased patrols in Jewish communities.

Five years ago, two New Jersey men were sentenced to 35 years in prison after being convicted for a series of attacks in 2012 that included the firebombings of two synagogues. They also threw a Molotov cocktail into the home of a rabbi as he slept with his wife and children.

In 2019, a man stabbed five people at a Hanukkah celebration at a rabbi's home in an Orthodox Jewish community north of New York City, fatally wounding one person.

U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer, a New Jersey Democrat, said he was "concerned and outraged" by the latest threat against Jews.

"I am deeply concerned and outraged by today's alert from the FBI," Gottheimer said. "This is what happens after years of antisemitic comments from public figures," he added, citing recent comments by Kanye West and a social media post shared by NBA star Kyrie Irving.

The FBI didn't release any information suggesting the threat that prompted the warning was related to the public debate over those comments.

Nets suspend Kyrie Irving for at least 5 games without pay

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Brooklyn Nets suspended Kyrie Irving for at least five games without pay Thurs-

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day, dismayed by his repeated failure to “unequivocally say he has no antisemitic beliefs.”

Hours after Irving refused to issue the apology that NBA Commissioner Adam Silver sought for posting a link to an antisemitic work on his Twitter feed, the Nets said that Irving is “currently unfit to be associated with the Brooklyn Nets.”

“We were dismayed today, when given an opportunity in a media session, that Kyrie refused to unequivocally say he has no antisemitic beliefs, nor acknowledge specific hateful material in the film. This was not the first time he had the opportunity — but failed — to clarify,” the Nets said in a statement.

“Such failure to disavow antisemitism when given a clear opportunity to do so is deeply disturbing, is against the values of our organization, and constitutes conduct detrimental to the team. Accordingly, we are of the view that he is currently unfit to be associated with the Brooklyn Nets.”

Irving did finally apologize later in an Instagram post for not explaining the specific beliefs he agreed and disagreed with when he posted the documentary.

“To All Jewish families and Communities that are hurt and affected from my post, I am deeply sorry to have caused you pain, and I apologize,” Irving wrote. “I initially reacted out of emotion to being unjustly labeled Anti-Semitic, instead of focusing on the healing process of my Jewish Brothers and Sisters that were hurt from the hateful remarks made in the Documentary.”

His reluctance to do so earlier Thursday came hours before the FBI said it had received credible information about a “broad” threat to synagogues in New Jersey, Irving’s home state.

The Nets said they made multiple attempts in recent days to help Irving understand the harm and danger of his words and actions, but it was clear during the point guard’s interview after practice earlier Thursday that little had changed.

Irving would say only that he meant no harm. He said some things in “Hebrews to Negroes: Wake Up Black America” were untrue, but he didn’t say he shouldn’t have posted a link to it.

“I’m not the one who made the documentary,” Irving said.

He was later asked if he had antisemitic beliefs, and he didn’t say no.

“I cannot be antisemitic if I know where I come from,” Irving said.

Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt reacted to a video of Irving’s response to that question on Twitter by writing: “The answer to the question ‘Do you have any antisemitic beliefs’ is always “NO” without equivocation.

“We took @KyrieIrving at his word when he said he took responsibility, but today he did not make good on that promise,” Greenblatt added. “Kyrie clearly has a lot of work to do.”

A day earlier, Irving and the Nets had announced, in conjunction with the ADL, that each would be donating \$500,000 to anti-hate causes. Greenblatt tweeted Thursday night that his organization could not in good conscience accept Irving’s donation.

Silver felt Irving needed to go further, anyway.

“While we appreciate the fact that he agreed to work with the Brooklyn Nets and the Anti-Defamation League to combat antisemitism and other forms of discrimination, I am disappointed that he has not offered an unqualified apology and more specifically denounced the vile and harmful content contained in the film he chose to publicize,” the commissioner said.

Silver added that he will be meeting with Irving in person within the next week.

It’s the second straight season that the Nets have sent Irving away from the team. Last year it was when he refused to be vaccinated against COVID-19, making him ineligible to play home games. They didn’t want him to be a part-time player, though eventually brought him back to play road games in December.

Irving posted the since-deleted link late last week, then defiantly defended his right to do so after the Nets’ home loss to Indiana on Saturday. The team had him not speak to reporters after their two games this week, hoping to avoid further upsetting fans, but the time away didn’t change Irving’s stance.

He quickly grew defensive Thursday, asking reporters why they weren’t asking questions about the history of Blacks in America, saying 300 million of his ancestors are buried in the country.

“Where were you guys asking those same questions when I was a kid learning about the traumatic

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events of my familial history and what I'm proud to come from and proud to stand here," Irving said, "and why when I repeat myself that I'm not going to stand down, it has nothing to do with dismissing any other race or group people.

"I'm just proud of my heritage and what we've been through and the fact that this has pinned me against the Jewish community and I'm here answering questions of whether or not I'm sorry or not about something I didn't create and was something I shared, and I'm telling everybody I'm taking responsibility, than that's where I sit."

Irving was also asked specifically about his beliefs regarding the Holocaust.

"Those falsehoods are unfortunate," Irving said, referring to content in the film. "And it's not that I don't believe in the Holocaust. I never said that. Never, ever have said it. It's not come out of my mouth. I never tweeted it. I never liked anything like it. So the Holocaust in itself is an event that means something to a large group of people that suffered something that could have been avoided."

The Nets said Irving's suspension would last "until he satisfies a series of objective remedial measures that address the harmful impact of his conduct."

The team refused to give him a contract extension this summer after he was unavailable for so much of last season. Irving opted into the final season of his contract, making it possible he is in the final season with the team.

The Nets are off to a 2-6 start, costing coach Steve Nash his job Tuesday.

US hiring may have slowed to a still-solid pace in October

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. jobs report for October will be closely watched Friday for any indication that employers are slowing their hiring — a prospect the Federal Reserve would likely welcome as a sign that the high inflation that is gripping the economy might soon begin to ease.

Economists expect the report to show that employers added 200,000 jobs last month, down from an average of 372,000 in the previous three months, according to a survey by the data provider FactSet.

That total would still represent a healthy gain and would suggest that employers still feel the need to fill many jobs. A substantial hiring gain, though, would also mean that wages will likely keep rising and continue to fuel inflation.

Chronic inflation is hammering the budgets of many households and has shot to the top of voter concerns in the midterm congressional elections that will end Tuesday. Republican candidates across the country have attacked Democrats over inflation in their drive to regain control of Congress.

Friday's jobs report is also expected to show that the unemployment rate ticked up to 3.6% in October from a five-decade low of 3.5%. Hourly pay, too, is expected to have risen at a brisk pace, though it might have weakened a bit from September.

All those trends underscore the challenges the Fed faces as it raises interest rates at the fastest pace since the early 1980s to try to bring inflation down from near a 40-year high. A low unemployment rate and solid wage gains are good for workers. But sizable pay raises, especially without gains in workers' efficiency, can contribute to higher inflation.

At a news conference Wednesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell noted that the strong job market is feeding inflationary pressures as businesses seek to attract and keep workers by raising pay. In September, average wages rose more than 6% from 12 months earlier, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. That was the fastest such pace in 40 years, though it still trailed inflation.

Powell spoke after the Fed announced a fourth straight three-quarter-point increase in its benchmark rate — a series of unusually large hikes that have made mortgages and other consumer and business loans increasingly costly and heightened the risk of a recession.

The Fed's policymakers did open the door Wednesday to the possibility of a smaller rate hike when they next meet in December. But Powell also said that in order to tame inflation, the central bank would likely have to raise rates high enough to weaken the job market. That could mean that hiring will slow in coming

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months or even that many employers will cut jobs and increase the unemployment rate.

"The broader picture is of an overheated labor market where demand (for workers) substantially exceeds supply," Powell said.

The policymakers want to see signs that job growth and wages are easing, he said, "but I don't see the case for real softening just yet."

Many economists say that wages tend to follow inflation higher as workers seek to keep up with price increases. Those pay raises, in turn, can keep inflation higher if companies pass on at least part of their higher labor costs to their customers in the form of higher prices.

So far this year, the Fed has raised its key short-term rate six times — from near zero in early March to a range of 3.75% to 4%, the highest level in 14 years.

For now, the economy is still growing. It expanded at a 2.6% annual rate in the July-September quarter after having contracted in the first six months of the year. But much of last quarter's growth was due to a spike in U.S. exports. By contrast, consumers — the primary driver of the economy — only modestly increased their spending beyond the rate of inflation.

With inflation still painfully high and the Fed making borrowing increasingly expensive for consumers and businesses, most economists expect a recession by early next year.

Housing has, so far, absorbed the worst damage from higher borrowing costs. The Fed's rate hikes have sent average long-term mortgage rates surging to around 7%, the highest level in two decades. Home sales have cratered as a result, and once-soaring home prices have started to slow.

Many technology companies are also experiencing slowdowns in their businesses. Ride-hailing provider Lyft and fintech firm Stripe have said they are cutting jobs. And on Thursday, Amazon said it would pause hiring in its corporate offices.

Yet much of the rest of the economy has so far remained resilient, with companies in travel, restaurants, manufacturing and health care still hiring. Southwest Airlines told investors last week that it was on track to hire 10,000 employees this year, including 1,200 pilots.

And Adam Schechter, CEO of testing firm Laboratory Corporation of America, told investors, "We have huge efforts underway to try to hire as many people as we can."

Alcohol death toll is growing, US government reports say

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The rate of deaths that can be directly attributed to alcohol rose nearly 30% in the U.S. during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to new government data.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had already said the overall number of such deaths rose in 2020 and 2021. Two reports from the CDC this week provided further details on which groups have the highest death rates and which states are seeing the largest numbers.

"Alcohol is often overlooked" as a public health problem, said Marissa Esser, who leads the CDC's alcohol program. "But it is a leading preventable cause of death."

A report released Friday focused on more than a dozen kinds of "alcohol-induced" deaths that were wholly blamed on drinking. Examples include alcohol-caused liver or pancreas failure, alcohol poisoning, withdrawal and certain other diseases. There were more than 52,000 such deaths last year, up from 39,000 in 2019.

The rate of such deaths had been increasing in the two decades before the pandemic, by 7% or less each year.

In 2020, they rose 26%, to about 13 deaths per 100,000 Americans. That's the highest rate recorded in at least 40 years, said the study's lead author, Merianne Spencer.

Such deaths are 2 1/2 times more common in men than in women, but rose for both in 2020, the study found. The rate continued to be highest for people ages 55 to 64, but rose dramatically for certain other groups, including jumping 42% among women ages 35 to 44.

The second report, published earlier this week in JAMA Network Open, looked at a wider range of deaths that could be linked to drinking, such as motor vehicle accidents, suicides, falls and cancers.

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More than 140,000 of that broader category of alcohol-related deaths occur annually, based on data from 2015 to 2019, the researchers said. CDC researchers say about 82,000 of those deaths are from drinking too much over a long period of time and 58,000 from causes tied to acute intoxication.

The study found that as many as 1 in 8 deaths among U.S. adults ages 20 to 64 were alcohol-related deaths. New Mexico was the state with the highest percentage of alcohol-related deaths, 22%. Mississippi had the lowest, 9%

Excessive drinking is associated with chronic dangers such as liver cancer, high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease. Drinking by pregnant women can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or birth defects. And health officials say alcohol is a factor in as many as one-third of serious falls among the elderly.

It's also a risk to others through drunken driving or alcohol-fueled violence. Surveys suggest that more than half the alcohol sold in the U.S. is consumed during binge drinking episodes.

Even before the pandemic, U.S. alcohol consumption was trending up, and Americans were drinking more than when Prohibition was enacted. But deaths may have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic began for several reasons, including people with alcohol-related illnesses may have had more trouble getting medical care, Esser said.

She added that the research points to a need to look at steps to reduce alcohol consumption, including increasing alcohol taxes and enacting measures that limit where people can buy beer, wine and liquor.

Biden trying to save incumbent Democrats in campaign sprint

By AAMER MADHANI and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — President Joe Biden took off on a personal final-days campaign sprint Thursday that reflects the Democrats' major concerns before next week's midterm elections, appealing to New Mexico voters to defeat "reckless and irresponsible" Republicans and reelect Democratic New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

New Mexico is normally safe Democratic territory, but Lujan Grisham is facing a determined challenge from her Republican opponent, former television meteorologist Mark Ronchetti.

At a rally headlined by the president, she warned that Democrats in the state are "a little behind" but assured supporters "we catch up fast."

In fact, the headwinds facing Lujan Grisham are indicative of the difficulties for Democrats in many parts of the country as Biden set off on a multistate campaign swing largely focused on shoring up support in usual party strongholds.

"Remember this is not a referendum. This is a choice," he said, pointing to the stakes next Tuesday.

Biden said Republicans would follow through on proposals to slice healthcare and retirement benefits if they win control of Congress.

"They're just saying it," he said. "They're not even hiding it."

Biden's itinerary in the campaign's final days illustrates the limited political clout of a president who has been held at arm's length by some Democrats in tough races this cycle. It also suggests that the president, whose approval ratings remain underwater, has concluded that he can be most effective using the waning days before polls close to shore up support for Democratic candidates in areas that he easily won in 2020.

Biden's four-state, three-day trip includes California, Illinois and Pennsylvania, where Biden has deep roots.

"Democrats are clearly on the defensive and that's bearing out as the campaign comes to a close," said Christopher Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion. "Their chances for gains don't look realistic, so now you look to what you can preserve."

A president's party typically faces significant losses during midterm elections. Since 1934, only Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934, Bill Clinton in 1998, and George W. Bush in 2002 saw their parties gain seats in the midterms.

Some recent presidents saw big losses in their first midterm races. Republicans under Donald Trump lost 40 House seats but gained two Senate seats in 2018; Democrats under Barack Obama lost 63 House seats and six Senate seats in 2010, and Democrats under Clinton lost 52 House seats and eight Senate

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seats in 1994.

The decision to deploy Biden to areas where he won handily in 2020 was made in part because of concern about voter energy in races that Democrats view as must-win. Party officials are also concerned about some candidates who have seen their races tighten in the final days of the campaign.

Biden won New Mexico by nearly 11 percentage points in 2020, but Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, who is from the state, warned that this election would be close.

"Republicans are catching up to us," she said. "And we can't let that happen."

Fundraising by Ronchetti's campaign has surged amid visits from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey and Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin. Ronchetti also received a social media endorsement from Trump despite his acknowledgment that Biden won in 2020.

Before speaking at the political rally, Biden went to Central New Mexico Community College to tout his student debt relief program, calling it "a game changer for so many people."

Focusing on young voters whose support Democrats are energetically seeking, Biden said, "Your generation is not going to be ignored. You will not be shunned. You will not be silenced."

Nearly 26 million people have applied for student loan forgiveness, up 4 million from two weeks ago. About 16 million applications are expected to be approved by the week's end, but no debt can be forgiven until a legal fight over the program is resolved.

"Republican members of Congress and Republican governors are doing everything they can, including taking us to court, to deny relief, even to their own constituents," Biden said.

Later Thursday, Biden joined Rep. Mike Levin for a get-out-the vote event at a community college in Oceanside, California. Levin represents a district with a slight Democratic tilt that cuts through San Diego and Orange counties and that Biden carried by double digits in the 2020 presidential election. Republican nominee Brian Maryott has gone after Levin over inflation, gas prices and rising crime.

Levin defeated Maryott, a businessman and former mayor of San Juan Capistrano, by more than 6 percentage points in 2020, but Democrats are bracing for an even closer race in the rematch.

Biden plugged Levin as an important backer of his major legislative achievements, including the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill and the \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Act. He said having Levin on Capitol Hill was critical to him passing the Inflation Reduction Act.

The infrastructure legislation, which passed with only Democratic votes in Congress, was the most substantial federal investment in history to fight climate change — some \$375 billion over a decade — and caps prescription drug costs at \$2,000 out-of-pocket annually for Medicare recipients.

"This guy delivers," Biden said of Levin. "He stood up with me. This guy knows what he's doing."

Biden is to spend part of Friday and Saturday in the Chicago area, where two-term incumbent Rep. Sean Casten is facing a stiff challenge from Republican Keith Pekau as he tries to hang on to a suburban district that Biden won by a double-digit percentage in 2020. The White House has yet to announce Biden's plans for his time in Chicago.

The Congressional Leadership Fund, a super PAC aligned with House Republican leaders, this week announced an \$1.8 million ad buy to assist Pekau, the mayor of south suburban Orland Park. And Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California, the House minority leader, is due to campaign with Pekau in the district on Friday.

Casten's campaign, in a fundraising email Wednesday, called the crush of super PAC money a "last-ditch effort to buy this seat" and implored his supporters to send him contributions for the campaign's final stretch.

The president on Saturday will head to Pennsylvania to campaign with Obama for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Josh Shapiro and Democratic Senate candidate John Fetterman.

Pennsylvania Democrats are trying to keep control of the governor's office, which is being vacated by Tom Wolf as he finishes his second term. Fetterman is locked in a tight race with Republican Mehmet Oz, vying for the seat being vacated by the retiring Republican Sen. Pat Toomey.

John Mellencamp revisits 'Scarecrow,' his game-changing disc

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By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — An urgency in the ringing guitar and thunderous drums that opened the 1985 album "Scarecrow" was the first hint that this was something different for the artist then billed as John "Cougar" Mellencamp.

The disc, which is getting the deluxe reissue treatment this week, stands as a rare reputation-changing work. It elevated Mellencamp from a generic heartland rocker to a serious artist with something to say, helping spark Farm Aid, a movement that lives on.

In that first song, "Rain on the Scarecrow," Mellencamp described the financial crisis that was swallowing family farms in the Midwest. The Indiana-bred singer embraced his roots in the anthem "Small Town." At age 34, his writing in "Minutes to Memories" showed a new maturity about life.

A high standard is maintained through the closer, "R.O.C.K. in the USA," which neatly summarized the musical approach — even if Mellencamp had to be talked into putting it on the album.

Ask him now, at age 71, whether "Scarecrow" represented an elevated standard, and you'll discover the chip that remains on his shoulder. He'll remind you of hit songs that predated the album.

"I didn't know," he said, "because I didn't know I had to change my game."

Still, the singer professionally christened "Johnny Cougar" against his will at age 21 admits he made five albums before making a good one. "Scarecrow" was No. 7, excepting one shelved when his first record company dropped him.

"I think John really found his voice on this album," said veteran music writer Anthony DeCurtis, who contributed liner notes to the reissue.

"There were certainly signs of it before, like on 'Jack and Diane' and 'Pink Houses,'" he said. "But the sense of him looking at the world, taking his personality as someone who grew up in Seymour, Indiana, and making a wider statement about it, that was all a big deal for him. It raised him to the level of someone who was an important musical voice in the culture."

As someone who didn't think much about songwriting until he had a record deal, Mellencamp saw others around him setting a high benchmark and thought, "I better step up my game." He mentioned Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and Joni Mitchell.

As two chart-topping rockers aware of comparisons made between them, Springsteen and Mellencamp circled each other warily in the 1980s but are good friends today.

You can see, in "Scarecrow," Mellencamp creating a musical world from what he knew growing up in the Midwest, much like Springsteen did for the Jersey Shore. Mellencamp's "Lonely Ol' Night" is a thematic cousin to Springsteen's 1984 hit "Dancing in the Dark" in the narrators' late-night search for a connection.

"What I learned from him was to be a good observer of life," Mellencamp said. "You don't have to be the person. You can watch. I've had people say to me, 'John, have you ever had writer's block?' And I would say no, all you've got to do is look out the window."

He remembers a long conversation with his late friend and songwriting partner, George Green, wondering why so many of the small towns they knew were fading away. From those talks, they wrote "Rain on the Scarecrow."

The album's cover features a serious-looking Mellencamp on a farm, a fuzzy scarecrow and tractor in the background. He dedicates it to his grandfather, Speck, who died at the end of 1983.

After he made the record, he recalls another conversation with someone who was making some of their music videos, "who looked at me and said, 'you know, this is a really special record for these times.'

"I said, 'You think so?' he said. "That was the first time I had ever given it any thought that it was much different than anything else I'd done."

With the spirit of Live Aid and the themes of "Scarecrow" in the air, Mellencamp helped organize the initial Farm Aid concert with Willie Nelson and Neil Young. To date, the organization says it has raised \$64 million for family farming; Nelson and Mellencamp both appeared at its most recent show, in September in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Mellencamp and his band were tight from years on the road in the mid-1980s, but he still gave them

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an assignment prior to making the new album: learn to play dozens of rock hits from the 1960s, a sound their leader wanted to recreate.

They included several from artists name-checked in "R.O.C.K. in the USA." Mellencamp didn't want the song on "Scarecrow," figuring it sounded "cartoonish" compared to the rest of the material. To his gratitude now, he listened to the pleas of record company executives to change his mind.

Versions of songs from the band's assignment, like James Brown's "Cold Sweat" and "Shama Lama Ding Dong" from Otis Day & the Knights, make it on the "Scarecrow" reissue.

"I don't mean to sound arrogant," he said, "but I was not surprised that people liked that record. I'm not surprised that 'Small Town' stuck around for as long as it has. I don't listen to the radio anymore, but when I do, I always hear that song."

Through the 1980s, Mellencamp built a formidable jukebox worth of his own hits. But his time at the top coincided with his unhappiest time personally, and he stepped off.

"I had a girlfriend over who was a real famous actress," Mellencamp said (He didn't drop names, but a good guess is Meg Ryan, who he dated for several years in the 2010s). "She looked at me one night and said, 'You know, John, we've both been to the moon and we both know we don't want to go back there.' She was right."

He has a new album, "Orpheus Descending," due out in February and a lengthy concert tour booked from February to May. Theaters, not arenas.

Lula's team meets Bolsonaro as Brazil's transition kicks off

By CARLA BRIDI Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — President Jair Bolsonaro met briefly on Thursday with the envoy coordinating the transfer of power to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, four days after Bolsonaro's tight election loss that sparked protests by his supporters amid his refusal to publicly concede.

The meeting between Brazil's far-right outgoing president and Vice President-Elect Geraldo Alckmin took place at the presidential palace, according to Alckmin, who heads da Silva's transition team. The team had earlier arrived in the capital of Brasilia, launching the process that will culminate with da Silva's Jan. 1 inauguration.

While Bolsonaro declined to publicly concede defeat in his first public comments Tuesday, his chief of staff Ciro Nogueira told reporters he had received authorization from the incumbent for the transition process to proceed.

"It was positive," Alckmin told journalists after Thursday's meeting with Bolsonaro. He refused to answer whether the incumbent had congratulated him for Sunday's victory.

Bolsonaro spoke about "the federal government's readiness to provide every information, help, so we have a transition that is guided by the public interest," the vice president-elect said.

Alckmin's team's first meeting of the day was with Sen. Marcelo Castro, who is responsible for the government's 2023 budget proposal. The vice president-elect urged lawmakers to adopt an emergency measure to allow new spending that the future administration considers essential, including monthly welfare payments of 600 reais (\$118).

Without that emergency action, the current budget would reduce these payments to 400 reais (\$78) in January. Lawmakers told reporters that a decision on whether to make the change would be made by Monday.

Alckmin added he will return to Brasilia on Tuesday for more talks.

Da Silva's Worker's Party is also seeking negotiations with Chamber of Deputies Speaker Arthur Lira, who has been a close ally of Bolsonaro. He is expected to seek reelection for the job next year.

"He showed willingness to discuss whatever is set as a priority for the (future) government. The doors are open," Workers' Party lawmaker José Guimaraes said.

The meetings aim to ensure governability with a potentially contentious Congress and provide reassurance that Bolsonaro's administration will be cooperative.

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There had been widespread concern Bolsonaro might present claims of fraud and challenge the results of Sunday's election, following the roadmap of former U.S. President Donald Trump.

There have been questions about the ease with which da Silva will be able to govern, partly because conservative lawmakers from Bolsonaro's party and others did well in the first round of the election on Oct. 2. In addition, the "Big Center" bloc of politicians known for exchanging support for positions and pork has been supporting Bolsonaro to date.

An opening came Sunday when Lira became the first prominent Bolsonaro ally to recognize the election results. Lira oversees what has become commonly referred to as the "secret budget," which directs billions to lawmakers for pet projects.

The mechanism was adopted during Bolsonaro's government, enabling Congress and the executive branch to bypass a budget ceiling. During the campaign, da Silva criticized the program, saying it depleted funds for key social needs and promised to put an end to it. Many lawmakers already expect to receive funds for spending in their states.

Senator-elect Wellington Dias, one of the coordinators of da Silva's campaign, told journalists that "it is not the moment" to discuss an end to that mechanism.

Congress has until Dec. 17 to approve a 2023 spending bill with input from the new administration.

In a video posted to social media Wednesday, Bolsonaro addressed his supporters, calling for them to end their nationwide protests. They had blocked hundreds of roads, with some people calling for military intervention to overturn the election results.

In the narrowest presidential election since Brazil's return to democracy in 1985, da Silva beat Bolsonaro by about 2 million votes.

"I know you're upset. I'm just as sad and upset as you are. But we have to keep our heads straight," Bolsonaro said. "Closing roads in Brazil jeopardizes people's right to come and go."

By Thursday morning, more than 850 protests had broken up, leaving 73 partial or full blockages of roads, the federal highway police said. Of the 13 full blockages, most were in the southern state of Santa Catarina.

North Korea keeps up its missile barrage with launch of ICBM

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea fired at least six missiles into the sea on Thursday, including an intercontinental ballistic missile that triggered evacuation warnings and halted trains in northern Japan, adding to a recent barrage of weapons tests that has escalated tensions in the region.

The ICBM test was followed by launches of two short-range ballistic missiles in the morning, drawing swift condemnation by North Korea's neighbors and the United States, which reacted by extending ongoing joint air force exercises with South Korea.

The South Korean and Japanese militaries said North Korea later fired three more short-range missiles into waters off its eastern coast. Those launches came an hour after a senior North Korean military official issued a statement threatening retaliation over the extension of the U.S.-South Korea drills. Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada said the missiles traveled as far as 500 kilometers (300 miles).

The South's military said the North followed those launches by firing 80 artillery rounds into the eastern parts of maritime buffer zones the rivals created off their eastern and western coasts in 2018 as part of agreements to reduce tensions.

On Wednesday, North Korea fired more than 20 missiles, the most it has launched in a single day.

After already setting an annual record with dozens of ballistic launches in 2022, North Korea has further dialed up its testing activity since late September, including what it described as simulated nuclear attacks on South Korean and U.S. targets. It has said its tests are meant as a warning against the United States' military drills with allies South Korea and Japan which it portrays as rehearsals for a potential invasion.

Experts say North Korea is escalating brinkmanship aimed at forcing the United States to accept it as a nuclear power and at negotiating economic and security concessions from a position of strength.

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The Biden administration said in response to the launches that it is willing to take "all necessary measures" to ensure the safety of the American homeland as well as South Korea and Japan. It also warned of unspecified "additional costs and consequences" if North Korea ups the ante by detonating a nuclear test device for the first time since September 2017. U.S. and South Korean officials have been monitoring possible test preparations in North Korea for months.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency open meeting for Friday afternoon to discuss North Korea's missile launches at the request of the U.S., Britain, France, Albania, Ireland and Albania.

On Thursday morning, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected that North Korea had fired an ICBM from an area near its capital, Pyongyang, and then two short-range missiles an hour later from the nearby city of Kaechon that flew toward its eastern waters.

The longer-range missile appeared to be fired at a high angle, possibly to avoid entering the territory of neighbors, reaching a maximum altitude of 1,920 kilometers (1,193 miles) and traveling around 760 kilometers (472 miles), according to South Korea's military. It wasn't immediately clear whether the launch was successful.

Japan said it lost track of one of the North Korean weapons, apparently the ICBM, after it "disappeared" in skies above waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

Choi Yong Soo, a South Korean navy captain who handles public affairs for Seoul's Defense Ministry, didn't answer directly when asked about the possibility of the ICBM launch being a failure, saying that it is still being analyzed.

Citing anonymous military sources, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that the missile possibly failed to maintain a normal flight following a stage separation.

The Japanese government initially feared North Korea fired a missile over its northern territory but later adjusted its assessment. Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the alerts were based on a trajectory analysis that indicated a flyover.

The office of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida broadcast alerts through television, radio, mobile phones and public loudspeakers to residents of the northern prefectures of Miyagi, Yamagata and Niigata, instructing them to go inside strong buildings or underground.

There have been no reports of damage or injuries in the regions where the alerts were issued. Bullet train services in some areas were temporarily suspended following the missile alert before resuming shortly.

North Korean missile activity is a particular concern in Niigata, which is home to seven reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant. Those reactors are currently offline and Japanese authorities say no abnormalities have been detected.

On Sado island, just off Niigata's northern coast, fishermen rushed back from sea at the sound of sirens blaring from community speaker systems. One fisherman told NTV television he no longer feels safe going out to sea.

"We really have to be careful," he said.

North Korea last flew a missile over Japan in October in what it described as a test of a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, which experts say potentially would be capable of reaching Guam, a major U.S. military hub in the Pacific.

Kishida condemned North Korea's latest launches and said officials were analyzing the details of the weapons. The office of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said it will continue to expand military exercises with the United States. It said further launches would only deepen the North's international isolation and unleash further economic shock to its people.

Adrienne Watson, a spokesperson for the U.S. National Security Council, issued a statement saying the United States strongly condemns North Korea's ICBM test and that President Joe Biden and his national security team are assessing the situation in close coordination with allies and partners.

"This launch, in addition to the launch of multiple other ballistic missiles this week, is a flagrant violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions and needlessly raises tensions and risks destabilizing the security situation in the region," Watson said.

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She said the United States will take all necessary measures to ensure the security of America and its allies South Korea and Japan.

One of the more than 20 missiles North Korea shot on Wednesday flew in the direction of a populated South Korean island and landed near the rivals' tense sea border, triggering air raid sirens and forcing residents on Ulleung island to evacuate. South Korea quickly responded by launching its own missiles in the same border area.

Those launches came hours after North Korea threatened to use nuclear weapons to get the U.S. and South Korea to "pay the most horrible price in history" in protest of the ongoing South Korean-U.S. military drills.

After North Korea's earlier launches on Thursday, the South Korean and U.S. air forces agreed to extend their ongoing combined aerial drills to step up their defense posture in the face of North Korea's increased weapons testing and growing nuclear threat.

U.S. and South Korean forces have deployed more than 200 warplanes, including advanced F-35 fighter jets, for the "Vigilant Storm" exercises that were initially scheduled through Friday. South Korea's air force didn't immediately say how long the training will continue, noting that the allies are still discussing details.

In a statement issued through state media, senior North Korean military official Pak Jong Chon accused the allies of pushing tensions to an "uncontrollable state" by extending their "provocative military acts."

"The U.S. and South Korea will get to know what an irrevocable and awful mistake they made," he said.

Experts say North Korea's ramped up tests show an effort to exploit a divide in the U.N. Security Council deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine to pursue weapons development and increase pressure on the United States and its regional allies.

North Korea has punctuated its tests with an escalatory nuclear doctrine that authorizes preemptive nuclear attacks over a variety of loosely defined crisis situations.

Experts say a North Korean nuclear test, which would be its seventh overall, could bring the country a step closer to its goal of building a full-fledged arsenal threatening regional U.S. allies and the American mainland.

"Should it go forward with a seventh nuclear test there would be additional costs and consequences," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said Tuesday, noting that the test would be a "dangerous, reckless, destabilizing act."

Nuclear disarmament talks between Washington and Pyongyang have been stalled since 2019 because of disagreements over an easing of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against North Korea in exchange for de-nuclearization steps.

Yamaguchi reported from Tokyo. AP writers Amer Madhani and Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Milwaukee elections worker fired over false ballot requests

By HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A top Milwaukee elections official has been fired after sending falsely obtained military absentee ballots to the home of a Republican state lawmaker who has been an outspoken critic of how the 2020 election was administered, the city's mayor said Thursday.

Kimberly Zapata, deputy director of the Milwaukee Election Commission, requested military ballots for fictitious voters from clerks in nearby municipalities using the state's MyVote Wisconsin website, Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson said just days before the midterm election.

"This has every appearance of being an egregious, blatant violation of trust, and this matter is now in the hands of law enforcement," said Johnson.

As part of her job, Zapata oversaw the counting of absentee ballots in Milwaukee. The mayor said the city is investigating whether she might have committed any other offenses.

The ballots were sent to the home of Republican state Rep. Janel Brandtjen, who chairs the Assembly

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elections committee and has voiced support for overturning the results of the 2020 presidential election in the state and promoted conspiracy theories about the same. Earlier this week, Brandtjen's office said she had received three ballots for military voters she believed to be fictitious. Brandtjen said then she thought someone was trying to show how easy it is to get military ballots in Wisconsin.

The announcement comes five days ahead of Election Day in a cycle where officials are increasingly concerned about threats from within their own organizations. In battleground states such as Wisconsin, elections officials are seeing record partisan poll worker nominations that could put skeptics on the front lines of the voting process.

Zapata's motive for allegedly obtaining and sending the ballots wasn't immediately clear. She did not immediately respond to messages left Thursday at phone numbers believed to be hers. Michael Maistelman, an attorney for Zapata, declined to comment.

But her boss, commission Executive Director Claire Woodall-Vogg, said she thought Zapata was intent on illustrating a vulnerability in the system. She said Zapata had, to her knowledge, never before violated work policies or procedures.

Zapata's alleged actions echo those of a Racine man who requested and received absentee ballots in the names of lawmakers and local officials in July. That man, Harry Wait, said he wanted to expose vulnerabilities in the state's elections system. He has been charged with two misdemeanor counts of election fraud and two felony counts of identity theft — charges that could land him in prison for up to 13 years.

Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm said his office was reviewing allegations against Zapata and that he expects charges to be filed "in the coming days."

In Wisconsin, military voters are not required to register to vote, meaning they don't need to provide a photo ID to request an absentee ballot.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission and local elections officials who send out and collect ballots have a number of safeguards in place to catch fraudulent absentee ballot requests. The elections commission staff monitors the statewide voter registration system for indications of unauthorized requests. The MyVote website also requires a person requesting a ballot to verify that they are the person asking for it, along with a warning about potential penalties for committing fraud.

Wisconsin Elections Commission Administrator Meagan Wolfe called Zapata's alleged action "a deeply unfortunate violation of trust" but said election fraud remains extremely rare and is quickly discovered.

"While the actions of this individual set us all back in our efforts to show Wisconsinites that our elections are run with integrity, I have every confidence the upcoming election will be fair and accurate," she said.

Zapata was fired immediately after the city was made aware that she might have been responsible, and she no longer has access to city computer networks or offices, the mayor said.

Zapata had worked for the elections commission for seven years and with the city of Milwaukee for nearly 10 years, according to Claire Woodall-Vogg, the elections commission's executive director. She declined to comment on why Zapata might have requested the ballots.

Brandtjen said the episode vindicates the concerns she has raised about elections despite criticism from "the liberal media" and Republicans "who don't have the backbone to take on the issues."

President Joe Biden defeated Trump by nearly 21,000 votes in Wisconsin, an outcome that has withstood two partial recounts, a nonpartisan audit, a conservative law firm's review and numerous state and federal lawsuits. Even a Republican-ordered review that drew bipartisan criticism did not turn up evidence of widespread fraud that would change the outcome of the election before the investigator was fired.

In August, after Wait's actions came to light, the election commission notified voters whose absentee ballot requests for the primary went to a mailing address different from the one on file to alert them of potential fraud.

Harm Venhuizen is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow Venhuizen on Twitter.

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and check out <https://apnews.com/hub/explaining-the-elections> to learn more about the issues and factors at play.

EXPLAINER: Threats to US election security grow more complex

By FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Top U.S. election security officials say protecting the nation's voting systems has become increasingly challenging.

That's due mostly to the embrace by millions of Americans of unfounded conspiracy theories and false claims about widespread fraud in the 2020 presidential race.

With the midterm elections just days away, the director of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Jen Easterly, and other officials say they have no evidence that election infrastructure has been altered by hostile actors to prevent voting or vote counting, compromise ballots or affect voter registration accuracy.

But they're not lowering their guard. Disinformation is rampant. Foreign rivals are capable of potent cyber mischief. And the insider threat is considered greater than ever. On top of the physical threats and intimidation of elections officials — which is authorities' overriding concern — security experts are particularly worried about tampering by those who work in local election offices or at polling stations.

"The current election threat environment is more complex than it has ever been," Easterly told reporters in mid-October.

Global rivals also are expected to deepen longstanding disinformation efforts. The tense geopolitical moment means Russia, Iran and China may have fewer qualms about trying to disrupt the conduct of elections in key battlegrounds with cyber operations.

The spectrum of potential threats is wide: foreign ransomware gangs friendly with the Kremlin, conspiracy-obsessed local election officials, hostile voters bent on sabotage or political provocateurs trying to suppress the vote with dirty tricks or misinformation.

Here are some of the potential threats agencies are assessing through Election Day:

THREATS FROM WITHIN

Insider threats are a growing concern and could undermine serious strides made to secure voting systems — including migrating to hand-marked paper ballots and introducing reliable audits — since they were declared critical national infrastructure in January 2017.

Rogue election officials could provide access to voting systems to unauthorized individuals, as happened in Colorado and Georgia. Poll workers or even voters could try to access voter registration databases or equipment, or plant malware to taint election management systems.

Eddie Perez, a voting technology expert with the nonprofit OSET Institute, calls the repeated efforts to cast doubt on the integrity of voting equipment an element of a more broad "manufactured chaos" — intentional subversion of the nation's elections to sow doubt.

Perez is among specialists who think attempts to discredit voting technology are one manifestation of efforts by former President Donald Trump and his allies to undermine trust in election results so Republican-controlled state legislatures — rather than voters — can decide the outcome of future races.

To counter the threats from insiders, federal authorities have conducted trainings and encouraged election officials to focus on limiting access to critical equipment, adding video surveillance and key cards on doors. They also encourage strict chain-of-custody rules for everything from ballots to voting scanners and tabulators.

Threats to public officials and election disruption attempts have occurred with increasing frequency and intensity, federal and local law enforcement officials say. They are especially concerned about physical violence by protesters in highly contested districts during the post-election vote-counting process.

THREATS FROM ABROAD

U.S. officials have issued two main election-security advisories in the run-up to the Nov. 8 elections. They say malicious cyberactivity is unlikely to seriously disrupt or prevent voting and that hostile foreign

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states are apt to try to influence outcomes with "information operations."

Foreign meddlers could launch cyberattacks or exaggerate the effects of relatively ineffectual attacks. They could spread misinformation about voting or voter fraud, try to incite violence or, if violence is already happening, fan the flames.

Hostile foreign bids to undermine U.S. democracy have risen since the Russian operation that hacked and then leaked Democratic emails to aid Trump in the 2016 presidential race. None have had anywhere near the impact, though.

Rivals constantly probe U.S. networks for vulnerabilities. Moscow may seek payback for Washington's arming of Ukraine against its invasion. Iran resents U.S. support for anti-regime demonstrations triggered by the death in police custody of a young woman who defied head-scarf orthodoxy. As for China, relations are tense as Washington tries to throttle high-tech supplies to Beijing over its perceived hostility and growing authoritarianism.

There's also the possibility that foreign actors might have breached election systems long ago and are waiting to pounce.

ATTACKS FROM FOREIGN ADVERSARIES

On Election Day, hostile foreign powers or sympathetic hackers could mount what are known as denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which render websites unreachable by flooding them with junk data. Targeting state and local government websites, such attacks could prevent voters from looking up registration information or polling locations, or knock offline sites that report election results after voting ends.

One group on the radar of the U.S. cybersecurity agency is Killnet, pro-Russia hackers who made a ruckus in October by organizing DDoS attacks on U.S. airport and state government websites.

Such attacks are mostly a nuisance and don't destroy data or even breach sites. But they can frustrate voters and election poll workers, and become powerful grist for disinformation offensives. For example, Russian state media and fake news mills could amplify exaggerated claims of disruption, as occurred with the Killnet effort against the airport and government sites.

Another potential threat are Russian-speaking ransomware gangs that operate with little Kremlin interference. They have largely spared U.S. election infrastructure, which by now tends to be a lot better protected than many of the hospitals, schools and businesses they routinely plague.

Hack-and-leak operations also are possible. Sensitive data could be stolen from election or campaign websites, partially falsified and released online.

Cybersecurity firm Trellox reported a spike in phishing emails targeting county election workers in Pennsylvania and Arizona, both battleground states, over the summer seeking to harvest passwords and potentially interfere with the administration of absentee ballots.

"In many cases, the threat actors attempting to breach our election systems are the same ones who are conducting influence operations that seek to sow discord," Easterly, the CISA director, said in mid-October.

That could include the Russian troll farm known as the Internet Research Agency, a key player in the 2016 Russia destabilization campaign that favored Trump and sought to widen social divisions in the U.S. The group sought to manipulate public opinion by gaming social media platforms, including by purchasing online ads.

In a pre-election report, the cybersecurity firm Recorded Future said it was "almost certain" that networks associated with the group "are engaging in covert malign influence on a subset of the U.S. population."

On Thursday, the social media analysis firm Graphika reported that suspected Russian operatives have been disseminating on far-right media platforms beginning Oct. 29 political cartoons disparaging Democratic candidates in tight statewide races in Georgia, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania.

Associated Press writer Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of the elections at: <https://apnews.com/hub/2022-midterm-elections>. And check out <https://apnews.com/hub/explaining-the-elections> to learn more about the issues and factors at play

in the 2022 midterm elections.

Judge says he'll appoint monitor for Donald Trump's company

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A Manhattan judge said Thursday he will appoint an independent monitor "to ensure there is no further fraud" at former President Donald Trump's company, restricting its ability to freely make deals, sell assets and change its corporate structure.

Judge Arthur Engoron ordered an outside watchdog as he presides over a lawsuit in which New York's attorney general alleges Trump and the Trump Organization misled banks and others about the value of prized assets, including golf courses and hotels bearing his name.

Attorney General Letitia James says the company is continuing to engage in fraud and has taken steps to dodge potential penalties from her lawsuit, such as incorporating a new, similarly named entity — Trump Organization LLC — in September, just before the lawsuit was filed.

Engoron wrote in an 11-page order that Trump and the Trump Organization "demonstrated propensity to engage in persistent fraud" and that appointing an outside monitor "is the most prudent and narrowly tailored mechanism to ensure there is no further fraud or illegality" pending the resolution of the lawsuit.

James, a Democrat, is seeking \$250 million and a permanent ban on Trump, a Republican, doing business in the state.

Trump, who contends James' investigation of him is a "political witch hunt," issued a statement Thursday ripping Engoron as her "puppet judge." He urged the courts to "do the right thing and stop this inquisition."

Engoron, in agreeing to appoint a monitor, barred the Trump Organization from selling or transferring any noncash assets without giving the court and James' office 14 days notice. The to-be-named monitor will be charged with ensuring the company's compliance and will immediately report any violations to the court and lawyers for both sides.

The Trump Organization must also grant the monitor access to its financial statements, asset valuations and other disclosures, must provide a full and accurate description of the company's structure and must give the monitor at least 30 days notice of any potential restructuring, refinancing or asset sales, Engoron said.

It's just the latest ruling Engoron has made against Trump or Trump-related interests.

While presiding over disputes over subpoenas issued in James' investigation, the judge, a Democrat, held Trump in contempt and fined him \$110,000 after he was slow to turn over documents, and he forced him to sit for a deposition. In that testimony, Trump invoked his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination more than 400 times.

"Today's decision sets a dangerous precedent for government interference in private enterprise and is an obvious attempt to influence the outcome of the upcoming election," the Trump Organization said in a statement, calling the move "more political persecution by Letitia James."

Trump Organization lawyer Christopher Kise said Engoron's order "effectively seizes control" of the company's financial affairs and sends a message that "free enterprise is simply not welcome in New York."

James' senior enforcement counsel, Kevin Wallace, said at a hearing preceding Engoron's decision that they were seeking "limited" oversight and wouldn't want the monitor involved in intricacies, such as how many rounds of golf or hotel rooms they were booking in a given year.

"Our goal in doing this is not to impact the day-to-day operations of the Trump Organization," said Wallace.

"The Trump Organization has a persistent record of not complying with existing court orders," Wallace said. "It should not be incumbent on the court or the attorney general to spend the next year looking over their shoulder, making sure assets aren't sold or the company restructured."

Trump sued James in Florida on Wednesday, seeking to block her from having any oversight over the family trust that controls his company. Trump's 35-page complaint rehashed some claims from his previously dismissed lawsuit against James in federal court in New York.

Wallace said at Thursday's hearing that James' office is seeking to stop "fraudulent activities that are ongoing at the Trump Organization" and wants safeguards in place so that the company can't just sell off

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assets, such as Trump Tower and an office building at 40 Wall Street, that could eventually be used to pay a potential lawsuit judgment.

Kise responded that the company has “no intention” to divest those properties, which together he says conservatively have a value of at least \$250 million. The “Trump entities are not going anywhere,” he added.

Kise argued that James’ lawsuit was much ado about common, good-faith disagreements in the real estate industry. If banks that loaned Trump money felt he or the company had acted improperly, they would have spoken up, Kise said.

“There’s no problem. There’s no case here,” Kise said. “It’s mind-numbing that we’re going to have a receiver insert himself or herself into these complex transactions instead of the owner of this real estate.”

Engoron took issue with at least one aspect of Kise’s reasoning, asking him if there was really a “good-faith disagreement” when Trump claimed his Trump Tower penthouse was three times its actual size, and \$200 million more valuable.

As for the new Trump entity that drew concern from James’ office, Kise said the company — listed in a New York corporate filing as Trump Organization II — had nothing to do with dodging potential penalties from James’ lawsuit, but rather “consolidation of payroll issues that have arisen in other contexts.”

Kise didn’t offer additional details. The Trump Organization’s payroll practices are among the issues being raised at the company’s Manhattan criminal fraud trial, which was halted Tuesday and is expected to resume Monday after a witness tested positive for COVID-19.

Follow Michael Sisak on Twitter at twitter.com/mikesisak and send confidential tips by visiting <https://www.ap.org/tips/>.

US Embassy officials visit Brittney Griner in Russia prison

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Officials at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow visited jailed WNBA star Brittney Griner on Thursday, more than a week after a Russian court rejected her appeal of her nine-year sentence for drug possession.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a tweet that the American representatives “saw firsthand her tenacity and perseverance despite her present circumstances.”

Price said the Biden administration is continuing to press for the immediate release of Griner and Paul Whelan, who was sentenced in 2020 to 16 years in prison in Russia on espionage-related charges that he and his family say are bogus, and “fair treatment for every detained American.”

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Griner “is doing as well as can be expected under the circumstances” and that the administration was working “to resolve the current unacceptable and wrongful detentions” of Griner and Whelan.

Griner was convicted in August after police said they found vape canisters containing cannabis oil in her luggage at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport. Her arrest in February came at a time of heightened tensions between Moscow and Washington, just days before Russia sent troops into Ukraine. At that time, Griner was returning to play for a Russian team during the WNBA’s offseason.

She admitted at her trial to having the canisters in her luggage but testified she packed them inadvertently in her haste to make her flight and had no criminal intent. Her lawyers have called the punishment excessive.

The United States regards Griner and Whelan as wrongful detainees and has been trying for months to negotiate with Russia for their release. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said over the summer that the U.S. had made a “substantial proposal” to Russia to try to secure their release, and President Joe Biden told relatives of Griner and Whelan in a White House meeting in September that his administration was committed to bringing them home.

People familiar with the offer have said the U.S. had offered to release convicted Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout for Griner and Whelan.

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There have been no outward signs of progress since then in the negotiations.

Jean-Pierre told reporters traveling with the president to New Mexico that “despite a lack of good faith negotiation by the Russians, the U.S. government has continued to follow up on that offer and propose alternative potential ways forward with Russia through all available channels. This continues to be a top priority.”

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Follow AP’s coverage of Brittney Griner at: <https://apnews.com/hub/brittney-griner>

Why no Powerball winner? It’s luck and smaller sales

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Perplexed that it seems no one can win the gigantic \$1.5 billion Powerball prize?

A big reason is that people aren’t buying as many tickets for each drawing as they did five or six years ago.

When fewer people buy tickets, a smaller percentage of the millions of possible number combinations are covered and the likelihood of a winner drops. The next drawing will be held Saturday night.

Of course, many people still are playing Powerball and Mega Millions, the other lottery game offered in most of the country. It’s ticket sales from those Powerball players that fund the prizes and enabled the jackpot to soar by \$300 million after there wasn’t a big winner Wednesday night.

In the last drawing for a \$1.2 billion jackpot, 46.6% of the 292.2 million possible number combinations were covered. That was up from the 36.3% of all possible number combinations that were picked for Monday night’s drawing, reflecting that ticket sales rise as jackpots climb higher.

But the percentage remains far less than when a record \$1.5 billion Powerball jackpot was on the line on Jan. 13, 2016. Back then, ticket sales were so strong that 88.6% of the possible combinations were covered, according to the Urbandale, Iowa-based Multi-State Lottery Association. A few days before that record 2016 drawing, there was a coverage of 77.8% for a \$900 million Powerball prize.

The association notes, however, that Powerball drawings now are held three times a week, so even if tickets sold for individual drawings are less, overall sales can be roughly comparable because of the extra game each week.

“It’s very difficult to make a comparison between now and five years ago because this is not really an apples-to-apples comparison,” said Drew Svitko, the Pennsylvania Lottery’s executive director and chairman of the Powerball Product Group.

Even as no one hit the jackpot by matching all five white numbers and the red Powerball, quite a few came aching close.

Powerball officials note that 19 tickets matched the five white balls and missed the Powerball -- earning the players \$1 million, or \$2 million if they paid extra for a “prize multiplier.” And 238 tickets matched four white balls as well as the Powerball.

There have been 39 consecutive drawings without a Powerball winner, dating back to Aug. 6, and if that winless streak hits 40 drawings after Saturday night, the jackpot will certainly grow to be the largest ever in the U.S. and globally.

The record number of consecutive Powerball drawings without a winner is 41, which ended on Oct. 4, 2021, with a \$699.8 million winner in California.

Until someone wins this time, the biggest prize remains a \$1.586 billion Powerball jackpot won in 2016 by three ticketholders in California, Florida and Tennessee. That stands just ahead of a \$1.537 billion Mega Millions prize won in 2018 by a ticketholder in South Carolina.

The \$1.5 billion prize on Saturday night is for winners who take an annuity, paid annually over 29 years. Most winners choose cash, and for the next drawing that would be \$745.9 million.

Powerball is played in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Netanyahu set to return to power in Israel after PM concedes

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday appeared set to return to power as head of Israel's most right-wing government ever after winning this week's national election, with the current caretaker prime minister conceding defeat.

Final results showed Netanyahu's Likud Party and its ultranationalist and religious partners capturing a solid majority in Israel's Knesset, or parliament.

The strong showing promised to end the political gridlock that has paralyzed Israel for the past three and a half years. But the planned agenda of the new government expected to take office — including an overhaul of the country's legal system and a tough line against the Palestinians — promises to further polarize a deeply divided nation and risks antagonizing Israel's closest allies abroad.

Israel on Tuesday held its fifth election since 2019 in a race, like the previous four, that was widely seen as a referendum on Netanyahu's fitness to rule as he faces corruption charges. While the previous races ended in deadlock, Netanyahu managed a disciplined campaign that gave him the edge over a divided and disorganized opposition.

The acting prime minister, Yair Lapid, conceded defeat and called Netanyahu to congratulate him shortly before the final results were released. Lapid said he had instructed his staff to prepare an organized transition of power.

"The state of Israel comes before any political consideration," Lapid said. "I wish Netanyahu success, for the sake of the people of Israel and the state of Israel."

There was no immediate comment from Netanyahu.

According to the unofficial final results, Netanyahu and his ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox allies captured 64 seats in Israel's 120-seat Knesset. His opponents in the outgoing coalition, led by Lapid, won 51 seats, with the remainder held by a small unaffiliated Arab faction. Netanyahu still has to conduct negotiations with his partners, but is expected to form a coalition in the coming weeks.

The election focused heavily on the values that are meant to define the state: Jewish or democratic. In the end, voters favored their Jewish identity.

Netanyahu's main governing partner is expected to be Religious Zionism, a far-right party whose main candidate, Itamar Ben-Gvir has built a career on confrontations with Palestinians and espouses anti-Arab views that were once largely confined to an extremist fringe.

The party will be the third-largest in parliament.

Ben-Gvir says he wants to end Palestinian autonomy in parts of the occupied West Bank and maintain Israel's occupation over the Palestinians, now in its 56th year, indefinitely. Until recently, he hung a photo in his home of a Jewish militant who murdered 29 Palestinian worshippers in a 1994 mosque shooting in the West Bank.

Ben-Gvir has labeled Arab lawmakers "terrorists" and called for their deportation. The far-right lawmaker, who recently brandished a pistol while visiting a tense Palestinian neighborhood in east Jerusalem, wants to be put in charge of the country's police force.

The party's leader, Bezalel Smotrich, a fellow West Bank settler who has made anti-Arab remarks, has his sights set on the Defense Ministry. That would make him the overseer of the military and Israel's West Bank military occupation.

Party officials favor aggressive settlement construction in the West Bank. They also have made repeated anti-LGBTQ comments.

These positions have threatened to antagonize American Jews, who are overwhelmingly liberal, and put Israel's next government on a collision course with the Biden administration.

The White House on Thursday said it was looking forward to working with Israel on "our shared histories and values."

But in a separate comment, State Department spokesman Ned Price said the U.S. hopes Israel "will continue to share the values of an open, democratic society, including tolerance and respect for all in civil society, particularly for minority groups." He also reiterated support for a two-state solution between Israel

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and the Palestinians – an idea with little, if any, support among the incoming government.

Italy's new far-right premier, Giorgia Meloni, congratulated Netanyahu on Twitter. "Ready to strengthen our friendship and our bilateral relations, to better face our common challenges," she wrote.

Hungary's nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, also congratulated Netanyahu, calling him "a friend of Hungary."

As the votes were being counted, Israeli-Palestinian violence was flaring, with at least four Palestinians killed in separate incidents, and an Israeli police officer wounded lightly in a stabbing in Jerusalem's Old City.

Ben-Gvir used the incidents to promise a tougher approach to Palestinian attackers once he enters government.

"The time has come to restore security to the streets," he tweeted. "The time has come for a terrorist who goes out to carry out an attack to be taken out!"

While Religious Zionism could cause Netanyahu headaches abroad, it could bring him relief at home.

The party has promised to enact changes to Israeli law that could halt Netanyahu's corruption trial and make the charges disappear. Along with other nationalist allies, they also want to weaken the independence of the judiciary and concentrate more power in the hands of lawmakers. Netanyahu says the trial is a witch hunt against him orchestrated by a hostile media and a biased judicial system.

Netanyahu remains a deeply polarizing figure in Israel. If his coalition takes power and pushes forward with its war on the justice system, these divisions are likely to deepen.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving leader, was ousted in 2021 after 12 consecutive years in power by an ideologically-diverse coalition. The coalition collapsed in the spring over infighting.

The strong showing by Likud and its allies reflected a decades-long shift to the right by the Israeli electorate.

Both Likud and Religious Zionism tapped into fears over Palestinian violence in the West Bank, accused Lapid of being weak and demonized his government for being the first to include an Arab party in a coalition.

Israel's dovish left wing, meanwhile, had an abysmal showing in the election. The Labor party, which was a dominant force in Israeli politics for decades and supports Palestinian statehood, squeaked into parliament with the minimum four seats. The anti-occupation Meretz was banished into political exile for the first time since it was founded three decades ago.

"This is a disaster for Meretz, a disaster for the country and yes, a disaster for me," Meretz's distraught leader, Zehava Galon, said in a video.

In Georgia, campaigns look to drive turnout with a knock

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

DAWSON, Ga. (AP) — Someone like Erika Hardwick has come to the door of millions of Georgia voters.

A paid canvasser for the New Georgia Project Action Fund, Hardwick was working the southwest Georgia town of Dawson on a warm October afternoon. She was trying to motivate people in the town 135 miles (215 kilometers) south of Atlanta to cast ballots on or before Tuesday.

Hardwick is part of an intensifying effort to contact voters in Georgia, where narrow electoral margins have led political parties and other groups to pour in resources, knowing that driving a few more voters to the polls could make a difference.

Although campaigns spend millions on television and social media ads, research has found that face-to-face contact is more effective in pushing marginal voters to the polls. Democrats are also expanding "relational organizing," paying people to call or text their friends and acquaintances to urge them to vote.

Those efforts may be bearing fruit in Georgia's big early voting turnout. More than 2 million people had cast early ballots by mail or in person by the end of the day Wednesday, far ahead of the turnout pace of 2018. New Georgia Project's figures show people it has contacted face-to-face have been three times as likely to vote early so far this year compared with similar people who have had no contact.

Hardwick used to work at a big hotel in Atlanta, but when the COVID-19 pandemic tanked that business, she moved home to southwest Georgia. Now, in addition to taking college classes and selling cosmetics,

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she gets paid to get out the vote.

Working off a list on her cellphone, Hardwick cruised up and down blocks in the Black section of Dawson, jumping out of her car when she reached addresses on her list. At most houses, no one answered, and Hardwick left a brochure. Others were home, giving Hardwick a chance to ask people about their plan to vote, about the most important issues in their lives and about who they planned to vote for in Georgia's pivotal races for governor and senator.

The New Georgia Project, founded by Democrat Stacey Abrams, has devoted itself to bringing voters to the polls who represent a rapidly diversifying Georgia — Black, Latino, Asian and younger voters. New Georgia Project and its associated action fund don't endorse candidates but push progressive policies broadly in line with Democrats. Abrams, challenging incumbent Republican Gov. Brian Kemp this year after narrowly losing to him in 2018, is no longer associated with the group.

Hardwick's list avoided surefire voters, instead aiming to contact what some might call infrequent voters. The New Georgia Project instead calls them "high opportunity voters." The group says it has reached 1.9 million people so far.

Patricia Lee, for example, was undecided about her vote and doubted it would do much good.

"They aren't going to do what they say they're going to do," Lee said.

Earnestine Harvey said she would vote for "Abrams all day," but didn't know anything about the Senate contest between incumbent Democrat Raphael Warnock and Republican challenger Herschel Walker.

"Child, I don't even know who's running for senator," Harvey told Hardwick.

Plenty of others — including the Democratic and Republican parties, campaigns and other third-party groups — are swarming the doors of Georgia's 7 million registered voters.

Lauren Groh-Wargo, Abrams' campaign manager, said Monday that the Abrams campaign has cut television advertising in favor of get-out-the-vote operations aimed at targeted voters.

"We're firing on all cylinders on our GOTV operation. We are outspending and outmaneuvering Kemp on radio, on digital and on field," Groh-Wargo said. "And so yes, we are reducing our TV spend."

Republicans have intensified efforts after barely winning in 2018 and then losing the presidential race in 2020 and two U.S. Senate runoffs in 2021. The Republican National Committee has more than 85 staffers working turnout operations in Georgia, spokesperson Garrison Douglas said, more than five times as many as in 2018. Republicans say they have had more than 4.5 million voter contacts, although some voters have been reached more than once.

"We have to work harder than we ever have before," Kemp said of his campaign's turnout push Tuesday after a rally with former Vice President Mike Pence. "We lost, I think, the 2020 race because we didn't have a good ground game in the state. And we have one now, but we're not finished with that."

Beyond parties and candidates, there's a constellation of liberal-leaning groups aimed at Asian, Latino and Black voters, as well as people motivated by issues such as abortion or health care.

Fewer such groups had existed on the Republican side, but former U.S. Sen. Kelly Loeffler has founded Greater Georgia and affiliated groups aimed at motivating conservatives. That includes some typically Republican voters who didn't vote in the 2021 Senate runoff that Loeffler lost to Warnock after President Donald Trump falsely claimed that Georgia's elections were rigged and stolen. Greater Georgia has been making special efforts to persuade those 340,000 people that their votes will be counted.

For Democrats and progressive groups, much effort has gone into trying to improve turnout in rural parts of the state with large Black populations. Some of those counties have historically had lower turnout rates, with Democrats doing more poorly than the number of Black residents suggests they should.

Democrats usually win Dawson and surrounding Terrell County, which civil rights workers dubbed "Terrible Terrell" for its resistance to integration in the 1960s. But Democratic vote shares hover below 55% in a 9,100-resident county that's 60% Black overall.

"Especially in the Black community, I've seen a lot of them think their vote doesn't count, their vote doesn't matter," Hardwick said.

But Hardwick was undeterred. She was moving on, trying to talk to a few more voters before the sun went down.

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Check out <https://apnews.com/hub/explaining-the-elections> to learn more about the issues and factors at play in the 2022 midterm elections.

Twitter's blue check: Vital verification or status symbol?

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

The story of Twitter's blue checkmarks — a simple verification system that's come to be viewed as an elite status symbol — began with some high-profile impersonations, just as the site began taking off in 2008 and '09.

Celebrities who saw their likeness spoofed included Kanye West, now Ye, the basketball star Shaquille O'Neil and the actor Ewan McGregor, who was also impersonated on a wildly popular website called ... MySpace.

Then, in June 2009, St. Louis Cardinals manager Tony La Russa sued Twitter, claiming that a fake account, using his name to make light of drunken driving and two Cardinals pitchers who died, damaged his reputation and caused emotional distress.

LaRussa eventually dropped his lawsuit. But in June of that year, Twitter's then-CEO Biz Stone introduced a verification system to sort out authentic accounts from impostors. The benefit would be to the holders of the accounts, but also to everyone else on Twitter. They could be sure, if they saw the blue check next to a name, that what they were reading was authentic.

Fast-forward to 2022. Twitter's new owner and ruler, billionaire Elon Musk, wants to turn this verification system into a revenue source for the company he paid \$44 billion to purchase. It's a 180-degree turn from the stance he took earlier this year, before his buyout closed, when he said he wanted to "verify all humans" on Twitter.

After floating the idea of charging users \$20 a month for the "blue check" and some extra features, he appeared to quickly scale it back in a Twitter exchange with author Stephen King, who posted "If that gets instituted, I'm gone like Enron."

"We need to pay the bills somehow! Twitter cannot rely entirely on advertisers. How about \$8?" Musk replied.

Whatever the price, the idea of a paid verification system is raising some complex questions and concerns — beyond the customary cheers and jeers that have accompanied Musk's every move since he took ownership of the social media company last week.

"Tapping into Twitter users to make more money may be the right strategy, but verification isn't the right feature to charge for," said Insider Intelligence analyst Jasmine Enberg. "Verification is intended to ensure the integrity of accounts and conversations on the platform, rather than a premium feature meant to elevate the experience. There is a growing appetite among some social users to pay for features that add value to their experiences."

Instead of charging for authentication, though, Enberg said Musk should be looking at adding features to Twitter that get people to use it more and help them grow their follower base and find a way to make money from those.

"Turning users into customers isn't an easy sell, and the value exchange has to be right in order for it to pay off," she said.

Twitter already has a subscription plan, Twitter Blue, that for \$5 a month lets users access extra features, such as the ability to undo a tweet and read ad-free articles. Musk's plan, as it appears from his tweets, seems to be expanding it to charge more money for more features — including the verification badge — and spread it to more users.

"Of roughly 300,000 verified accounts on Twitter we would estimate only about 25% would go down

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this path ultimately and pay the \$8 per month fee," Wedbush analyst Daniel Ives said.

That would mean only \$7.2 million a year in extra revenue for Twitter — not enough to move the dial for a company whose last reported quarterly revenue was \$1.18 billion.

Ives expects Musk to first go after users who already have the check to charge them to keep it, then likely introduce other tiered pricing plans for other accounts.

"The problem is with many athletes and celebrities willing to lose their coveted blue check and refusing to pay the monthly fee it would be an ominous black eye moment for Musk on his first strategic move with Twitter," he said.

While Musk's exact plans are not clear, experts are raising concerns about the consequences of having a paid verification system that leaves anyone unwilling to pay vulnerable to impersonation — and anyone who does pay the ability to have their Twitter presence boosted by the platform's algorithms.

While many verified users on Twitter are famous, there are also community activists, journalists at small newspapers and outlets inside and outside of the U.S. — and regular people who simply find themselves in the news. For this subset, \$8 a month may not be worth it, no matter how many memes Musk posts about the cost of a cup of coffee.

The idea behind verification — which other social networks later copied — was to ensure that public figures, politicians and businesses were who they say they are. It began small at first, as things do when tech companies test out new features and functions.

"The experiment will begin with public officials, public agencies, famous artists, athletes, and other well known individuals at risk of impersonation," Stone wrote in 2009. He suggested that those who can't be immediately verified put their official website in their Twitter bio to show that they are who they say they are.

Business accounts — such as brand pages for Coca-Cola or McDonald's — were not included in the initial verification system, nor were rank-and-file journalists. Those were added later, as misinformation from fake sites and accounts became a bigger problem on social media.

While the "blue check" (which is actually a white checkmark in a blue frame, or black checkmark in a white frame if you are using Twitter in dark mode) has come to be viewed in some circles as an elite status symbol for the rich and famous, its purpose has always been to ensure that the people and accounts tweeting are who they say they are. As such, it benefited Twitter as much — if not more — as it benefitted the accounts that were verified, by clamping down on impersonations.

Kelly McBride, an expert on journalism ethics for the Poynter Institute think tank, said she suspected the blue check would become less valuable if people know that it could be bought. Currently, it signifies a person with a particular position or public stature whose identity has been verified.

"Twitter may end up being a similar story," she said. "It may become less valuable to journalists. And that wouldn't be a bad thing."

Pakistan's ex-PM Imran Khan wounded in shooting at protest

By MUNIR AHMED and RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A gunman opened fire at a protest rally in eastern Pakistan on Thursday, slightly wounding former Prime Minister Imran Khan in the leg and killing one of his supporters, his party and police said. Nine other people also were hurt.

The gunman was immediately arrested, and police later released a video of him in custody, allegedly confessing to the shooting and saying he acted alone. It was not clear under what conditions he made his statement.

"Only Imran Khan was my target," said the suspect, identified as Faisal Butt by Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb.

Khan, 70, underwent surgery at Shaukat Khanum Hospital in Lahore, tweeted Omar Ayub Khan, a senior leader of the ex-premier's Tehreek-e-Insaf party. Khan was seen with a bandage on his right leg, just above the foot, according to reports and a blurry image from the protest.

The shooting was an "assassination attempt," party spokesman Fawad Chaudhry told rallygoers after-

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ward in Wazirabad. He added that "it was an attack on the whole of Pakistan," and vowed that the people would avenge it.

The violence, which follows Khan's ouster as prime minister in a no-confidence vote in April, raised new concerns about growing political instability in Pakistan, a country with a long history of political violence and assassinations.

Since he lost the vote in Parliament, Khan has mobilized mass rallies across the nuclear-armed nation of 225 million, whipping up crowds with claims that he was a victim of a conspiracy by his successor, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, and the United States — allegations that both the premier and Washington deny.

Sharif condemned Thursday's attack and ordered his government to investigate the incident. He added that he was praying for Khan, adding: "Violence should have no place in our country's politics."

The White House also condemned the attack and hoped for the swift recovery of all the wounded. "We call on all parties to remain peaceful and refrain from violence," press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Air Force One as President Joe Biden flew to New Mexico.

The attack happened in the Wazirabad district in the eastern Punjab province where the former cricket star-turned-Islamist politician was traveling in a large protest convoy of trucks and cars heading for the capital of Islamabad. The convoy is part of his campaign aimed at forcing the government to hold early elections.

District police officer Ghazanfar Ali said one person was killed and nine others were wounded in the attack.

Among the wounded was Faisal Javed, a lawmaker from Tehreek-e-Insaf. In a video statement, with his bloodstained clothes visible, he said the attack would not stop Khan's march on Islamabad. Khan's supporters rallied in different parts of the country after the shooting.

Khan has been at loggerheads with Pakistan's powerful military and has refused to halt his protest plans in the capital. The military has said that although Khan had a right to hold a rally there, no one would be allowed to destabilize the country. Authorities in Islamabad have deployed additional security to deter any clashes.

The attack came less than a week after Khan began his march from Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, with thousands of supporters.

Earlier, Chaudhry had said they plan to enter Islamabad on Friday.

Sharif's government has said that there would be no early election and that the next balloting will be held as scheduled in 2023.

Khan's latest challenge comes after Pakistan's elections commission disqualified him from holding public office for five years for allegedly selling state gifts unlawfully and concealing assets as premier.

Khan, who has challenged the disqualification in court, has said he would sue Chief Election Commissioner Sikandara Raja, who was behind the decision, for calling him a "dishonest person."

Pakistan has a long history of political assassinations.

Benazir Bhutto, the first democratically elected female leader of a Muslim country, was killed in 2007. Her father, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was ousted by Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq in a 1977 coup and was hanged two years later for conspiracy to kill a political rival. Zia died in a 1988 plane crash that investigators said appeared to be sabotage. That crash also killed the U.S. ambassador and 28 others.

The new violence comes as the impoverished country is grappling with the aftermath of unprecedented floods in the summer that killed 1,735 people and displaced 33 million.

US agency softens opioid prescribing guidelines for doctors

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The nation's top public health agency on Thursday softened its guidelines for U.S. doctors prescribing oxycodone and other opioid painkillers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention new recommendations are an update to 2016 guidelines that added momentum to a decline in opioid painkiller prescriptions.

Opioids painkillers can be addictive — even when used under doctors' orders — and were identified as

a big reason for a rise in U.S. drug overdoses that began more than two decades ago. Other drugs have overtaken them in overdose statistics, and illicit fentanyl is now the biggest driver of deaths.

The previous guidance succeeded in reducing inappropriate and dangerous prescribing, some experts say. But they also were seen as a barrier to care, with some pharmacists refusing to fill prescriptions as doctors wrote them.

The new guidelines are designed to ensure that patients get compassionate and safe pain care, CDC officials said.

A draft released in February received 5,500 public comments. Some modifications were made, but several main changes stayed in place, including:

- The CDC no longer suggests trying to limit opioid treatment for acute pain to three days.
- The agency is dropping the specific recommendation that doctors avoid increasing dosage to a level equivalent to 90 milligrams of morphine per day.
- For patients receiving higher doses of opioids, the CDC is urging doctors to not abruptly halt treatment unless there are indications of a life-threatening danger. The agency offers suggestions on tapering patients off the drugs.

Tally of homeless veterans fell 11%, biggest drop in 5 years

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of veterans in the United States experiencing homelessness dropped by 11% since 2020, the biggest decline in more than five years, the Biden administration reported Thursday.

There were 33,136 homeless veterans in January of this year, compared with 37,252 in 2020, according to the Point-in-Time count conducted by the departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development as well as the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

"One veteran experiencing homelessness will always be one too many, but the ... count shows that we are making real progress in the fight to end veteran homelessness," VA Secretary Denis McDonough said.

The government count is conducted annually to capture U.S. homeless population on a single night in January each year, but was not fully completed last year due to limits on in-person surveying during the coronavirus pandemic.

The data released Thursday shows significant drops each year in homelessness from 2010 to 2016, when the Obama administration made it a top priority to end veteran homelessness, before mostly leveling off from 2016 to 2020.

Since 2010, when it stood at 76,329, the number of homeless vets fell by more than 55%.

The Biden administration credited its efforts to reduce veteran homelessness with help from the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, which boosted the VA's homeless programs and expanded rental aid and other support for veterans' families.

How Russian soldiers ran a 'cleansing' operation in Bucha

By ERIKA KINETZ, OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

BUCHA, Ukraine (AP) — The first man arrived at 7:27 a.m. Russian soldiers covered his head and marched him up the driveway toward a nondescript office building.

Two minutes later, a pleading, gagged voice pierced the morning stillness. Then the merciless reply: "Talk! Talk, f--ing mother-f--er!"

The women and children came later, gripping hastily packed bags, their pet dogs in tow.

It was a cold, gray morning, March 4 in Bucha, Ukraine. Crows cawed. By nightfall, at least nine men would walk to their deaths at 144 Yablunska street, a building complex that Russians turned into a headquarters and the nerve center of violence that would shock the world.

Later, when all the bodies were found strewn along the streets and packed in hasty graves, it would be easy to think the carnage was random. Residents asking how this happened would be told to make their peace, because some questions just don't have answers.

Yet there was a method to the violence.

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What happened that day in Bucha was what Russian soldiers on intercepted phone conversations called “zachistka” — cleansing. The Russians hunted people on lists prepared by their intelligence services and went door to door to identify potential threats. Those who didn’t pass this filtration, including volunteer fighters and civilians suspected of assisting Ukrainian troops, were tortured and executed, surveillance video, audio intercepts and interviews show.

The Associated Press and the PBS series “Frontline” obtained surveillance camera footage from Bucha that shows, for the first time, what a cleansing operation in Ukraine looks like. This was organized brutality that would be repeated at scale in Russian-occupied territories across Ukraine — a strategy to neutralize resistance and terrorize locals into submission that Russian troops have used in past conflicts, notably Chechnya.

Ukrainian prosecutors now say those responsible for the violence at 144 Yablunska were soldiers from the 76th Guards Airborne Assault Division. They are pursuing the commander, Maj. Gen. Sergei Chubarykin, and his boss, Col. Gen. Alexander Chaiko — a man known for his brutality as leader of Russia’s troops in Syria — for the crime of aggression for waging an illegal war.

Police ended up recovering nearly 40 bodies along Yablunska street alone. Prosecutors have identified 12 around 144 Yablunska; AP reporters documented a 13th body in the stairwell of one of the buildings in the complex, in photos and videos taken on April 3.

Taras Semkiv, Ukraine’s lead prosecutor for the 144 Yablunska street case, told the AP and “Frontline” that it’s unusual to see war crimes play out on video and that the CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts from March 4 are key elements for the prosecution.

“The results of the criminal evidence we’ve gathered so far reveal that it wasn’t just isolated incidents of military personnel making a mistake but a systematic policy targeting the Ukrainian people,” Semkiv said. The Kremlin didn’t respond to detailed questions sent by the AP.

This story is part of an AP/Frontline investigation that includes the War Crimes Watch Ukraine interactive experience and the documentary “Putin’s Attack on Ukraine: Documenting War Crimes,” on PBS. The AP and “Frontline” reviewed hundreds of hours of video from surveillance cameras in Bucha and vetted audio recordings of phone calls by Russian soldiers.

Together with SITU Research, a New York-based visual investigations firm, we reconstructed events using a 3D model of Bucha, drawn from data from drones flown over Bucha this spring. AP reporters verified the locations of the security cameras, and The Dossier Center, a London-based investigative group funded by Russian opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky, verified the identity of soldiers whose phone calls were intercepted by the Ukrainian government by cross-referencing Russian phone numbers, social media accounts, public reporting and information in leaked Russian databases.

THE FALL OF BUCHA

Around lunchtime on March 3, three armored Russian vehicles appeared just beyond the quarry at the western edge of Bucha. Maksym Stakhov, a veteran of the 2014 war against Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region, spotted them. He jumped in his car and raced around town, hollering: “Hide! Run away! The Russians are coming!”

Stakhov and a few dozen other volunteers, along with a handful of soldiers, set up three checkpoints to inspect people’s documents and help with evacuations along Yablunska street, a strategic road that roughly divides Bucha from neighboring Irpin. Most of the volunteers had never handled weapons before, Stakhov and another fighter told the AP, and they scrounged what few guns they could.

Civilians headed to the well-fortified basement of an office building in an industrial complex at 144 Yablunska street for shelter, unaware that what they believed was a safe haven would soon become a prison.

At 12:45 p.m., two Ukrainian soldiers took up a post in the driveway of No. 144 and began directing traffic. They were soon joined by around 20 more men, who made a brief last stand, their guns and grenade launchers aimed to the west. One soldier lay on his stomach in the road and fired off rounds on his rifle.

Analysts from the Royal United Services Institute and the Centre for Information Resilience reviewed

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CCTV footage from the AP and confirmed that the camouflage and markings of their uniforms indicate they were Ukrainian.

Meanwhile, a seemingly endless convoy of Russian firepower was winding into town along the railroad tracks. The volunteers' radios crackled with a warning: Russian forces are moving in with heavy weapons. Evacuate.

"We had almost no weapons. It made no sense to fight them," Stakhov said. "Guys were crying. We didn't want to retreat."

They fled across the fields to a mall in Irpin, which Ukraine still controlled.

Shortly before 1 p.m., most of the Ukrainian soldiers at 144 Yablunska street clambered into a black van and sped off to the east. Four stragglers fired off a few final rounds. By 12:57 p.m., the Ukrainians were gone.

To the west, Yablunska was burning. Half an hour after the Ukrainians disappeared, the first detachment of Russian soldiers emerged from smoke and flames and crept on foot down the street.

In the chaos of the Russian advance, eight Ukrainian checkpoint volunteers got separated from the others. One, a taxi driver named Ivan Skyba, said in court papers that he had volunteered to help Ukraine's territorial defense but was not officially part of the military. All the men had was body armor, walkie-talkies, a Kalashnikov rifle and a hand grenade.

The volunteers ducked into a pale brick house at 31 Yablunska street and listened in silence to the searing crack of nearby rifles and endless rumble of Russian tanks. At 5:49 p.m., Andrii Dvornikov, another checkpoint volunteer, got a message from a Ukrainian fighter who had made it from Bucha to Irpin. He knew he was in trouble.

"Do you have food?" his friend asked.

"I can't think about food now," Dvornikov messaged back. "We want to get to Irpin."

"Don't go out at all!" his friend warned.

Around 9 p.m., Russian troops and military vehicles groaned down the long driveway of No. 144 under flurries of snow and sleety rain. By the morning of March 4, the Russians controlled Yablunska.

The cleansing was about to begin.

MARCH 4: CLEANSING

As more tanks rolled in, Russian soldiers shook hands, chatted and laughed with one another. Henry Schlottman, a former U.S. military intelligence analyst who reviewed surveillance footage from the AP, traced visible symbols and markings on Russian military vehicles and a munitions crate AP reporters found at 144 Yablunska to the 76th Guards Airborne Assault Division and related units.

The paratroopers swept up and down Yablunska, checking people's documents, examining their phones and interrogating them, according to interviews with local residents. In some cases, they already had the names of the people they wanted to find.

Around 10 a.m., Dvornikov called his wife, Yulia Truba, from the house on Yablunska. He told her to delete all evidence of their communications.

Not long after, Russian soldiers broke down the door of 31 Yablunska and hauled Dvornikov, Skyba, six other volunteers and the owner of the house out to the yard. They made them take off their shoes, called them Banderivtsi — implying they were Nazis — and accused them of acting as spotters for the Ukrainian military.

Then two Russian soldiers led the men at gunpoint down the wet, icy road to 144 Yablunska, cursing at them as they shuffled along in their stockinged feet.

It was 11:08 a.m.

Soldiers forced them to their knees behind a Russian military vehicle in the driveway of the complex and kicked them. Then Skyba saw them lift up the man next to him and shoot him in the head.

One of the volunteers, fearing for his life, confessed they'd been manning a checkpoint, Skyba said. The young man, nicknamed "The Saint," survived the carnage at Yablunska street. But Ukrainians later hunted him down and investigated him for treason, according to documents and photographs seen by the AP and

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"Frontline."

Over the next few hours, soldiers delivered more and more people to 144 Yablunska. They had been repeatedly told — by Russian President Vladimir Putin, among others — that they would be welcomed by their Ukrainian brothers and sisters as liberators and anyone who resisted was likely a fascist, an insurgent, not a real civilian.

Shortly before noon, four men were marched in. Then a lone man, hands behind his back. Two women and a man, with a red suitcase and a small dog in tow. A cluster of four civilians. Another pair, then a man, trailed by a woman and a black dog and then a cluster of five people and four dogs.

Then, at 12:48 p.m., soldiers led a man with a sack over his head away by the elbows. One minute later, an elderly woman hobbled in on her cane.

One of the people picked up that morning was 20-year-old Dmytro Chaplyhin, a baby-faced store clerk everyone called Dima. Soldiers went to his home, just off Yablunska, and found images of Russian tanks on his phone. They accused him of helping the Ukrainian military.

As the soldiers took Dima away, his grandmother, Natalia Vlasenko, fell to her knees.

"God, I begged them not to touch him," she said. "He pointed a rifle at me and said, 'If you won't give him up the easy way, then we'll do it the hard way.'"

"Grandma, don't worry!" Dima called as he left with the soldiers and headed for 144 Yablunska street. "I will come back!"

It was the last time she saw him alive.

Meanwhile, Russian soldiers were breaking into people's homes, forcing locks and busting through high fences with their tanks, CCTV footage shows. They told locals they were looking for weapons. Residents said the soldiers also stole tools, electronics gear, food and liquor.

They systematically took out every CCTV camera they found. Screen after screen cut to black.

Out front of their makeshift headquarters, Russian soldiers sat on top of their tank, sharing a bottle of Coca-Cola and playing with a pistol. Behind them, the crowd of civilians at No. 144 had thickened.

Barking dogs ran wild. Incongruously, some soldiers handed out tinned meat and matches and told people they were being freed from Nazi oppression, while others conducted public executions.

When the Russians marched Iryna Volynets to 144 Yablunska, she recognized one of the men lined up in the driveway as her old school friend Andrii Verbovyi. He was slumped over on his side in a fetal position, an alarmingly long trail of blood running from his body, she said.

Volynets knew her friend was still alive because she could see him trembling. They locked eyes. She thought she should cover him with a cloth that lay nearby, but her courage failed her.

Shaken, Volynets didn't immediately notice that her own son, Slava, was also kneeling in the line of doomed men. She finally recognized him by his jacket and pants. He'd taken a blow to the ribs and was breathing heavily.

Soldiers began to lead the kneeling men into the office building two at a time, Volynets said. She was panicked, desperate to negotiate Slava's release. The Russians took a young man over to take a close look at Slava.

"Is it him?" they asked.

"No, not him," the young man answered.

Slava got his boots back and lived.

Russians let most of the civilians go that day, first the women, then the men. But the volunteers were not released.

Skyba was hit in the face so hard it knocked his teeth out. His eyebrow split open, and blood gushed down his face.

Russians tied his hands with tape behind his back, put a bucket over his head and kneeled him against a wall inside the office complex. They piled bricks on his back until he fell over, then hauled him up and beat his head through the bucket until he lost consciousness.

"What should we do with them?" Skyba heard a Russian say. "Kill them," another answered. "But take

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them away first so they're not laying around here."

Russian soldiers led Sykba and other volunteers around the corner of the office building to a small courtyard where there was already one dead body. Then two soldiers started shooting.

Sykba felt something pierce his side, and he hit the ground. He had taken a bullet clean through his abdomen, a photograph shows. He pretended to be dead, terrified the Russians would see his exhalations cloud the cold air.

"I was waiting for the darkness," he said. "Terrible ... I cannot explain Just terrible."

Once it was silent, Skyba worked his wrists out of the tape that bound them, crawled through the corpses of his comrades from the checkpoint and stole boots from the body of the only man who still had them on. He ran to a neighboring house and curled up on the sofa, trying to get warm.

Then he heard voices. Russians.

"Is anybody here in the house?" a man called. Skyba pretended to be the owner.

Believing him to be an injured civilian, the soldiers took him back to 144 Yablunska, this time for medical treatment, Skyba said. They led him to the basement, where more than 100 people were being held.

For the next three days, Skyba huddled there, telling no one about his bullet wound. The only toilet was broken. Children cried. Adults prayed. The smell of human waste was overpowering.

On March 7, Skyba and the others were allowed to leave the basement. Everyone else who had been captured with him, except for "The Saint," was dead. He retrieved his eyeglasses, which had fallen near the body of one of the checkpoint volunteers. Then he walked out of 144 Yablunska street.

'I THINK I'M GOING CRAZY'

As their advance to Kyiv stalled and losses mounted, Russian troops continued to cleanse the streets of Bucha and surrounding towns with rising levels of sometimes drunken violence.

On March 14, a soldier nicknamed Lyonya called his mother from a cell tower near Bucha.

"There are civilians on the streets with their brains out," he said. His mother wanted to know who had shot them.

"Our people," Lyonya said.

"Maybe they were just peaceful civilians," his mother said.

"Mom, there is fighting going on. And suddenly he jumps out! You understand? What if he's got a grenade launcher?" Lyonya said.

One time, Lyonya described, they stopped a young boy and checked the Telegram account on his phone. The app had information about the location and logistics of the Russians.

"He was shot on the spot," Lyonya told his mom.

On March 17 and 18, a Russian soldier named Ivan called his mother from Bucha. She'd forgotten which military unit he belonged to and he reminded her: 74268 -- the 234th Guards Airborne Assault Regiment, which is part of the 76th Guards Airborne Assault Division.

Ivan said that Russians "shoot everyone, who gives a f--- who it might be: a child, a woman, an old lady, an old man. Anyone who has weapons gets killed. Absolutely everyone."

He explained that his unit goes out for "cleansing" on its tanks, seizing weapons, strip-searching people and examining their phones "to see if there is information or who is against us."

"If we have to — we will kill," he said.

On March 21, a soldier named Maksym called his wife from outside Kyiv. He told her he'd been drinking — everyone was drinking — because life here without liquor was too much to bear.

"How will you protect yourself if you are tipsy?" his wife worried.

"Totally normal," he replied. "It's easier to shoot civilians."

He was scared, shocked by what he'd seen and very close to the front line.

"You know how many civilians I killed here? Those men leaked information," he said.

"Don't say anything!" his wife warned.

"Hide the weapons from me! I think I'm going crazy. I've already killed so many civilians."

Later, she asked: "Why the f--- did you go there?"

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A SYMBOL OF ACCOUNTABILITY

What happened at 144 Yablunska is case No. 1 for the office of Ukraine's prosecutor general.

Ukraine is scrambling to build a system that can handle tens of thousands of complex war crimes investigations. There are more than 3,500 investigations in Bucha alone, and things have fallen through the cracks. In the case files for 144 Yablunska two dates were off, the AP found. Prosecutors said they were also checking into the 13th body AP reporters identified in April.

"Such grave tortures — we never had such a huge number of them," Yuriy Bielousov, the head of Ukraine's war crimes department, told the AP and "Frontline." "That's why I'm sure that, unfortunately, especially in Bucha, because it was one of the first, lots of mistakes were done at the first stage."

Some low-level perpetrators may get away due to mismanagement of evidence and procedural challenges, he said, but prosecutions of mid- and top-level commanders won't be undermined.

For now, the families of Bucha must wait.

What relief Dvornikov's widow, Yulia Truba, has found did not come from a court. A month after she buried her husband, he came to her in a dream.

"I feel bad without you. How can I talk to you if I already buried you?" she told him in the dream. "I am alive," he said. His face was luminous.

She jolted awake, weeping. Then she realized his voice was not sad.

"We still have this connection," she said. "After this, I felt better."

What she wants Ukraine may not be able to deliver on its own. Truba — along with Skyba and relatives of two other people killed at 144 Yablunska — has filed a case against Russia at the European Court of Human Rights.

She wants the world to recognize how her husband died, his body left for weeks in a trash-filled courtyard.

"All the civilized world must recognize it was murder," she said. "I want to prove it's not fake and that it really happened."

New calculator tackles inequality in missing persons stories

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If you went missing, how much press would you be "worth"? The Columbia Journalism Review unveiled a tool on Thursday that calculates the number of stories your disappearance would net, based on demographics.

It sounds morbid but the exercise is designed to call attention to "missing white women syndrome," the tendency of news organizations to pay relatively little attention to missing people who don't fit that category.

The late journalist Gwen Ifill is credited with coining the term two decades ago. Yet in the interim, there's been little indication that coverage decisions have evolved.

"It's like a bolt that has been rusted in place," said Jelani Cobb, dean of the Columbia Journalism School.

The media firestorm around the disappearance and death of Gabby Petito last year renewed scrutiny of the practice, with Petito's own family imploring media to give all missing people the same attention.

Researchers at CJR and the ad agency TBWA/Chiat/Day/New York examined 3,600 stories about missing people done last year by U.S.-based news organizations, cross-referencing them with age, gender and race details from a database maintained by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The data was used to generate a rough estimate of how much public attention a person would get based on who they are, said Kyle Pope, CJR's editor in chief and publisher. The starkly named site AreYouPress-worthy.com asks users to enter their age, gender, location and ethnicity.

As the site goes through each step, the user is informed that the disappearance of older people and men are less likely to make the news. The tool distinguishes between stories in the local and national press, so people in larger cities — where there are more news outlets — have a "higher chance of being reported on than people in rural areas." White people are the most likely to get covered, while Black and Hispanic people have the lowest chance of coverage.

About 38% of the people who go missing in the United States are Black, more than double the percent-

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age of Black people in the general population, the Black and Missing Foundation says.

Black people accounted for 22% of the missing people in the data examined by CJR, and just 13% of the news stories. White people, who made up 47% of the missing person cases, were featured in 70% of the stories.

According to the calculator, the disappearance of a 22-year-old white woman in New York would generate 67 stories. If she were three years older, that number would drop to 19. And a missing 25-year-old Black woman from New York would get eight. A 50-year-old Black man in the same city would net six.

The results page also identifies the outlets most and least likely to cover the user's hypothetical disappearance and calculates what percentage of Americans would hear about you. More than 92% of Americans would have heard about a 22-year-old missing white woman from Nevada, the tool says.

Why does that matter? "When a missing persons' case is seen by more people, their chances of being found increase," the site states.

There was no comparable data from when "missing white person syndrome" was first talked about two decades ago.

"We have to place a spotlight on the way that the media functions and the way in which we devalue — inadvertently or not — the lives of people that we're supposed to cover," Cobb said.

Implicit bias is partly to blame, he said, along with a lack of diversity among journalists in decision-making roles and hard-to-break habits.

"There's clearly an imbalance," said Angeline Hartmann, spokesperson for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "What needs to happen is the playing field should be leveled."

But Hartmann said there is more than just demographics at play in determining what stories get coverage. The media also gravitates to stories where there are plenty of photos and videos available of the victim — like in *Petito's* case — and a family member willing to be an on-camera spokesperson. Those things make journalists' job easier.

Similarly, authorities need to take a close look at how situations are characterized, Hartmann said. Sometimes, she said, people are too simplistically characterized as runaways, and thus not included in stories about missing children.

CJR has made similar efforts to call attention to disinformation and coverage of climate control and issues surrounding guns.

Pope said he hoped their newest online tool will attract attention on social media, particularly among news consumers who might then put pressure on their local news outlets to keep the issue in mind. Each results page ends with the pictures and names of people who are currently missing and "haven't received any press coverage at all," along with an encouragement to contact authorities with any information.

"It's one of the reasons why CJR exists, because we do have the attention of the news industry and we need to use it to point out the problems," Pope said. "I don't think another kind of earnest op-ed is going to move the needle."

In 1 classroom, 4 teachers manage 135 kids -- and love it

By NEAL MORTON, The Hechinger Report undefined

MESA, Ariz. (AP) — A teacher-in-training darted among students, tallying how many needed his help with a history unit on Islam. A veteran math teacher hovered near a cluster of desks, coaching some 50 freshmen on a geometry assignment. A science teacher checked students' homework, while an English teacher spoke into a microphone at the front of the classroom, giving instruction, to keep students on track.

One hundred thirty-five students, four teachers, one giant classroom: This is what ninth grade looks like at Westwood High School, in Mesa, Arizona's largest school system. There, an innovative teaching model has taken hold, and is spreading to other schools in the district and beyond.

Five years ago, faced with high teacher turnover and declining student enrollment, Westwood's leaders decided to try something different. Working with professors at Arizona State University's teachers college, they piloted a classroom model known as team teaching. It allows teachers to dissolve the walls that

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separate their classes across physical or grade divides.

The teachers share large groups of students — sometimes 100 or more — and rotate between group instruction, one-on-one interventions, small study groups or whatever the teachers as a team agree is a priority that day. What looks at times like chaos is in fact a carefully orchestrated plan: Each morning, the Westwood teams meet for two hours of the school day to hash out a personalized program for every student, dictating the lessons, skills and assignments the team will focus on that day.

By giving teachers more opportunity to collaborate and greater control over how and what they teach, Mesa's administrators hoped to fill staffing gaps and boost teacher morale and retention. Initial research suggests the gamble could pay off. This year, the district expanded the concept to a third of its 82 schools. The team-teaching strategy is also drawing interest from school leaders across the U.S., who are eager for new approaches at a time when the effects of the pandemic have dampened teacher morale and worsened staff shortages.

"The pandemic taught us two things: One is people want flexibility, and the other is people don't want to be isolated," said Carole Basile, dean of ASU's teachers college, who helped design the teaching model.

ASU and surrounding school districts started investigating team teaching about six years ago. Enrollment at teacher preparation programs around the country was plummeting as more young people sought out careers that offered better pay, more flexibility and less stress.

Team teaching, a concept first introduced in schools in the 1960s, appealed to ASU researchers because they felt it could help revitalize teachers. And it resonated with school district leaders, who'd come to believe the model of one teacher lecturing at the front of a classroom to many kids wasn't working.

"Teachers are doing fantastic things, but it's very rare a teacher walks into another room to see what's happening," said Andi Fourlis, superintendent of Mesa Public Schools, one of 10 Arizona districts that have adopted the model. "Our profession is so slow to advance because we are working in isolation."

Of course, revamping teaching approaches can't fix some of the biggest frustrations many teachers have about their profession, such as low pay. But early results from Mesa show team teaching may be helping to reverse low morale. In a survey of hundreds of the district's teachers last year, researchers from Johns Hopkins University found those who worked on teams reported greater job satisfaction, more frequent collaborations with colleagues and more positive interactions with students.

Early data from Westwood also show on-time course completion — a strong predictor of whether freshmen will graduate — improved after the high school started using the team approach for all ninth graders. ASU has found that students in team-based classrooms have better attendance, earn more credits toward graduation and post higher GPAs.

The model is not for everyone. Some teachers approached about volunteering for a team have said they prefer to work alone. Team teaching can also be a scheduling nightmare, especially at schools like Westwood where only some staff work in teams.

On a recent morning at Westwood High, the four teachers and 135 freshmen on the team settled into a boisterous routine.

They ignored the Halloween music that blared from the school speakers, marking a new period for the older students. As their peers in the higher grades shuffled to another 50-minute class, the freshmen continued into a second hour of their work. Most students busied themselves with the day's assignments, alone or in pairs, while others waited for a specific teacher's help.

The team regularly welcomes other educators into the classroom, for bilingual or special education services and other one-on-one support. But substitute teachers are rare, since teachers can plan their schedules to accommodate their teammates' absences.

Another benefit of teams, teachers say, is that they can help each other improve their instruction. During the planning session earlier that morning, English teacher Jeff Hall shared a critique with a science teacher: Her recent lecture, on something she called "the central dogma of biology," had befuddled him and their other teammates.

"If the science is too confusing for me, can you imagine the frustration you feel as kids?" Hall said. But

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the science teacher, he said, wouldn't have known about the confusion on her own.

Hall, who moonlights as an improv comic, had quit teaching right before COVID. He worked odd jobs and realized what they offered that teaching didn't: a chance to work alongside other adults and collaborate. The need for a steadier paycheck convinced Hall to return to the classroom last year, but he only applied for positions to teach on a team.

"Why don't we do this for every teacher?" Hall said. "Why was I — a student teacher with zero experience teaching English — handed the keys to an entire class of kids on day one? All alone? That doesn't work for anyone."

Proponents of the ASU model acknowledge it doesn't work perfectly. It presents thorny questions, for example, about how to evaluate four teachers on the performance of 135 students. And teachers on the Westwood team argue they receive too little training on the model.

Students, however, have noticed a difference.

Quinton Rawls attended a middle school with no teams and not enough teachers. Two weeks into eighth grade, his science teacher quit — and was replaced by a series of subs. "I got away with everything," recalled the 14-year-old.

That's not the case in ninth grade, said Rawls. He said he appreciates the extra attention that comes with being in a class with so many teachers.

"There's four of them watching me all the time," he said. "I think that's a good thing. I'm not really wasting time."

In the Amazon, a giant fish helps save the rainforest

By FABIANO MAISONNAVE and JORGE SAENZ Associated Press

CARAUARI, Brazil (AP) — Even in the most biodiverse rainforest of the world, the pirarucu, also known as arapaima, stands out.

First, there is its mammoth size: It can weigh up to 200 kilos (440 pounds), by far the largest of 2,300 known fish species in the Amazon. It is found primarily in floodplain lakes across the Amazon basin, including the region of Medio Jurua.

Second, the giant fish not so long ago nearly vanished from Jurua, as vessels swept the lakes with large nets. The illegal and unsustainable fishing left river and Indigenous communities struggling to catch their staple food. And it left pirarucu designated as threatened with extinction, unless trade in the fish is closely controlled by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

But now something remarkable has happened. The fish has come back to the lakes of Medio Jurua. The story of how involves people of different backgrounds cooperating on many levels — a vision of what's possible that veterans of the Amazon say they've seen nowhere else across the vast region.

Change began in the late 1990s. With the assistance of a Dutch Catholic priest, rubber tappers organized and led a campaign to persuade the federal government to create the Medio Jurua Extractive Reserve. They proposed that river communities could take from the forest and its lakes — up to a point — and within protected areas.

It worked. Now, local communities produce açai, vegetable oils and rubber, and they leave the forest standing. Most successful of all has been the management of pirarucu.

Riverine settler communities, organized into associations, also reached agreement with neighboring Deni Indigenous people, who have suffered in the past from invasions by rubber-tappers and fishermen. Now they are part of the managed fishing of pirarucu, which improved relations between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous.

Managing the comeback has required social organization, cooperation and complex logistics. Illegal fishing has been sharply reduced. Pirarucu are flourishing.

The virtuous cycle plays out in the region of Carauari, which stretches along 650 kilometers (404 miles) of the Jurua River and is home to 35,000 people.

To see how things could have gone, look no further than the neighboring Javari Valley, where British

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journalist Dom Phillips and Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira were murdered last June.

The backdrop of that tragedy is a decades-old dispute between Indigenous communities and former rubber tappers who were hired by local businessmen to do illegal fishing, targeting mostly the pirarucu. Two local fishermen confessed to the crimes.

Illegal fishing is rampant in Brazil. It's the second most frequent environmental crime on protected land, after logging, according to an academic study based on official data. Brazil's conservation agency issued 1,160 infraction notices for illegal fishing — a quarter of all infractions — over a recent five-year period.

"Javari is a portrait of what Medio Jurua was like in the 1980s," Manoel Cunha, the main leader of the local rubber tappers, told The Associated Press during a boat trip to Sao Raimundo, his home community and one of the ones that takes part in regulated fishing. "We managed to get rid of fishing companies and invading fishermen by monitoring and management. You have been on this river for days now, and you have not seen any fishing boats except the ones from our organizations. There is no more room for them here."

Pirarucu fishing is done once a year, around September, the period of lowest water. Fishing quotas are possible due to another remarkable characteristic of the pirarucu: It is one of the few fish species in the world that surfaces to breathe. It does that with a big splash, flashing its red tail out of the water.

A local fisherman and a researcher in the nearby Mamirauá region developed a way to take advantage of this, and count the fish since they stay underwater for no more than 20 minutes. The government now recognizes this counting method.

The survey is done once a year by certified fishermen, after taking a course. By law, only 30% of the pirarucu in a certain area can be fished the following year.

This controlled fishing has led to a surge in its population in regions where it's employed. In Sao Raimundo region, there were 1,335 pirarucus in the nearby lakes in 2011, when the managed fishing began. Last year, there were 4,092 specimens, according to their records.

In the Carauari region, the number of pirarucu spiked from 4,916, in 2011, to 46,839, ten years later.

An AP team accompanied the first of the seven days of fishing in Sao Raimundo. Picture a few dozen houses, with running water, connected by well-maintained wooden footbridges amid açai palm trees. Thirty-four families call it home. Most belong to Cunha's extended family, whose ancestors arrived in the region from the impoverished and drought-ravaged Northeast during the rubber boom to work as tappers.

"Our pirarucu is so tasty, everybody that eats it falls in love with it and wants more," Rosilda da Cunha, a sister of Manoel who lives in Sao Raimundo, told the AP.

Pirarucu bring money into the community, she said. This year, the goal is to buy a solar panel system to replace the diesel-fueled generator. Another share of the money goes to the community members who participate in the fishing. Women's and men's salaries are equal.

To catch pirarucu, fishermen use special, stronger nets they weave themselves. The holes are large enough to allow smaller specimens to go through, as taking fish under five feet is prohibited.

When the fishers catch one, they haul in the net and club the fish in the head. Then they put it in their small boat. When it's very heavy, two or three men are required to do the job.

The pirarucus are then taken from the lakes to a large boat by the Jurua River. There they are gutted, a task that is mostly done by women, and put on ice. All the production is bought by the Association of Rural Producers of Carauari, known as Asproc, the region's umbrella organization, so the fishers are never at the mercy of middlemen.

Founded by rubber tappers who wanted to liberate themselves from slave-like labor conditions, Asproc has grown to be one of the most important grassroots entities in the entire Amazon. It runs programs on everything from sanitation, to community markets to higher education, innovating along the way. It now sells pirarucu to Brazil's main cities including Sao Paulo and Brasília, a complex endeavor that involves several days of transport by boat and road and usually takes more than two weeks.

Asproc's success has attracted several partnerships. One is counterintuitive — the United States Forest Service, which supported the creation of a brand, the Gosto da Amazônia (Amazon Taste), that promotes the pirarucu nationwide, and the Agency for International Development (USAID), which helped to finance

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a warehouse for processing fish in Carauari city, where the pirarucu is cut, frozen and packaged.

"This project is unique as it requires a strong governance structure," Ted Gehr, USAID mission director in Brazil, told the AP during his first visit to the Sao Raimundo community. "Everybody is in agreement that they may have to sacrifice and not be able to fish all of the pirarucu that are available but knowing that they'll reproduce more, and that in the long run they will be more valuable."

The Medio Jurua region is blessed with remoteness. It has no access by road. So far it is free from the deforestation and fire that have been devastating elsewhere in the Amazon. But the smoke that has left the skies grayish in September is a reminder that the destruction is not far away. The challenge is to be a strong organization and economy to stave off future threats, says Cunha.

"Had we not organized ourselves through fishing management to protect our environments and take our fish, instead of others taking them from us, we could be in the same situation as our colleagues from Javari," says Cunha, who is the head of the Medio Jurua Extractive Reserve, a position usually held by government officials. "Had they organized themselves earlier, they could have saved the lives of those two comrades."

As Israel's far right parties celebrate, Palestinians shrug

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — The apparent comeback of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the dramatic rise of his far-right and ultra-Orthodox allies in Israel's general election this week have prompted little more than shrugs from many Palestinians.

"It's all the same to me," Said Issawi, a vendor hawking nectarines in the main al-Manara Square of Ramallah, said of Netanyahu replacing centrist Yair Lapid and poised to head the most right-wing government in Israel's history.

Over the past month, Issawi had struggled to get to work in Ramallah from his home in the city of Nablus after the Israeli army blocked several roads in response to a wave of violence in the northern West Bank. "I'm just trying to eat and work and bring something back to my kids," he said.

Some view the likely victory for Netanyahu and his openly anti-Palestinian allies, including ultranationalist lawmaker Itamar Ben-Gvir who wants to end Palestinian autonomy in parts of the occupied West Bank, as a new blow to the Palestinian national project.

The sharp rightward shift of Israel's political establishment pushes long-dormant peace negotiations even further out of reach and deepens the challenges facing 87-year-old President Mahmoud Abbas, whose autocratic Palestinian Authority already seemed to many Palestinians as little more than an arm of the Israeli security forces.

"If you want to use the metaphor of a 'nail in the coffin of the Palestinian Authority,' that was done earlier," said Ghassan Khatib, a former Palestinian peace negotiator and Cabinet minister. "This election is another step in that same direction."

During his 12 years in power, before being voted out in 2021, Netanyahu showed scant interest in engaging with the Palestinians. Under his leadership, Israel vastly expanded its population of West Bank settlers — now some 500,000 — and retroactively legalized settler outposts built on private Palestinian land. The measures have entrenched Israel's occupation, now in its 56th year since Israel captured the territory during the 1967 Mideast war.

Palestinians see successive Israeli governments as seeking to solidify a bleak status quo in the West Bank: Palestinian enclaves divided by growing Israeli settlements and surrounded by Israeli forces.

"We had no illusion that this next government would be a partner for peace," said Ahmad Majdalani, a minister in the Palestinian Authority. "It's the opposite, we see a campaign of incitement that began more than 15 years ago as Israel drifted toward extremism."

The Gaza Strip's militant Hamas rulers said the election outcome would "not change the nature of the conflict."

But for the first time, surging support for Israel's far right has made the Jewish supremacist party of

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Ben-Gvir the third-largest in the Israeli parliament.

Ben-Gvir and his allies hope to grant immunity to Israeli soldiers who shoot at Palestinians, deport rival lawmakers and impose the death penalty on Palestinians convicted of attacks on Jews. Ben-Gvir is the disciple of a racist rabbi, Meir Kahane, who was banned from parliament and whose Kach party was branded a terrorist group by the United States before he was assassinated in New York in 1990.

On the campaign trail, Ben-Gvir grabbed headlines for his anti-Palestinian speeches and stunts — recently brandishing a pistol and encouraging police to open fire on Palestinian stone-throwers in a tense Jerusalem neighborhood.

Some Palestinians have found reason for optimism. After Tuesday's elections, they say, Israel will no longer present to the world the telegenic face of Lapid. A win for extremism in Israel, some say, could bolster the moral case for efforts to isolate Israel, vindicating activism outside the moribund peace process.

"It will lead to some international pressure," said Mahmoud Nawajaa, an activist with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, or BDS, which calls for an economic boycott of Israel as happened to apartheid-era South Africa in the 1980s.

"Netanyahu is more honest and clear about his intentions to expand settlements. The others didn't say it, even if it was happening," Nawajaa added.

Lapid and his predecessor, Naftali Bennett, a former settler leader who rebranded himself as a national unifier, had presided over a wobbly coalition of right-wing, centrist and dovish left-wing parties, including the first Arab party to ever join a government.

Foreign leaders who shunned the divisive Netanyahu embraced what appeared to be a less ideological government. Bennett became the first Israeli leader to visit the United Arab Emirates after the countries normalized ties — an honor repeatedly denied to Netanyahu. President Joe Biden, who had a rocky relationship with Netanyahu, basked in Lapid's warm welcome during his visit to Israel last summer.

But even as Lapid voiced support for the two-state solution during his address to the U.N. General Assembly in September, Palestinians saw no sign he could turn words into action. They watched Israel approve thousands of new settler homes on lands they want for a future state.

Israeli military raids in the West Bank have also surged after a series of Palestinian attacks in the spring killed 19 people in Israel. More than 130 Palestinians have been killed, making 2022 the deadliest since the U.N. started tracking fatalities in 2005. The Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions and others not involved in confrontations have also been killed.

Even as final ballots were still being counted from the election, violence flared up with four Palestinians killed in separate incidents on Thursday.

"In terms of violence, the Lapid government has outdone itself," said Nour Odeh, a Palestinian political analyst and former PA spokeswoman. "As far as new settlements and de facto annexation, Lapid is Netanyahu."

Many young Palestinians have given up on the two-state solution and grown disillusioned with the aging Palestinian leadership, which they see as a vehicle for corruption and collaboration with Israel. Hamas and Fatah, the Palestinian party that controls the West Bank, have remained bitterly divided for 15 years.

A mere 37% of Palestinians support the two-state solution, according to the most recent report from Palestinian pollster Khalil Shikaki. In Israel the figures are roughly the same — 32% of Jewish Israelis support the idea, according to the Israel Democracy Institute.

"There is no horizon for a political track with the Israelis," Odeh said. "We need to look inward ... to re-legitimize our institutions through elections, and stand together on a united political platform."

But on the crowded, chaotic streets of Ramallah on Wednesday, there was only misery and anger over the daily humiliations of the occupation.

"I hate this place," said Lynn Anwar Hafi, a 19-year-old majoring in literature at a local university. "It's like the occupation lives inside me. I can't think what I want to. I can't go where I want to. I won't be free until I leave."

Russians try to subdue Ukrainian towns by seizing mayors

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Not long after Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, soldiers broke down the office door of Melitopol Mayor Ivan Fedorov. They put a bag over his head, bundled him into a car and drove him around the southern city for hours, threatening to kill him.

Fedorov, 34, is one of over 50 local leaders who have been held in Russian captivity since the war began on Feb. 24 in an attempt to subdue cities and towns coming under Moscow's control. Like many others, he said he was pressured to collaborate with the invaders.

"The bullying and threats did not stop for a minute. They tried to force me to continue leading the city under the Russian flag, but I refused," Fedorov told The Associated Press by phone last month in Kyiv. "They didn't beat me, but day and night, wild screams from the next cell would tell me what was waiting for me."

As Russians seized parts of eastern and southern Ukraine, civilian administrators and others, including nuclear power plant workers, say they have been abducted, threatened or beaten to force their cooperation — something that legal and human rights experts say may constitute a war crime.

Ukrainian and Western historians say the tactic is used when invading forces are unable to subjugate the population.

This year, as Russian forces sought to tighten their hold on Melitopol, hundreds of residents took to the streets to demand Fedorov's release. After six days in detention and an intervention from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he was exchanged for nine Russian prisoners of war and expelled from the occupied city. A pro-Kremlin figure was installed.

"The Russians cannot govern the captured cities. They have neither the personnel nor the experience," Fedorov said. They want to force public officials to work for them because they realize that someone has to "clean the streets and fix up the destroyed houses."

The Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), a group of local leaders from across Ukraine, said that of the more than 50 abducted officials, including 34 mayors, at least 10 remain captive.

Russian officials haven't commented on the allegations. Moscow-backed authorities in eastern Ukraine even launched a criminal investigation into Fedorov on charges of involvement in terrorist activities.

"Kidnapping the heads of villages, towns and cities, especially in wartime, endangers all residents of a community, because all critical management, provision of basic amenities and important decisions on which the fate of thousands of residents depends are entrusted to the community's head," said Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko, head of the AUC.

In the southern city of Kherson, one of the first seized by Russia and a key target of an unfolding counteroffensive, Mayor Ihor Kolykhaiev tried to stand his ground. He said in April that he would refuse to cooperate with its new, Kremlin-backed overseer.

Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Russian-installed regional administration, repeatedly denounced Kolykhaiev as a "Nazi," echoing the false Kremlin narrative that its attack on Ukraine was an attempt to "de-Nazify" the country.

Kolykhaiev continued to supervise Kherson's public utilities until his arrest on June 28. His whereabouts remain unknown.

According to the U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, 407 forced disappearances and arbitrary arrests of civilians were recorded in areas seized by Russia in the first six months of the war. Most were civil servants, local councilors, civil society activists and journalists.

Yulia Gorbunova, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch, said the abuse "violates international law and may constitute a war crime," adding that Russian forces' actions appeared to be aimed at "obtaining information and instilling fear."

The U.N. human rights office has warned repeatedly that arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances are among possible war crimes committed in Ukraine.

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Several mayors have been killed, shocking Ukrainian society. Following the discovery of mass burials in areas recaptured by Kyiv, Ukrainian and foreign investigators continue to uncover details of extrajudicial killings of mayors.

The body of Olga Sukhenko, who headed the village of Motyzhyn, near Kyiv, was found in a mass grave next to those of her husband and son after Russian forces retreated. The village, with a prewar population of about 1,000, is a short drive from Bucha, which saw hundreds of civilians killed under Russian occupation.

Residents said Sukhenko had refused to cooperate with the Russians. When her body was unearthed on the outskirts of Motyzhyn, her hands were found tied behind her back.

Mayor Yurii Prylypko of nearby Hostomel was gunned down in March while handing out food and medicine. The prosecutor general's office later said his body was found rigged with explosives.

Ukraine's government has tried to swap captive officials for Russian POWs, but officials complain that Moscow sometimes demands Kyiv release hundreds for each Ukrainian in a position of authority, prolonging negotiations.

"It's such a difficult job that any superfluous word can get in the way of our exchange," said Dmytro Lubinets, Ukraine's human rights commissioner. "We know the places where prisoners are kept, as well as the appalling conditions in which they are kept."

There has been no news about the fate of Ivan Samoydyuk, the deputy mayor of Enerhodar, site of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Samoydyuk, abducted in March, has repeatedly been considered for a prisoner swap, but his name was struck off the list each time, Mayor Dmytro Orlov told the AP.

The 58-year-old deputy mayor was seriously ill when seized, Orlov said, and "we don't even know if he's alive." At best, Samoydyuk is sitting in a basement somewhere "and his life depends on the whim of people with guns," he added.

More than 1,000 Enerhodar residents, including dozens of workers at Zaporizhzhia, Europe's largest nuclear plant, were detained by the Russians at one time or another.

"The vast majority of those who came out of the Russian cellars speak of brutal beatings and electric shocks," he said.

Gorbunova, the HRW senior researcher, said torture "is prohibited under all circumstances under international law, and, when connected to an armed conflict, constitutes a war crime and may also constitute a crime against humanity."

Each week brings reports of abductions of officials, engineers, doctors and teachers who won't cooperate with the Russians.

Viktor Marunyak, head of the village of Stara Zburivka in the southern Kherson region, is famous for appearing in Roman Bondarchuk's 2015 documentary "Ukrainian Sheriffs," an Academy Award contender. The film explores the separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine that began in 2014. While the film didn't win an Oscar, it cemented Marunyak's salt-of-the-earth reputation.

After Russian troops seized Stara Zburivka in spring, Marunyak held pro-Ukrainian rallies and hid some activists in his home. He was eventually taken prisoner.

"At first, they put (electrical) wires on my thumbs. Then it seemed not enough for them, and they put them on my big toes. And they poured water on my head so it would flow down my back," he told the AP. "Honestly, I was so beaten up that I didn't have any impressions from the electric current."

After 23 days, Marunyak was "released to die," he said. Hospitalized for 10 days with pneumonia and nine broken ribs, he finally left for territory controlled by Kyiv.

History professor Hubertus Jahn of Cambridge University said that from the time of Peter the Great onward, the tactic by imperialist Russia of co-opting locals targeted elites and nobility, with resistance often bringing Siberian exile.

During World War II, he said, "German SS units operated in a similar way," by targeting local administrators in order to pressure residents into submission. Jahn called it an obvious strategy "if you don't have the strength to subordinate a region outright."

Historian Ivan Patryliuk of Kyiv's Taras Shevchenko National University said municipal authorities in Soviet

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Ukraine often fled before Nazi occupation forces arrived, which “helped avoid mass executions of officials.”
“The kind of torture and humiliation (of) city leaders that the Russians are now perpetrating ... is one of the darkest and most shameful pages of the current war,” Patryliuk said.

Today in History: November 4, Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Nov. 4, the 308th day of 2022. There are 57 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 4, 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing Israeli minutes after attending a festive peace rally.

On this date:

In 1842, Abraham Lincoln married Mary Todd in Springfield, Illinois.

In 1879, humorist Will Rogers was born in Oologah, Oklahoma.

In 1922, the entrance to King Tutankhamen's tomb was discovered in Egypt.

In 1942, during World War II, Axis forces retreated from El Alamein in North Africa in a major victory for British forces commanded by Lt. Gen. Bernard Montgomery.

In 1956, Soviet troops moved in to crush the Hungarian Revolution.

In 1979, the Iran hostage crisis began as militants stormed the United States Embassy in Tehran, seizing its occupants; for some of them, it was the start of 444 days of captivity.

In 1980, Republican Ronald Reagan won the White House as he defeated President Jimmy Carter by a strong margin.

In 1985, to the shock and dismay of U.S. officials, Soviet defector Vitaly Yurchenko announced he was returning to the Soviet Union, charging he had been kidnapped by the CIA.

In 1991, Ronald Reagan opened his presidential library in Simi Valley, California; attending were President George H.W. Bush and former Presidents Jimmy Carter, Gerald R. Ford and Richard Nixon — the first-ever gathering of five past and present U.S. chief executives.

In 2007, King Tutankhamen's face was unveiled for the first time to the public more than 3,000 years after the pharaoh was buried in his Egyptian tomb.

In 2008, Democrat Barack Obama was elected the first Black president of the United States, defeating Republican John McCain. California voters approved Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment outlawing same-sex marriage, overturning a state Supreme Court decision that gave gay couples the right to wed just months earlier.

In 2020, a day after the presidential election, victories in Michigan and Wisconsin left Joe Biden one battleground state short of winning the White House. President Donald Trump falsely claimed victory in several key states and called the election process “a major fraud on our nation.”

Ten years ago: New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said cold temperatures would leave “tens of thousands” of people whose homes were damaged by Superstorm Sandy in need of alternate housing. A 2-year-old boy was mauled to death by a pack of African wild dogs when he fell into their pen from a viewing area at the Pittsburgh Zoo.

Five years ago: China's rubber-stamp legislature made it a criminal offense to disrespect the country's national anthem, punishable by up to three years in prison; the move came amid rising nationalist appeals from the ruling Communist Party. Saudi Arabian authorities began a wave of arrests of dozens of the country's most powerful princes, military officers, businessmen and government ministers in a purported anti-corruption sweep; they included potential rivals or critics of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

One year ago: The Biden administration issued a rule requiring tens of millions of Americans who worked at companies with 100 or more employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or get tested for the virus weekly. (The Supreme Court rejected that rule in January 2022, finding that the administration had overstepped its authority.) The Biden administration sued Texas over new voting rules, saying that the

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restrictions surrounding mail-in voting requirements and voter assistance violated federal civil rights protections. A Texas real estate agent, Jennifer Leigh Ryan, who bragged she wasn't going to jail for storming the U.S. Capitol because she was white, had blond hair and had a good job, was sentenced to two months behind bars. Drug gang gunmen stormed ashore at a beach on Mexico's resort-studded Caribbean coast in front of luxury hotels and executed two drug dealers from a rival gang.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Loretta Swit is 85. R&B singer Harry Elston (Friends of Distinction) is 84. Blues singer Delbert McClinton is 82. Former first lady Laura Bush is 76. Actor Ivonne Coll is 75. Rock singer-musician Chris Difford (Squeeze) is 68. Country singer Kim Forester (The Forester Sisters) is 62. Actor-comedian Kathy Griffin is 62. Actor Ralph Macchio is 61. "Survivor" host Jeff Probst is 61. Actor Matthew McConaughey is 53. Rapper-producer Sean "Puffy" Combs is 53. TV personality Bethenny Frankel is 52. Actor Anthony Ruivivar is 52. Soul/jazz singer Gregory Porter is 51. Celebrity chef Curtis Stone is 47. Actor Heather Tom is 47. R&B/gospel singer George Huff is 42. Actor Emme Rylan is 42. Actor Chris Greene (Film: "Loving") is 40.