

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar Tuesday, Feb. 14

Senior Menu: Valentine Dinner: Baked pork chop, baked potato with sour cream, baby glazed carrots, cheesecake with strawberry glaze, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg and cheese wrap.

School Lunch: Meatballs, tiny whole potatoes.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Boys Basketball at Aberdeen Roncalli (C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity)

United Methodist Church: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Junior High Boys Basketball games at Roncalli Elementary Gym, 4 p.m.



Wednesday, Feb. 15

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, rice pilaf, broccoli, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Eggs and breakfast potatoes.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, tater tots.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

United Methodist Church: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Book Study with Lindsey Tietz, 4 p.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

2023 Annual Hunger Banquet, 6:30 PM, SEAS Church

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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The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

scrutiny over odd spending and filing habits during his most recent congressional campaign, including amounts allegedly spent on sushi and Uber rides.

- Ohio GOP Senator J.D. Vance is facing backlash for releasing a statement about East Palestine almost two weeks after the explosive train derailment, which was among more than a dozen reported train wrecks in the nation this year.

- Reports that Russian President Vladimir Putin is allegedly plotting a coup in Moldova is “deeply concerning,” National Security Council spokesman John Kirby. Moldovan President Maia Sandu accused Putin of wanting to overthrow the government in plans that included “violent actions, attacks on government buildings, and taking hostages.”

- Mississippi GOP Governor Tate Reeves is trailing Democrat Brandon Presley in a new poll, worsening Republican worries that the gubernatorial race could become competitive.

- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin must decide whether to prioritize preventing a Ukrainian breakthrough in Zaporizhzhia or mitigating their successes in Luhansk, a decision that could determine his fate as president, Matthew Schmidt of the University of New Haven told Newsweek.

- “There is no indication of aliens,” White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters as the number of “flying objects” shot down continues to increase. The internet, and even one Congressman, has taken the UFO idea and run with it.

- Donald Trump will not be successful in his attempts to stop former Vice President Mike Pence from testifying to a January 6 grand jury while citing executive privilege, legal experts have said.

- New York GOP Rep. George Santos continues to face

Groton Area school board approves hiring new principal, looks toward future of 1969 gym

by Elizabeth Varin

A new Middle School and High School Principal has been hired.

The Groton Area School District Board approved hiring Shelby Edwards as the sixth through 12th grade principal for the district at its February 13 school board meeting. The board held interviews February 8 with the two candidates for the position in executive session, and, at the beginning of the February 13th meeting, Board President Deb Gengerke proposed amending the agenda to include hiring Edwards as principal for the 2023-2024 school year.

Edwards is currently a physical education and health teacher at Simmons Middle School in Aberdeen, according to the Aberdeen Public School District website.

Edwards has a Master's Degree of Education in teaching and learning from Nebraska and a specialist in education degree in educational administration and the school principal degree program from the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, according to the South Dakota Department of Education.

Edwards will bring "a lot of good ideas and good energy," said Superintendent Joe Schwan.

The position opened up when current middle school and high school principal Kiersten Sombke submitted her letter of resignation at the board's December 12, 2022 school board meeting.

The district board also voted to move forward with a \$10,500 architectural proposal from JLG Architects to explore future uses for the 1969 gym renovation. The proposal would help the district and board come up with ideas for the gymnasium.

Before the vote, Gengerke asked the board if they thought it was reasonable and worthwhile to do. She also polled the board about whether they believe the public would like to redo the facility.

"I think it would be great to do something with the bleachers and the floor," said board member Tigh Flihs. "They're terrible."

He has heard from a lot of people who came back from recent games in Moberge complimenting that school's facilities.

"I'd be in favor," Flihs said of looking into options for the 1969 gym.

An architectural proposal would help the district get more focused and more serious about what the community wants for the facility, said Superintendent Schwan.

"I think if it's going to be a serious discussion, it warrants some professional discussion," he said. "...This would be a start to that."

There's been a lot of talk about doing something with the gym space, said board Vice President Marty Weismantel.

"We'd have to get something put together before we ask for support," he said.

While the district will contract with the architectural firm for the gym project, the board put a hold on getting an architect to create plans for renovations of the health science lab.

The architect would charge 10-and-a-half percent of the total construction cost to create plans to renovate the current health science lab, Schwan said. However, there may not be a need to contract for those plans if the work can be done without an architect.

Schwan has a meeting Thursday, February 15, with a construction company to discuss the project, he said. That would include taking out the current lab tables, covering the lab floor and moving electrical and plumbing access.

If the district can move forward with the renovations without an extra bill like that, it would be preferred, Schwan said. The grant to improve the facility doesn't include work on the physical space.

Earlier in the school year, the district received a South Dakota Department of Education CTE Innovation Equipment Grant for \$236,522 to be used for the Health Science Simulation Lab. That grant, Schwan said, includes equipment purchases, but not updates to the existing facility.

"It needs a facelift," he said.

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The board approved more expenditures Monday, including elementary school roofing repairs and a school bus purchase.

The district will contract with Hub City Roofing for \$320,000 to repair two areas of the elementary school roof. The board also approved purchasing a 2024 International school bus from Harlow's School Bus Service for \$111,680.70.

Board Vice President Weismantel expressed concerns about whether the district would have to travel to Minnesota for any warranty repairs that may be needed.

"It's a new bus," joked Business Manager Mike Weber. "We shouldn't need it."

"You jinxed us," jokingly replied board President Gengerke.

In other personnel changes, the board approved hiring Caitlyn Fischbach as a first grade teacher for the 2023-2024 school year. Fischbach, who is finishing a degree at Valley City State College in North Dakota, has been assisting a third grade class for her student-teaching period, said Elementary School Principal Brett Schwan.

The district had 12 applicants for the position, said Superintendent Joe Schwan, but the applicant pool was not very experienced.

The board also accepted a letter of resignation from elementary school special education teacher Dustin Vogel.



2023-2024 Groton Area School District



Adopted 02/13/2023

August 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

August	
21 - Faculty Inservice	
22 - Faculty Inservice	
23 - 1st Day of School	
Student Contact: 7; Inservice: 2	

January 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January	
3 - School Resumes	
Student Contact: 21; Inservice: 0	

September 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

September	
1 - NO SCHOOL	
4 - Labor Day - NO SCHOOL	
15 - Homecoming	
28 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1:30-8:00)	
29 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 18; Inservice: 2	

February 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

February	
15 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (1:30-8:00)	
16 - Faculty Inservice - NO SCHOOL	
19 - President's Day - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 19; Inservice: 2	

October 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

October	
9 - Native American Day - NO SCHOOL	
13 - Lake Region Marching Festival	
20 - End of 1st Quarter (39)	
Student Contact: 21; Inservice: 0	

March 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

March	
8 - End of 3rd Quarter (46)	
14-15 Spring Break - NO SCHOOL	
29 - Good Friday - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 18; Inservice: 0	

November 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

November	
10 - Veterans Day Program	
22-24 - Thanksgiving - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 19; Inservice: 0	

April 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

April	
1 - Easter Monday - NO SCHOOL	
7 - Pops Concert (2:00 & 5:00)	
20 - PROM	
25 - Middle School Spring Concert (7:00)	
30 - Elementary Spring Concert (7:00)	
Student Contact: 21; Inservice: 0	

December 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

December	
7 - MS/HS Christmas Concert (7:00)	
21 - Elementary Christmas Concert (1:00)	
21 - Early Dismissal (2:00)	
21 - End of 1st Semester (41/80)	
22-31 - Christmas Break - NO SCHOOL	
Student Contact: 15; Inservice: 0	

May 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

May	
2 - High School Concert/Awards/Art Show (7:00)	
12 - Graduation	
15 - End of 2nd Semester (44/90)	
16 - Faculty Inservice	
Student Contact: 11; Inservice: 1	

Faculty Inservice	End of Quarter/Semester
No School	Early Dismissal
Important Dates	

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Superintendent's Report to the Groton Area School District 06-6 Board of Education

February 13, 2023

Legislative Session. Today marks the 22nd legislative day of the 2023 session. There are 37 days in the regular session which ends on March 9, 2023 and one day (#38) reserved for consideration of gubernatorial vetoes which is scheduled for March 27th. Given the healthy revenue reports, there are many vehicle bills or other spending bills that are being put into appropriations for them to decide where to put the dollars.

SB3, SB4, SB5, and SB6 are all related to revisions regarding the juvenile justice system. All four have been passed through the Senate and are assigned to House Judiciary.

SB24. Revise property tax levies for school districts and to revise the state aid to general and special education formulas. Currently assigned to Joint Appropriations.

SB65. Modify the compulsory age for school attendance.

SB129. Include school employees in certain assault provisions and provide a penalty therefor. This would make simple assault against a school employee engaged in the performance of his/her duties a class 6 felony.

SB182. Establish a uniform method for calculating high school credit received from completing postsecondary courses.

HB1055. Increase the dollar amount of the South Dakota Opportunity scholarships. This would increase the Opportunity scholarship award to \$1,300 per year for years 1-3 and \$2,600 for year 4 in FY2024 and \$1,500 per year for years 1-3 and \$3,000 for year 4 after FY2024. This bill is currently in House Appropriations.

HB1075. Lower the state sales tax rate and state use tax rate on food to zero percent. This bill is currently in House Appropriations.

Here is a link to SASD's 2023 Bill Tracker Spreadsheet that is updated throughout the session:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wD0JgiwouW31L3XSjNcZt7otmzlgCqSQ0qfewr517jg/edit#gid=696979032>

Food Service Program Grant Funding. Mr. Clocksene received an award notice from the Department of Education CANS office to purchase a new Stand Mixer in the amount of \$7354.01. Today's cost for the mixer is \$7,597.91. We'll plan to move forward with the grant documents and mixer purchase.

USDA Supply Chain Assistance Funding. Schools in South Dakota are receiving another round (officially Rounds 2 and 3) of Supply Chain Assistance funding which can be used to purchase non-processed or minimally processed foods. Our total allocation for these funds will be \$21,466.61.

HVAC Project Timeline Update. The anticipated start date for the HVAC project is Monday, May 22 with estimated testing and balancing to be conducted on July 25, 2023 with the exception of the air handling unit that will be installed in the old gym. It is anticipated that the work in the GHS Arena will be completed between July 9 and July 11. The current timeline on equipment arrival for that portion of the work estimates arrival/installation on November 15, 2023 and completion by December 20, 2023.

1969 Boiler Room Boilers. The new boilers in the 1969 gym boiler room have been started and are operational.

Football Field Scoreboard. The new ad panels for the scoreboard at the football field have been installed. Invoices for sponsors who haven't already paid will be mailed this week. Please thank our sponsors, if you have a chance: Hefty Seed, Groton Ag Partners, James Valley Telecommunications, Dacotah Bank, Weismantel Agency, POET, Groton Vet Clinic, and Groton Ford

Staffing Vacancies.

Elementary Special Education

MS/HS Special Education (Immediate)

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Principal's Report

MS/HS Building

Dr. Sombke

February 13, 2023

1) MS/HS Conferences- Conferences for the MS/HS Building will be held on Thursday, February 16th from 1:30-8:00pm in the old GHS gym. Parents may also contact and conference with their child's teacher by phone or email. Students will receive 10 bonus points for completed conferences. MS/HS PAC is providing supper for MS/HS staff in two shifts from 5:00-5:30 and from 5:30-6:00. Classes will run by Parent/Teacher Conference Bell Schedule all day on February 16th as shown below:

Warning Bell 8:25

1st hour 8:30-9:04

2nd hour 9:08-9:42

3rd hour 9:46-10:20

4th hour 10:24-10:58

1st 5th hour 11:02-11:36

1st Lunch 10:58-11:23 (Grades 6-7)

2nd Lunch 11:36-12:01 (Grades 8-12)

2nd 5th hour 11:27-12:01

6th hour 12:05-12:38

7th hour 12:42-1:15

2) NWEA-MAPS Assessment Data- Students in grades 6-11 have completed two MAPS Assessments so far this year; fall testing (August/September) and mid-year testing (December). Parents and Guardians will receive a copy of their child's MAPS assessment results showing the growth from the beginning of the school year to mid-year in Math, English, and Science. All students in grades 6-11 will complete the final testing during the last two weeks in April. This data is used to inform weekly lesson planning, identify gaps in learning, identify weaknesses in course curriculum, and identify the areas students are ready to learn next.

3) 2023-2024 Curriculum Guide- The new and updated Groton Area Curriculum Guide includes course descriptions from all courses available in district, through E-Learning, Distance Learning, and Dual Credit. Graduation endorsements, graduation requirements, and grade level guides are also included. Parent or guardians may stop at the school office to pick up a copy of the Curriculum Guide or may choose to access the Curriculum Guide online by going to the grotonarea.com website. Please note new courses added for the 23-24 school year can be found on pages:

Gateway to Certified Nursing Assistant (CTE) p. 17

4) Class Registration for 2023-2024 School Year- Students and parents in grades 7-11 will receive class registration and course information during the week of February 13th from Mrs. Schwan, Groton Area Opportunities Counselor. Students in grades 7-11 will register for the 2023-2024 School year during guidance classes March 1-3. Please see Mrs. Schwan with questions regarding course information or class registration.

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Parent/Teacher Conferences

MS/HS Building

Teacher Information-Reminders:

- **Parents do not need to meet** and have a conference if their child has an “A, or an A-“
 - To earn the 10 bonus points, parent/guardian will need to meet/conference/collect **signature** from any teacher for which their child has a grade of **B, C, D, or an F**
 - Parents may conference **in person**, via **phone** conversation, or via **email**- Please email Sue for any parents that conference with you by phone or email
 - The 10 bonus points will be given out at **semester** time
 - Classes will run by **Parent Teacher Conference Bell Schedule** on **Thursday, February 16th**
 - Warning Bell 8:25
 - 1st hour 8:30-9:04
 - 2nd hour 9:08-9:42
 - 3rd hour 9:46-10:20
 - 4th hour 10:24-10:58
 - 1st 5th hour 11:02-11:36
 - 1st Lunch 10:58-11:23 (Grades 6-7)
 - 2nd Lunch 11:36-12:01 (Grades 8-12)
 - 2nd 5th hour 11:27-12:01
 - 6th hour 12:05-12:38
 - 7th hour 12:42-1:15
- Conferences will be held in **GHS Gym**

Brett Schwan

Elementary Principal

Feb 13

1. **Enrollment**

- a. JK: 21
- b. KG: 38
- c. 1st: 44
- d. 2nd: 42
- e. 3rd: 47
- f. 4th: 52
- g. 5th 39

2. **SASD LEADERSHIP ACADEMY '23.** Our final session will be on March 23 in Rapid City.

3. **OST Update:** We will be open on Thursday during conferences from 1:00-6:00 PM but we will be closed Friday, Feb 17 for staff in-service.

4. **Title IX Training:** Completed the comprehensive, one day training which certifies attendees in ALL possible roles in the Title IX process: Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, Decision-Maker, Appellate Decision-Maker, and Informal Mediator.

5. **Summer School/Connect 4Ed:** Last summer we ran summer school two days per week through the 2nd week of August with 3 staff members. This year we are looking to do the same but will end services at the end of July. Some of the funds used last year to provide a 3rd staff member were used with our ESSER funds. Next meeting, I plan to have our cost from last year and our proposed cost for this coming summer.

6. **NSU Job Fair:** Mr. Joe Schwan and I attending the annual NSU job fair. We were able to meet both Junior and Senior students who are majoring in education. Mr. Schwan also connected with students during the round table discussions. We met a lot of teacher candidates and hopefully we might be able to hire one or two of them for our special education openings unless we get additional applicants. We both look forward to this event each year, and we are already making plans as to how we can make our District/table stand out.

7. **Playground Slide:** Our 11 ft slide has a large crack down the middle. I reached out to Dakota Playground and I'm hoping they can find something compatible to what we currently have.

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Business Manager's Report February 13, 2023

Fiscal Year 2021 Audit Complete

The FY '21 audit is finally complete and I have placed a copy in your binders. Feel free to take it home to review. On the back page you see the annual finding we receive when Eide Bailly performs year-ending audit adjustments to get us in compliance with federal GASB standards. Eide Bailly considers this a conflict of interest and so therefore the notation. In addition, we were cited for inventory control issues in the food service department. Our corrective action plan response is noted.

Fiscal Year 2022 Statistical Digest Comparative Numbers

The state recently posted statistical digest numbers for all schools in the state. I thought you might find it interesting to compare our data with our neighboring school districts. The following schools are abbreviated as follows: Groton Area(G), Britton-Hecla(B), Ipswich(I), Redfield(R), Warner(WA) and Webster(We).

Levy/Thousand Payable in 2022	G	B	I	R	WA	WE
Agricultural	1.409	1.409	1.409	1.409	1.409	1.409
Owner Occupied	3.153	3.153	3.153	3.153	3.153	3.153
Other Non-Ag/Utilities	6.525	6.525	6.525	6.525	6.525	6.525
Special Education	0.726	0.768	0.804	1.670	0.950	1.670
Capital Outlay	1.371	1.773	2.207	2.530	2.559	2.539
Bond Redemption	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.603	0.434	0.093
Total	13.184	13.628	14.098	16.890	15.030	15.389
State Aid Fall Enrollment	590.88	453.14	418.00	547.20	315.29	534.00
Average Teacher Salary	50,140	48,620	46,097	47,867	46,908	46,117
Average Years of Experience	18.5	14.6	15.3	13.1	13.7	14.6
% with Advanced Degrees	34.1	27.8	18.4	25.5	26.9	13.2
Certified Instructional Staff	43.3	32.3	37.0	47.0	22.3	35.7
Composite ACT Score	21.4	20.5	20.2	20.5	22.5	19.9
Cost per ADM	10,494	9,485	10,785	10,195	8,631	9,454

ADM—Average Daily Membership

GDILIVE.COM

Boys Basketball Action at Aberdeen Roncalli
Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023

Livestreaming begins with Boys C at 5 p.m.

C Sponsored by Darcie and Eric Moody

JV Sponsored by Coach Kyle and Tyhe Gerlach



Varsity to follow sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Bahr Spray Foam

Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.

GDI Subscribers can watch for free

GDILIVE.COM

Basketball Double Header at Britton-Hecla
Friday, Feb. 17, 2023

Livestreaming begins at 5 p.m. for both JV Games
Boys Game sponsored by Grandpa
Girls Game sponsored by Rich & Tami Zimney

Varsity to follow sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors
Bierman Farm Service
Blocker Construction
Dacotah Bank
Groton Chamber of Commerce
Groton Ford
John Sieh Agency
Locke Electric
Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
Bahr Spray Foam
Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



Shane Clark will be doing the play-by-play of the girls games!

\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.
GDI Subscribers can watch for free

GDILIVE.COM

**Boys Basketball Action hosting Florence-Henry
Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023**

Livestreaming begins at 11 a.m.

JH and C games sponsored by

GDI Living Heart Fitness Center

JV Game sponsored by Steve & Betty Dunker



Varsity to follow sponsored by

Bary Keith at Harr Motors

Bierman Farm Service

Blocker Construction

Dacotah Bank

Groton Chamber of Commerce

Groton Ford

John Sieh Agency

Locke Electric

Milbrandt Enterprises, Inc.

Spanier Harvesting & Trucking

Bahr Spray Foam

Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



\$5 ticket to watch can be purchased at GDILIVE.COM.

GDI Subscribers can watch for free

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You're Invited!

RESET

women's conference

ROSE HILL CHURCH

12099 ROSE HILL RD, LANGFORD SD

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023

9:30 AM - 2:00 PM

*Women and girls of all generations
are welcome to enjoy a day to reset.*

GUEST SPEAKERS

**PASTORS LISA PALMER
AND MICAH LOMBARDI, A
MOTHER-DAUGHTER TEAM**



REGISTER ONLINE

**THIS IS A FREE EVENT.
REGISTER BY SCANNING
THE QR CODE OR AT
ROSEHILLEFC.COM**









CHILDCARE WILL BE AVAILABLE

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Region 1A Standings

Girls Basketball

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Sisseton	16	2	.889	43.944
2	 Milbank	11	7	.611	41.222
3	 Groton Area	11	8	.579	40.789
4	 Aberdeen Roncalli	9	9	.500	40.667
5	 Redfield	8	10	.444	39.222
6	 Waubay/Summit	9	9	.500	38.667
7	 Webster Area	7	11	.389	38.444
8	 Tiospa Zina	5	13	.278	37.889

Boys Basketball

#	Name	W	L	PCT	PTS
1	 Waubay/Summit	14	3	.824	43.294
2	 Groton Area	11	4	.733	42.467
3	 Milbank	10	6	.625	41.938
4	 Tiospa Zina	9	7	.562	41.250
5	 Aberdeen Roncalli	9	9	.500	40.167
6	 Redfield	8	10	.444	39.389
7	 Webster Area	4	13	.235	37.706
8	 Sisseton	1	17	.056	36.278

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2023 Spring Load Restriction – Press Release #1 (Week of Feb. 13 – 17, 2023)

PIERRE, S.D. – Spring Load Limit Restrictions will apply to the road segment(s) and at the indicated weight limit shown in the table below.

2023 STATE HIGHWAY SPRING LOAD LIMIT RESTRICTIONS

The effective date of a load restriction is determined by weather and road conditions. When restrictions go into effect, a notice will be sent out and posted on the spring load restriction page of the South Dakota Truck Info website at <https://sdtruckinfo.sd.gov/spring-load-restrictions/>.

A spring load restriction report is usually issued in advance of any major load restriction change. This report is issued for guidance only and does not take precedence over any load restriction signs in place. For further information, or a copy of a Spring Load Restriction map, please contact the SDDOT at 605-773-3571.

Spring Load Limit Information is available at <https://sdtruckinfo.sd.gov/spring-load-restrictions/> and also on the SD511 site at <https://sd511.org/>; click on Traffic Notices then CVO Restrictions for current restriction.

Individuals can subscribe to an email list to receive spring load limit restriction information electronically at <https://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?A0=DOTSPRINGLOADLIMITS>. Click subscribe located on the right side of the screen and follow the instructions. A valid email address is required. If you would like to unsubscribe at any time from the list, visit the same site, click unsubscribe, and enter the information and email you subscribed with.

Effective Date	Highway	Location	Begin/End MRM	Length	Posting	Region
February 17, 2023	US 16A	Custer State Park West gate to SD 244	26.25 to 55.76	29.6	7 Tons/Axle	Rapid City
February 17, 2023	SD 87	Wind Cave Nat'l Park to US 16/385	47.27 to 79.36	30.8	7 Tons/Axle	Rapid City
February 17, 2023	SD 89	US 16A to SD 87	58.51 to 64.58	6.0	7 Tons/Axle	Rapid City
February 17, 2023	SD 40	Hermosa to Cheyenne River	48.60 to 69.00	30.7	7 Tons/Axle	Rapid City
February 17, 2023	SD 79	SD 168 to Jct. SD 20 West of Reva	150.70 to 199.32	48.6	8 Tons/Axle	Rapid City
February 17, 2023	SD 1806	Jct. SD 273 North to US 83	138.45 to 180.05	41.6	6 Tons/Axle	Pierre
February 17, 2023	SD 1806	Intersection West of Dam to Mission Ridge	193.83 to 221.05	27.2	7 Tons/Axle	Pierre

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

Super Bowl LVII

A matchup of the top two seeds in this year's playoffs met in Arizona for the 57th Super Bowl. The Kansas City Chiefs came in as slight underdogs to the Philadelphia Eagles.

The Eagles jumped out to an early lead, marching the opening kick down the field in the first five minutes ending in Jalen Hurts one-yard sneak.

Just three minutes later, Pat Mahomes hit his favorite target, Travis Kelce, for a 20-yard touchdown Game on- it looks like we're in for a shootout.

After taking a 14-7 lead on a a long pass to AJ Brown, Jalen Hurts fumbles, and the Chiefs returned it for a 44 -yard touchdown to tie the score at 14.

Hurts came right back, rushed for 50 yards on the next drive, and finished with a 4-yard touchdown run. A last second field goal by the Eagles made it 24-14. The big question was will Mahomes be able to return after reinjuring his ankle late in the second half.

After the Rihanna half-time show, Pat Mahomes returns and leads the Chiefs to a 75-yard touchdown drive to cut the lead to three. The Eagles get a field goal to make it a 6-point lead going into the fourth quarter.

In the fourth, Andy Reid dials up two great goal line plays for touchdowns(motion in and throw back to the receiver) to give KC an eight point lead. Jalen Hurts immediately takes the Eagles down the field to score his third touchdown of the game and converts a two point conversion to tie it at 35 with 5:15 to go.

Pat Mahomes(Super Bowl MVP) does it again as he takes the Chiefs down the field and even runs for 15 yards on a bad ankle. Sadly the key-play of the drive is a questionable defensive holding call on third down that allowed the Chiefs to basically run out the clock and kick a game winning field goal. Tough way to end a great game.

Chiefs are Super Bowl champions for the second time in four years, and Andy Reid beats his former team. This could be the final game for Reid, as there are rumors of a possible retirement and passing the torch to his OC, Eric Bienemy.

As for the Vikings, there was a lot of speculation and uncertainty but on Monday, they got the defensive coordinator they coveted the most, Brian Flores. There were rumors of the Vikings going in another direction, but it really felt as though they were waiting on Flores(former head coach at Miami) to see if he might get a head coaching job.

From the NFL Awards night, there was some good and bad news.

The good news was Justin Jefferson walked away with two awards, the NFL Offensive Player of the Year and the Play of the Year, for his catch against the Buffalo Bills. The not so good news was Kirk Cousins boldly came on stage with the host Kelly Clarkson and sang a funny tribute to Tom Brady(he should probably keep his day job). The bad news was former Viking Jared Allen has to wait another year to get into Canton, just missing out for the second year in a row.

It's all about the commercials:

As in every year, many new commercials debut during the Super Bowl. With help from the smartest person in the house(Gayle), we have come up with our top 5.

1. T-Mobile spin on the movie Grease with a cameo by John Travolta
2. Dodge Ram REV pickup electrification
3. General Motors EV with Will Farrell
4. Greg Gutfeld King of Late Night cut short because ads are expensive
5. Etrade Baby's at a wedding.

That takes us to the end of another great season. The Vikings overachieved under first year head coach Kevin O'Connell and are looking for even more in 2023. SKOL!!

That's Life by Tony Bender

We were in love

I was saddened when my mother told me that JoAnn Derry had passed away. She was 90. Her obituary described her as "a firecracker with grit and determination." Yup. That was her, all right.

I met her in Sunday School at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Frederick, SD, in 1968. I was misbehaving one day—hard to imagine, I suppose—when she threatened me with the most dire consequences. If I didn't straighten up I would have to sit on her lap.

"That would be just fine," I said cheerily, and that was it. She adored me from that day forward. JoAnn didn't have a glamorous bone in her body and that overt flattery won her over. We were in love.

She loved telling that story.

She looked at first glance like a hundred other Nordic housewives, but her face was especially kind, freckled, and sun-scorched, with a smile—that's what was special—that made you feel like everything was going to be just fine. She had a slight lisp that made her forever cute.

Her daughter Kristie was a classmate. She died 10 years ago from the ravages of diabetes, the heart-break of a lifetime for JoAnn and Ted. Their only. When Ted died at 95 in August, I didn't dare think it, but they were, as Forrest Gump would say, like peas and carrots. I was not surprised to learn that JoAnn so quickly followed him.

But heartbroken.

She met Ted in 1953 at a dance, and was mortified to learn that he didn't dance. They dated again on the Fourth of July, Ted and The Firecracker, and they were engaged in August.

She entertained the idea of sticking it out alone on the farm but that fantasy quickly evaporated. Indeed, it was tough enough for her and her walker to manage the small senior apartment she took in Frederick. I'm glad I visited her there a couple of times because she moved to assisted living in Aberdeen rather quickly after that. She was tough, but a realist about living alone at her age.

She had the same sharp and slightly naughty wit. Made me laugh, and my face hurt from smiling after those visits. I brought her flowers. She fed me baked treats.

Jack and Rayma Smith were there one day when I dropped in unannounced. JoAnn, adept on keyboards or accordion, any instrument, really, played with "Rae and the Ranch Hands" and the "Chicken Pluckers." If you didn't have Rae and the Ranch Hands play for your wedding dance you weren't officially married. I think that's a real law.

As I look back, I remember that JoAnn was the first one I challenged about what I saw as a grade schooler as contradictions in the Bible. I realize now, it was the beginning of a spiritual search for me. I need resolution. Explanations.

You might say Christianity and I had a falling out. As I grew older, I read everything I could find on every religion. I meditated. It took years but I saw the parallels between the religions, and I adopted my own truth. One commandment was enough: Be kind.

I joked with my mother once about being a heathen. "No, your church is the sun and the stars like my father's was," she said.

In spite of the prevalent meanness cloaked in the guise of religion these days, I've reconciled with the church because of the JoAnn Derry's of the world. The Christians I grew up with were simply good people doing good things. You can't argue that.

It's funny, too, that despite my aversion to pews, that I've always had a number of friends in the ministry. Maybe they're trying to save a renegade. Maybe they see me as an ally who's on the right side of things just often enough. Maybe a little of both.

JoAnn didn't have an answer to the contradictions, nor did she need one. She had faith. Which is much easier than needing explanations. Now, I've come full circle. The whys and the whats are less important to me as long as I'm around good people doing good things. Sometimes it takes the loss of someone dear to realize what connected you, what an impact they had.

Over the years, JoAnn and I made each other's days when we'd see each other. It was like a holiday. Now, I bid you adieu, dear JoAnn.

We were in love.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Noem signs transgender youth health care ban into law

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 13, 2023 5:04 PM

Gov. Kristi Noem signed a bill into law Monday that would ban some forms of health care for transgender youth.

HB 1080 is dubbed the "Help Not Harm" Bill by proponents. When it takes effect July 1, it will ban health care professionals who treat transgender children from prescribing drugs such as puberty blockers and performing some types of surgeries. Health care providers could lose their license if caught providing the banned services and could also be held liable in lawsuits.

However, there are several exemptions in the legislation, including one for children who are "born with a medically verifiable disorder of sex development," which proponents say covers medical situations when a child's physical sex is unclear.

"South Dakota's kids are our future. With this legislation, we are protecting kids from harmful, permanent medical procedures," Noem said in a news release. "I will always stand up for the next generation of South Dakotans."

The bill has been met with resistance from LGBTQ advocacy groups, medical professionals and concerned citizens. Opponents argue the bill violates the rights of transgender children and their parents.

"It's a huge government overreach into the patient-provider relationship," Samantha Chapman, of the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, told legislators during a committee hearing.

During the past several years, the World Health Organization changed its classifications. People who have a gender identity that does not match their physical, sexual characteristics are no longer classified as having a mental or behavioral disorder. They're regarded as having a condition related to sexual health.

This is the 34th bill Noem has signed into law this year.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

Officials blame inflation for state building projects that are millions over budget

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - FEBRUARY 13, 2023 4:16 PM

Eight building projects already approved by the Legislature need about \$30 million in additional funding due to rising costs, state lawmakers were told Monday at the Capitol in Pierre.

State officials told the Joint Committee on Appropriations about the challenges of trying to keep project costs under control amid high inflation.

One of the projects that has seen its cost estimates rise significantly is the new Dakota Events Complex, or DEX, at the state fairgrounds in Huron. It's already under construction and slated to be open in time for this summer's state fair.

The Legislature initially appropriated \$20 million for the project, but recent estimates have the secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Hunter Roberts, asking for \$9 million more.

"We actually reduced the footprint 50,000 square feet," Roberts said, "And we're still way off."

The DEX was initially aiming to open for the 2022 fair, but supply chain disruptions delayed completion. An addition to the Kinsman Building in Pierre rose from \$1.45 million to \$3 million. The cost to improve

and repair Hiddenwood Lake near Selby will be another \$1 million, on top of the originally appropriated \$3.5 million.

A slate of state university projects has also been affected by inflation.

The construction of a new bioproducts facility at a research park in Brookings, home of South Dakota State University, was estimated to cost around \$20 million but has seen its cost estimates rise by over \$3 million.

"Inflation grew at a rate that could not be envisioned," said Brian Maher, executive director of the state Board of Regents. "All of these bills are impacted by inflation."

SDSU is asking for an additional \$1 million for a dairy research facility on top of the originally appropriated \$7.5 million. And South Dakota Mines in Rapid City is asking for another \$4.4 million to complete its Mineral Industries Building on campus, which originally received \$19 million.

Similarly, Black Hills State University in Spearfish is asking for another \$5 million to complete a health services center that initially received \$15.1 million. And the new Lincoln Hall planned for Northern State University in Aberdeen is expected to need another \$5 million, now totaling \$34.5 million.

Despite these challenges, lawmakers and project officials said they remain committed to completing the projects. The Appropriations Committee will make its decision on the funding requests in the coming days.

Meanwhile, costs for an athletics events center at Dakota State University went from \$28 million to \$40 million. A bill to provide that extra funding is scheduled to be heard in the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Bill barring legislative spouses from becoming lobbyists passes Senate committee

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 13, 2023 2:19 PM

PIERRE — A bill that would prohibit a spouse of a legislator from being employed as a lobbyist passed the Senate State Affairs Committee on Monday morning.

The bill, SB 197, was introduced by Sen. Michael Rohl, R-Aberdeen, and would apply to active members of the Senate and House of Representatives. The committee passed the bill 8-1.

Rohl argued that lobbyists who have such intimate relationships with legislators have greater access to legislators, a "path to bribe legislators" and an "undisputable advantage" compared to other lobbyists or the general public.

"This would allow us to better serve the people of our state and not just the highest bidder," Rohl said. At least one legislator has a spouse that is a registered lobbyist.

Sen. Julie Frye-Mueller, R-Rapid City, has a husband who is a registered lobbyist for the Citizens for Liberty. Frye-Mueller was censured earlier this month for her verbal harassment of a Legislative Research Council staffer.

The bill to ban lobbying by legislators' spouses was introduced on Feb. 1, hours before the Senate censured Sen. Frye-Mueller.

Rohl said the bill would apply to any lobbyist who receives benefits from a lobbying firm. Lobbyists do not need to be paid to receive benefits, he said.

The bill passed the committee on an 8-1 vote, sending it to the Senate floor.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

Midwestern, Western states in spotlight after mystery flying objects shot down by military

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JACOB FISCHLER - FEBRUARY 13, 2023 5:37 PM

WASHINGTON — Military posts in Midwestern and Western states played key roles in the unprecedented downings of multiple unmanned aerial objects over the North American continent this weekend.

Members of Congress and governors from the states involved and from both parties have shared information about the downings on Twitter and in statements, in some cases soon after the incidents occurred. But they say they continue to have many questions after the flurry of U.S. and Canadian military activity over the weekend.

Over three days, three types of airborne crafts that the Pentagon has not specifically described were shot down: one over Alaska on Friday, a second over northern Canada with an assist from the U.S. on Saturday, and the third over Lake Huron, Michigan, on Sunday. The Pentagon has not attributed their ownership to any country or company.

That followed the Feb. 4 Air Force downing of a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon off the South Carolina coast after it had drifted east from where it was spotted in Montana.

In the Sunday incident, two U.S. Air Force F-16 fighter jets took off from Madison, Wisconsin, piloted by Air National Guard personnel based in Minnesota, to complete the mission.

"I'm proud of the airmen in the @148FW, based out of Duluth, who earlier today took off from Madison, WI to shoot down a flying object over Lake Huron as part of a federal mission," Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz posted to Twitter Sunday, referring to the 148th Air National Guard unit in Duluth. "The Bulldogs executed their mission flawlessly, protected the homeland, and got the birds home safe."

A refueling aircraft from the Air National Guard based in Pittsburgh and airborne warning support from Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma also assisted in monitoring the object.

Air National Guard units have both state and federal missions, which is part of what has put governors in the unusual position of being involved in a national security situation. Governors in a handful of states have had to communicate what is happening in their airspace, while leaving most decision-making to federal authorities.

In a followup tweet, Walz, a Democrat, downplayed his role, saying it was a federal mission and federal authorities would share more information when it was available.

In a Friday statement, Alaska's Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy said his state was "on the front lines" because of its proximity to Russia, North Korea and China.

He also questioned the Biden administration's decision not to disrupt the Chinese surveillance balloon until it reached the Atlantic Ocean and called for a discussion about how to make Alaska's military readiness "more robust."

Lake Huron downing

The Biden administration did release more information Monday about how it tracked and brought down an object in Lake Huron on Sunday.

The Minnesota crews used an air-to-air missile to down the object over Lake Huron at 2:42 p.m. Eastern.

The low-altitude craft, which was traveling at about 20,000 feet, crashed into the Canadian side of the lake, where the U.S. Coast Guard and Canadian counterparts are now making efforts to recover it in "what is probably very deep water," National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said during the White House press briefing Monday.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, had detected an object on radar in Canadian airspace, about 70 miles north of the U.S. border, around 4:45 p.m. Eastern time Saturday.

Fighter jets from Portland, Oregon, and a refueling tanker aircraft from Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington state were ordered to take off and investigate the object. But they were unsuccessful as it crossed into sovereign U.S. airspace around 6 p.m., just before dark, according to the Pentagon.

Overnight radar again detected an object tracking over Montana and traveling east on Sunday. Officials

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then monitored an object on radar over Wisconsin and Lake Michigan.

"It's likely, but we have not confirmed, that the track that we saw (over) Wisconsin was likely the same track in Montana," said NORAD Commander Gen. Glen VanHerck at a late Sunday news briefing.

The general said NORAD was able to monitor the radar track across Michigan's Upper Peninsula and ultimately shoot down the object over Lake Huron using an AIM-9X Sidewinder missile.

"I've been notified by the Department of Defense that the flying 'object' over the Great Lakes has been shot down," Wisconsin Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin said in a statement Sunday.

"I appreciate the decisive action taken by the President. Wisconsinites' safety and our national security remain paramount, and I am working hard to get Americans the answers they need and deserve on these incursions."

Information sharing

Both the full U.S. House and Senate were given classified briefings last week in the days following the Feb. 4 splashdown of a sizable suspected Chinese surveillance balloon 6 miles off the coast of South Carolina.

National defense agencies have also kept "relevant state governors" apprised of operations in their states, Kirby said at Monday's White House press briefing.

However, lawmakers want to know more. A senior U.S. House aide said elected officials are waiting for more information, including any details on the objects — size, shape, purpose or capabilities.

Unlike the approximately 200-foot maneuverable balloon from China — China says the balloon was for weather research — that carried a payload the size of a jetliner at 60,000 feet, the Pentagon and White House maintain the objects shot down over the last few days were smaller and unmaneuverable.

Friday, Saturday downings

The two incidents prior to Sunday's were similar.

On Friday morning, airspace over Alaska closed to air traffic as NORAD tracked an unidentified object at 40,000 feet and eventually shot it down with an air-to-air missile over frozen waters off Alaska's Northern Slope.

Then, two U.S. F-22 fighters from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson were ordered to monitor another object over Alaska late Friday evening. The object crossed into Canadian airspace Saturday, and the Royal Canadian Air Force monitored as a U.S. F-22 shot the object down over Yukon.

In all three weekend instances, the Pentagon says the objects posed a risk to civilian air traffic as they were at the level of commercial air traffic and at the mercy of the wind.

While they didn't pose a military threat, officials were concerned about their proximity to sensitive U.S. military sites, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs Melissa Dalton said Sunday.

Adjustments to NORAD's radar system since the Chinese balloon traversed the continent in early February has allowed more sensitive detection above North America, according to the Pentagon.

"In light of the People's Republic of China balloon that we took down last Saturday, we have been more closely scrutinizing our airspace at these altitudes, including enhancing our radar, which may at least partly explain the increase in objects that we've detected over the past week. We also know that a range of entities, including countries, companies, research organizations operate objects at these altitudes for purposes that are not nefarious, including legitimate research," Dalton said.

"That said, because we have not yet been able to definitively assess what these recent objects are, we have acted out of an abundance of caution to protect our security and interests," she continued.

Members of Congress press for more

That explanation still does not go far enough for some lawmakers.

"We need answers from the Pentagon. We need answers from the President himself. There are times to err on the side of secrecy in national security operations. But when our fighter pilots are shooting down presumably hostile aerial objects all across America, it's long past time for transparency," Rep. Mike Gallagher, chair of the new House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, said in a statement provided by his office Monday.

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"Where are these (unidentified aerial phenomena) coming from? What is their purpose? Are they related to the CCP's spy balloon or other CCP-directed espionage programs?" the Wisconsin Republican continued, referring to the Chinese Communist Party.

Gallagher repeated media reports from an unnamed official that the object that floated over his congressional district was "octagonal." States Newsroom has not independently verified that claim.

U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, a Montana Democrat who chairs the Defense spending subcommittee, said he supported the decision to shoot down the object that traveled over his state.

He said he was in continued contact with defense and intelligence officials and would "keep demanding answers for the public."

"I'm continuing to receive regular updates from the Pentagon and our intelligence community as we closely monitor American airspace," he said in a Sunday tweet. "I will keep holding them accountable so the public gets the answers they deserve."

Kirby said the White House is staying in regular contact with state and local officials.

"We will continue to brief members of Congress and relevant state leadership on what we are doing and what we learned," Kirby said Monday. "The President has made this a very top priority. We have, over the course of just the last few days and certainly over the course of last week, reached out to inform and brief members of Congress and relevant state governors of the operations that we were conducting and other recovery operations that are underway."

The president has ordered the creation of an interagency team to study the broader policy implications for detection, analysis and disposition of unidentified aerial objects that pose either safety or security risks, according to the White House.

"We have been, I think, as transparent as we can be," Kirby said.

There is "no indication of aliens or extraterrestrial activity with these recent takedowns," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said with laughter Monday.

Senators are expected to receive a briefing Tuesday morning, according to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Flying objects the U.S. has downed or helped down in the last two weeks:

Feb. 3-4: A suspected Chinese surveillance balloon (China claims it was an off-course weather balloon) was spotted in Montana Feb. 3, tracked over Kansas and Nebraska and shot down off the coast of South Carolina Feb. 4.

Feb. 10: An unidentified object was shot down off the coast of Alaska.

Feb. 11: The U.S. assisted Canada to take down "a high-altitude airborne object over northern Canada."

Feb. 12: An "airborne object" over Lake Huron, Michigan, was shot down. The Minnesota Air National Guard took off from Wisconsin to bring the object down. Pilots from Oregon and Washington (and a tanker from Pittsburgh Air National Guard) also tracked the object. It was also possibly detected over Montana, Wisconsin.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Bills limiting drag shows: Committee passes one, tables another

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FEBRUARY 13, 2023 10:37 AM

PIERRE — The House State Affairs Committee tabled one bill that would limit drag performances in South Dakota but passed a related bill Monday morning.

The first bill, HB 1125, would expand obscenity laws to include drag shows and prohibit exposing children to such performances. The bill was tabled after a failed motion to pass it to the House floor, and a failed motion to defeat it by deferring it to the 41st day of the 38-day legislative session.

The second bill, HB 1116, would ban "lewd or lascivious" content at state institutions and public schools.

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The committee passed an amended version of the bill 11-1.

The bills are in response to a controversial drag show held on the South Dakota State University campus last year by a student organization that advertised the show as "kid friendly." The Board of Regents began drafting a new policy after the controversy, and placed a moratorium on minors attending events hosted by student organizations on university campuses.

The failed HB 1125 was introduced by Rep. Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish. While Odenbach said the bill would "restate what should be obvious," enough legislators believed the bill was reactionary and too vague to pass.

Opponents argued the bill is an attack on freedom of expression and speech.

"It limits children's ability to learn what freedom of expression is and to grow in their acceptance of people who are different from them," said Garrett Satterly, a member of the public testifying in opposition to the bill.

The bill that was passed by the committee, HB 1116, was introduced by Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls. The bill would ban state institutions and public schools from authorizing, expending public money or using any state-owned facility for "lewd and lascivious content."

Such banned content includes obscene conduct that depicts sexual activity, nudity or "any physical human body activity" for sexual matters.

An amendment allows the Board of Regents to prohibit minors from attending any program or event.

Opponents to the bill included lobbyists representing the Associated School Boards of South Dakota and larger schools in the state.

Jessica Filler, lobbyist with the Associated School Boards of South Dakota, warned legislators the bill could have unintended consequences on events such as school performances and student dances.

Karr said the bill would not apply to events or performances that have literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

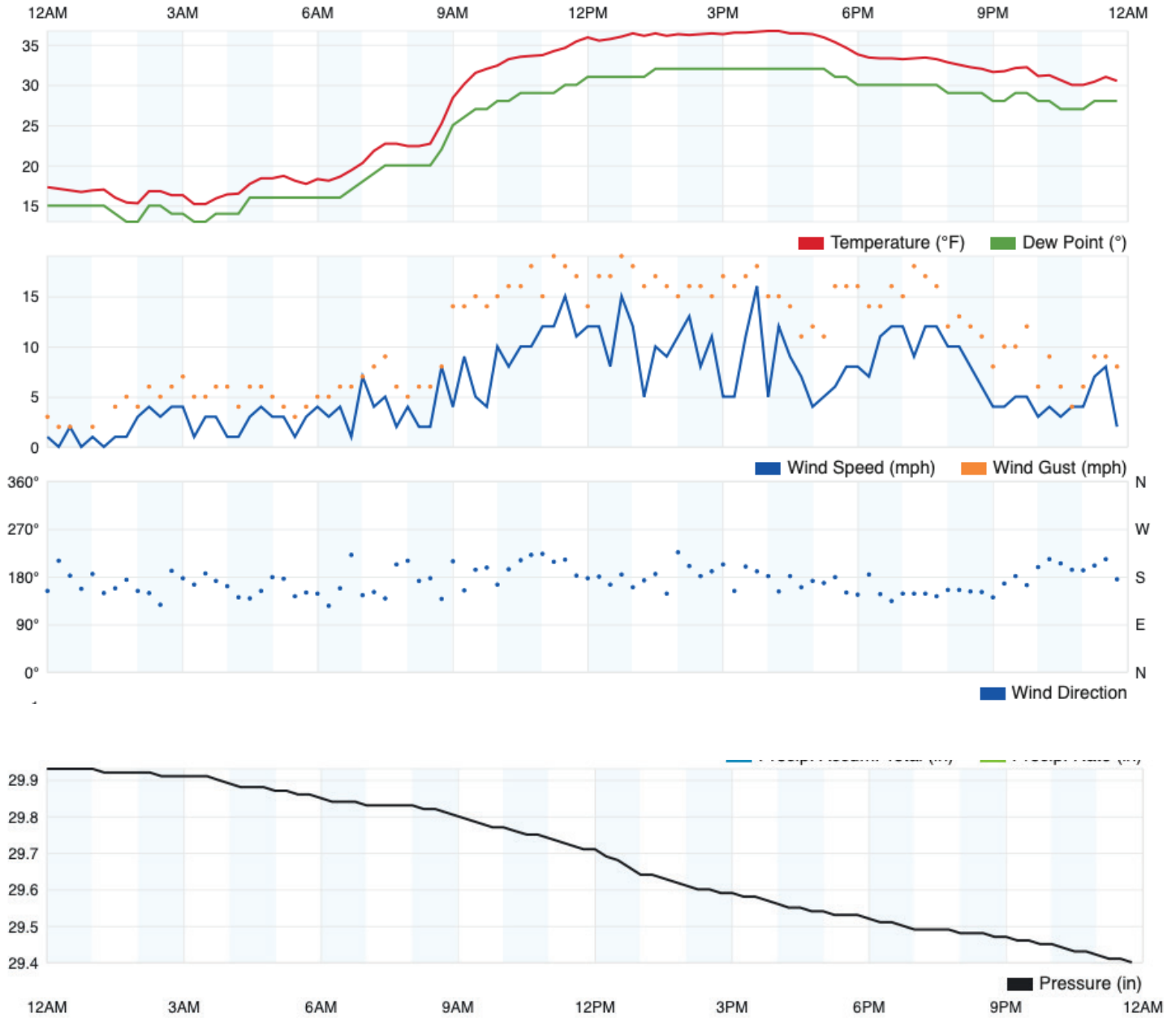
HB 1116 now heads to the House floor.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Strong Wind Potential

February 14, 2023
4:48 AM

Wind gust strength and timing

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	2/14 Tue								2/15 Wed								2/16 Thu
	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	
Aberdeen	15↑	12↓	9↓	22↓	36↓	53↓	58↓	54↓	51↓	41↓	36↓	29↓	23↓	17↓	12↓	9↓	
Britton	10↑	10↓	7↓	15↓	30↓	51↓	54↓	53↓	49↓	44↓	36↓	28↓	23↓	18↓	13↓	8↓	
Eagle Butte	15↑	18↓	31↓	41↓	46↓	48↓	47↓	45↓	40↓	37↓	29↓	22↓	21↓	16↓	13↓	10↓	
Eureka	13↑	10↓	23↓	36↓	41↓	46↓	46↓	46↓	48↓	41↓	32↓	26↓	22↓	15↓	9↓	7↓	
Gettysburg	12↑	10↓	17↓	32↓	43↓	46↓	49↓	49↓	46↓	41↓	32↓	26↓	23↓	20↓	14↓	10↓	
Kennebec	20↑	17↓	12↓	24↓	36↓	47↓	52↓	47↓	43↓	38↓	31↓	26↓	22↓	18↓	15↓	12↓	
McIntosh	20↑	30↓	38↓	43↓	46↓	46↓	46↓	48↓	44↓	37↓	30↓	21↓	16↓	14↓	9↓	8↓	
Milbank	24↑	22↓	12↓	10↓	12↓	32↓	46↓	47↓	47↓	47↓	37↓	35↓	28↓	28↓	26↓	20↓	
Miller	25↑	24↓	13↓	16↓	35↓	43↓	47↓	45↓	43↓	37↓	32↓	28↓	23↓	18↓	16↓	12↓	
Mobridge	10↑	13↓	29↓	36↓	43↓	46↓	46↓	43↓	39↓	36↓	26↓	22↓	17↓	15↓	9↓	7↓	
Murdo	16↑	16↓	21↓	30↓	39↓	46↓	51↓	46↓	40↓	36↓	30↓	24↓	20↓	20↓	15↓	12↓	
Pierre	12↑	9↓	16↓	26↓	39↓	45↓	48↓	45↓	41↓	32↓	25↓	21↓	18↓	17↓	12↓	7↓	
Redfield	22↑	23↓	18↓	14↓	32↓	46↓	49↓	46↓	48↓	39↓	35↓	30↓	24↓	20↓	16↓	12↓	
Sisseton	30↑	20↓	10↓	8↓	18↓	40↓	52↓	54↓	53↓	49↓	39↓	31↓	28↓	25↓	24↓	14↓	
Watertown	31↑	32↑	23↓	18↓	14↓	35↓	46↓	48↓	49↓	43↓	36↓	32↓	28↓	25↓	23↓	17↓	
Webster	29↑	30↑	16↓	12↓	22↓	47↓	53↓	55↓	55↓	52↓	43↓	35↓	30↓	26↓	22↓	14↓	
Wheaton	17↑	15↓	15↓	14↓	13↓	30↓	43↓	43↓	43↓	38↓	32↓	28↓	25↓	22↓	16↓		

What/When

A strong low pressure system is expected to bring strong winds starting in west central SD Tuesday afternoon pushing east across the area through the evening and continuing through Wed morning

Impacts

Travel may be impacted by blowing snow and reduced visibilities, due to the combination of the wind and falling snow, especially near and long the Prairie Coteau.

Uncertainty

Confidence is high on the wind strength and pretty confident on the timing.



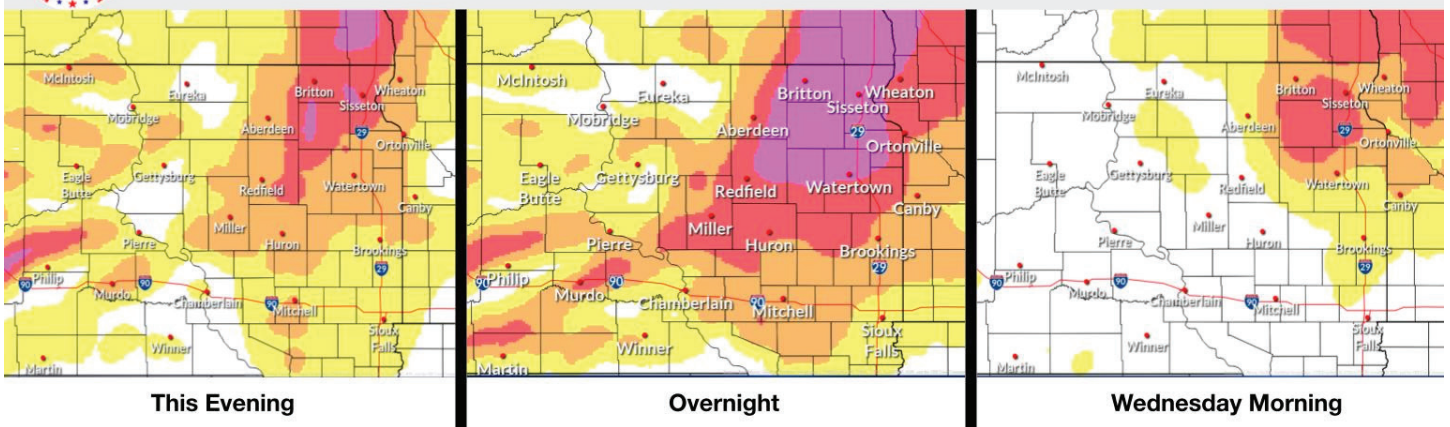
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Blowing Snow Potential

February 14, 2023
5:11 AM



Overview

→ In areas highlighted in red and pink in the images above, have the greatest potential for blizzard conditions, with visibilities down to 1/4 mile possible.



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

Minor ☁️ Patchy Blowing Snow with reduced visibilities expected	Moderate ☁️☁️ Areas of Blowing Snow with reduced visibilities expected	Significant ☁️☁️☁️ Widespread Blowing Snow and greatly reduced visibilities expected	Blizzard ☁️☁️☁️☁️ Significant Blowing Snow possible, travel may be impossible
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National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Winter Weather Advisory

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

300 AM CST Tue Feb 14 2023

Brown-Spink- Including the cities of Aberdeen and Redfield

300 AM CST Tue Feb 14 2023

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM 6 PM THIS EVENING TO 6 AM CST WEDNESDAY...

* WHAT...Snow expected. Total snow accumulations of 1 to 3 inches. Winds gusting as high as 55 mph.

* WHERE...Brown and Spink Counties.

* WHEN...From 6 PM this evening to 6 AM CST Wednesday.

* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Patchy blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the Wednesday morning commute. Strong winds could cause tree damage.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling.

The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

Blizzard Warning

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

300 AM CST Tue Feb 14 2023

Traverse-Big Stone-Marshall-Roberts-Day-Clark-Codington-Grant-Hamlin-Deuel-

Including the cities of Wheaton, Ortonville, Britton, Sisseton, Webster, Clark, Watertown, Milbank, Hayti, and Clear Lake

300 AM CST Tue Feb 14 2023

...BLIZZARD WARNING IN EFFECT FROM 6 PM THIS EVENING TO 9 AM CST WEDNESDAY...

* WHAT...Blizzard conditions expected. Total snow accumulations of 2 to 5 inches. Winds gusting as high as 55 mph.

* WHERE...Portions of west central Minnesota and northeast South Dakota.

* WHEN...From 6 PM this evening to 9 AM CST Wednesday.

* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Widespread blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the Wednesday morning commute. Strong winds could cause tree damage. The cold wind chills as low as 20 below zero could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 30 minutes.

* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Blizzard conditions will be possible over the Coteau tonight.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Travel should be restricted to emergencies only. If you must travel, have a winter survival kit with you. If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle.

In Minnesota, the latest road conditions can be obtained at 511mn.org, or by calling 5 1 1. In South Dakota, the latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 36.7 °F at 4:00 PM

Low Temp: 15.2 °F at 3:15 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 12:45 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 25 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 57 in 1934

Record Low: -34 in 1905

Average High: 28

Average Low: 6

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.28

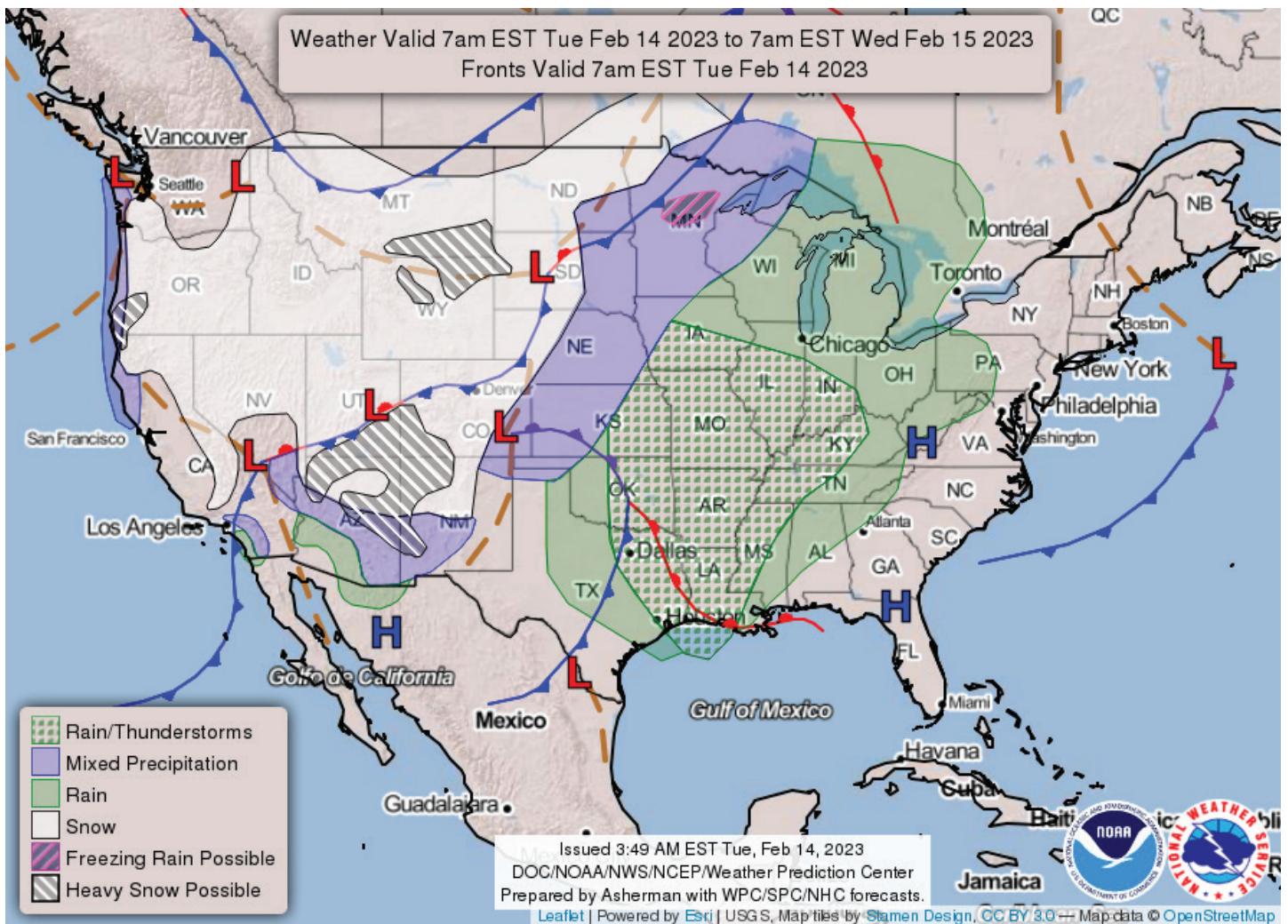
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.83

Precip Year to Date: 0.25

Sunset Tonight: 5:59:16 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:30 in 1936



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Today in Weather History

February 14th, 1967: The heaviest snow fell in the central part of the state, with Pierre receiving 10 inches with 14 inches reported near Harrold. Elsewhere, 1 to 4 inches of snow was typical. Winds of 20 to 30 mph with gusts over 40 mph caused extensive drifting and blowing snow reducing visibilities to near zero. As a result, many schools were closed, and other activities were canceled. Temperatures of 5 to 15 degrees below zero were typical on the morning of the 15th. A farmer died in the storm near Yale, where his car stalled, and he attempted to walk.

February 14th, 1979: High winds of 50 mph or greater and snow from a half-inch to more than 14 inches moved through the state late on the 14th, with winds slowly subsiding on the 16th. Visibility was reduced to near zero at the height of the storm, and no travel was advised. Temperatures fell to 25 degrees below zero, with wind chills to 80 to 90 below on the 15th. One man suffered frostbite after being stranded in his truck for seventeen hours. In addition, power was lost at Wall due to high winds snapping power lines together.

1895: The most significant snowfall in the history of Houston, Texas, occurred on the 14th and 15th. The Houston area saw 20 inches of snow.

1899 - A great blizzard struck the eastern U.S. Washington D.C. received 20.5 inches of snow to bring their total snow depth to nearly three feet. The storm produced 36 inches of snow at Cape May NJ. (David Ludlum)

1940: A St. Valentine's Day Blizzard blankets New England with up to 18 inches of snow. Gale force winds associated with the storm strand many in downtown Boston.

1982: A "meteorological bomb" exploded in the Atlantic southeast of Newfoundland. The term is used to describe a storm that rapidly intensifies. The intense cyclone off the Atlantic coast capsized a drilling rig killing 84 persons and sank a Soviet freighter resulting in 33 more deaths. The cyclone produced 80 mph winds that whipped the water into waves fifty feet high.

1987 - A powerful storm spawned severe thunderstorms in Texas and Oklahoma, and produced heavy snow in the Rocky Mountain Region. Snowfall totals in Colorado ranged up to 27 inches at Telluride. Straight line winds gusting to 104 mph howled through Guadalupe Pass in West Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong northerly winds ushered arctic air into the north central U.S. Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in Minnesota and the Dakotas. Winds gusted to 56 mph at Rapid City SD, and reached 65 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - While "Valentine's Day" was a soggy one in the Ohio Valley and the Tennessee Valley, unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Seventeen cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s. (The National Weather Summary)

1990: Valentine's Day was a snowy one for many parts of Iowa and Illinois. Five to ten inches of snow fell across Iowa. Six to 12 inches of snow blanketed northern Illinois, and strong northeasterly winds accompanied the heavy snow. Air traffic came to a halt during the evening at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, where 9.7 inches of snow was reported. More than 250 traffic accidents were reported around Des Moines, Iowa, during the evening rush hour. In addition, an ice storm glazed east central sections of Illinois, causing twelve million dollars damage in Champaign County alone.

2004 - Dallas receives 3 inches of snow, wreaking havoc with Valentine's Day flower deliveries. The greatest snowfall since 1978 caused numerous traffic accidents, power outages and flight cancellations at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

2007: Light snow fell on Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, for the first time in over 60 years. They also saw light snow on February 28th, 2019.

2010: Vancouver struggled with above average, non-winter-like temperatures during the first weekend of the 2010 Winter Olympics. In fact, Vancouver was warmer, 48 degrees, than Miami, Florida, 45 degrees!

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

A MOTHER'S DESIRED NAME

Whenever we had any need, we would say "Ma!" If we faced a problem, were in trouble, had a banged-up knee or a cut or bruise, we would still say "Ma." Often it would be "Thanks, Ma" or "Please, Ma?" even "Ma, why me?" or "Ma! I need help!" But all of us called her "Ma." It contained feelings of warmth and comfort, reassurance in times of trouble and difficulty, or happy smiles and laughing voices on special occasions. Now it brings precious memories of a saint reading her Bible, kneeling quietly in prayer for her children, or leading a large number of children to a Child Evangelism class. "Ma" deserved to be called "blessed!"

Solomon raised the bar on motherhood to its highest level when he wrote, "Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also and he praises her." This verse suggests a scene at a banquet or special gathering when children gather together and publicly announce to the world that their mother is worthy of being called "Blessed." It is not a term that is used to praise God. Its strict use is for one person to praise another person for outstanding accomplishments. In this instance, it is children praising their mother for her influence on and in their lives by imparting God's wisdom as their foundation for successful living.

The husband is also part of the celebration and "he also praises her." What a beautiful picture of a family! Too often we hear of dysfunctional families, broken families, single-parent families, blended families, neglected families - every type of family imaginable except families that have a mother who is called "blessed" by her children and "praised" by her husband.

We desperately need homes filled with such mothers.

Prayer: Father, we need homes where Moms are called "blessed!" Give us Christian homes where the Bible is taught and lived and homes filled with Your love! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also and he praises her. Proverbs 31:28



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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2023 Community Events

- 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)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 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)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 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)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.10.23

20 29 30 52 58 19

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$67,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 44 Mins
DRAW: 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.13.23

2 17 21 22 26 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$36,070,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 44
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.13.23

1 8 15 39 48 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 14 Mins 48
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.11.23

12 14 18 23 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$51,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 44
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.13.23

12 17 26 61 69 22

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 43
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.13.23

17 26 37 61 65 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$57,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 43
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Avon 59, Gayville-Volin 44
Bennett County 55, Oelrichs 24
Brandon Valley 73, Tea Area 65
DeSmet 66, Canistota 42
Deubrook 45, Deuel 28
Ethan 50, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 35
Gregory 53, Colome 16
Hanson 76, Beresford 47
Harding County 66, Bison 22
Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 47, Lemmon 35
Hitchcock-Tulare 55, Aberdeen Christian 26
Howard 57, Mitchell Christian 17
Lakota Tech 62, Rapid City Christian 56
Lower Brule 48, Little Wound 44
Miller 61, Potter County 41
New Underwood 29, Faith 26
Parkston 70, Bon Homme 40
Pine Ridge 42, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 28
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 70, Aberdeen Central 38
Sisseton 77, McLaughlin 37
Tri-Valley 63, McCook Central/Montrose 44
West Central 48, Elk Point-Jefferson 37
Wolsey-Wessington 87, Sully Buttes 81, OT

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Avon 54, Gayville-Volin 38
Baltic 67, Elkton-Lake Benton 40
Colman-Egan 48, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 43
Deuel 60, Deubrook 42
Ethan 65, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 24
Faulkton 65, Florence/Henry 57
Gregory 60, Colome 32
Hankinson, N.D. 81, Wilmot 70
Howard 58, Mitchell Christian 27
Jones County 58, New Underwood 33
Lower Brule 87, Little Wound 47
Milbank 55, Estelline/Hendricks 42
Miller 86, Potter County 60
Parkston 56, Bon Homme 39
Timber Lake 75, Dupree 61
Wakpala 75, North Central Co-Op 50
Wall 51, Kadoka Area 44
Wolsey-Wessington 59, Sully Buttes 49

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

Haley announces presidential campaign, challenging Trump

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador, announced her candidacy for president on Tuesday, becoming the first major challenger to former President Donald Trump for the 2024 Republican nomination.

The announcement, delivered in a video, marks an about-face for the ex-Trump Cabinet official, who said two years ago that she wouldn't challenge her former boss for the White House in 2024. But she changed her mind in recent months, citing, among other things, the country's economic troubles and the need for "generational change," a nod to the 76-year-old Trump's age.

Haley, 51, is the first in a long line of Republicans who are expected to launch 2024 campaigns in the coming months. Among them are Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina.

President Joe Biden has said he intends to seek reelection in 2024, stalling any jostling for the Democratic nomination.

Haley has regularly boasted about her track record of defying political expectations, saying, "I've never lost an election, and I'm not going to start now."

If elected, Haley would be the nation's first female president and the first U.S. president of Indian descent.

The daughter of Indian immigrants, Haley grew up enduring racist taunts in a small South Carolina town and has long referenced that impact on her personal and political arc.

She was an accountant when she launched her first bid for public office, defeating the longest-serving member of the South Carolina House in 2004. Three terms later and with little statewide recognition, Haley mounted a long-shot campaign for governor against a large field of experienced politicians.

She racked up a number of high-profile endorsements, including from the sitting South Carolina governor, Mark Sanford, and former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, a tea party darling.

With her 2010 victory, Haley became South Carolina's first female and minority governor — and the nation's youngest at 38. She earned a speaking slot at the 2012 Republican National Convention and gave the GOP response to President Barack Obama's State of the Union in 2016.

Open hearts, helping hands: Jill Biden's valentine to US

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The handprints of military children pressed onto paper hearts are decorating a corner inside the White House and the lawn as first lady Jill Biden celebrates Valentine's Day.

Three large hearts, one with the message, "Reach Out with Open Hearts and Helping Hands this Valentine's Day," and two others featuring handprints are on display on the north lawn in view of television cameras where White House correspondents stand for their live reports.

Cut-outs of dog Commander and cat Willow are also part of the display.

The theme continues inside the executive mansion as a corner of the East Wing entrance is decorated with three more large hearts, all printed with "Love," and replicas of the dog and cat. Hearts bearing the children's handprints have been strung together and hung in a window for visitors taking public tours to see.

The first lady and the children worked on the "heart" projects when she visited the U.S. Army Garrison Fort Drum, New York, home of the 10th Mountain Division, on Jan. 30. The 3- to 5-year-old children are enrolled at Fort Drum South Riva Ridge Child Development Center.

The visit was part of her Joining Forces initiative to support military and veteran families and their caregivers.

Valentine's Day is one of the first lady's favorite holidays. She also displayed Valentine's Day messages

at the White House in 2021 and 2022.

Gunmen storm hospital of newborn saved from quake in Syria

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Gunmen stormed a hospital in north Syria where a baby girl is receiving care after being born under the rubble of her family's earthquake-shattered home, a hospital official said Tuesday, adding that the attackers beat the clinic's director.

The official denied reports on social media claiming that the Monday night attack was an attempt to kidnap the infant, named Aya — Arabic for "a sign from God." Aya has been at the hospital since hours after the Feb. 6. earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria. Her mother, father and four siblings died in the disaster.

Aya has been closely followed since her birth and people from around the world have been offering to help her.

The official, who spoke condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, said the hospital's director had suspected that a nurse who was taking pictures of Aya was planning to kidnap her and kicked him out of the hospital. The nurse returned hours later accompanied by gunmen who beat up the director. The director's wife has been breast-feeding Aya.

Upon arrival at the hospital, the gunmen told local police officers protecting the girl that they were going after the director for firing their friend. They said they were not interested in Aya, according to the official.

Several people had shown up falsely claiming to be Aya's relatives, prompting local policemen to guard her. Aya's mother died after giving birth to her in the aftermath of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria. Her father and four siblings were also killed in the quake.

Aya may be able to leave the hospital as soon as Tuesday or Wednesday, according to her great-uncle, Saleh al-Badran. He said the baby's paternal aunt, who recently gave birth and survived the quake, will raise her.

Rescue workers in the northern Syrian town of Jinderis discovered the dark-haired baby girl more than 10 hours after the quake hit, as they were digging through the wreckage of the five-story apartment building where her parents lived.

Buried under the concrete, the baby still was connected by her umbilical cord to her mother, Afraa Abu Hadiya. The baby was rushed to the hospital in nearby Afrin, where she has been cared for since.

The devastating quake followed by a series of tremors that struck southeastern Turkey and northern Syria reduced many of the towns and cities inhabited by millions to fragments of concrete and twisted metal. More than 35,000 people were killed, a toll expected to rise considerably as search teams find more bodies.

The earthquake destroyed dozens of housing units in the town of Jinderis, where Aya's family had been living since 2018.

Aya's father, Abdullah Turki Mleihan, was originally from the village of Khsham in eastern Deir el-Zour province, but left in 2014 after the Islamic State group captured their village, said al-Badran, an uncle of Aya's father.

Amid ChatGPT outcry, some teachers are inviting AI to class

By JOCELYN GECKER AP Education Writer

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — Under the fluorescent lights of a fifth grade classroom in Lexington, Kentucky, Donnie Piercey instructed his 23 students to try and outwit the "robot" that was churning out writing assignments.

The robot was the new artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT, which can generate everything from essays and haikus to term papers within seconds. The technology has panicked teachers and prompted school districts to block access to the site. But Piercey has taken another approach by embracing it as a teaching tool, saying his job is to prepare students for a world where knowledge of AI will be required.

"This is the future," said Piercey, who describes ChatGPT as just the latest technology in his 17 years of teaching that prompted concerns about the potential for cheating. The calculator, spellcheck, Google,

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Wikipedia, YouTube. Now all his students have Chromebooks on their desks. "As educators, we haven't figured out the best way to use artificial intelligence yet. But it's coming, whether we want it to or not."

One exercise in his class pitted students against the machine in a lively, interactive writing game. Piercey asked students to "Find the Bot:" Each student summarized a text about boxing champion and Kentucky icon Muhammad Ali, then tried to figure out which was written by the chatbot.

At the elementary school level, Piercey is less worried about cheating and plagiarism than high school teachers. His district has blocked students from ChatGPT while allowing teacher access. Many educators around the country say districts need time to evaluate and figure out the chatbot but also acknowledge the futility of a ban that today's tech-savvy students can work around.

"To be perfectly honest, do I wish it could be uninvented? Yes. But it happened," said Steve Darlow, the technology trainer at Florida's Santa Rosa County District Schools, which has blocked the application on school-issued devices and networks.

He sees the advent of AI platforms as both "revolutionary and disruptive" to education. He envisions teachers asking ChatGPT to make "amazing lesson plans for a substitute" or even for help grading papers. "I know it's lofty talk, but this is a real game changer. You are going to have an advantage in life and business and education from using it."

ChatGPT quickly became a global phenomenon after its November launch, and rival companies including Google are racing to release their own versions of AI-powered chatbots.

The topic of AI platforms and how schools should respond drew hundreds of educators to conference rooms at the Future of Education Technology Conference in New Orleans last month, where Texas math teacher Heather Brantley gave an enthusiastic talk on the "Magic of Writing with AI for all Subjects."

Brantley said she was amazed at ChatGPT's ability to make her sixth grade math lessons more creative and applicable to everyday life.

"I'm using ChatGPT to enhance all my lessons," she said in an interview. The platform is blocked for students but open to teachers at her school, White Oak Intermediate. "Take any lesson you're doing and say, 'Give me a real-world example,' and you'll get examples from today — not 20 years ago when the textbooks we're using were written."

For a lesson about slope, the chatbot suggested students build ramps out of cardboard and other items found in a classroom, then measure the slope. For teaching about surface area, the chatbot noted that sixth graders would see how the concept applies to real life when wrapping gifts or building a cardboard box, said Brantley.

She is urging districts to train staff to use the AI platform to stimulate student creativity and problem solving skills. "We have an opportunity to guide our students with the next big thing that will be part of their entire lives. Let's not block it and shut them out."

Students in Piercey's class said the novelty of working with a chatbot makes learning fun.

After a few rounds of "Find the Bot," Piercey asked his class what skills it helped them hone. Hands shot up. "How to properly summarize and correctly capitalize words and use commas," said one student. A lively discussion ensued on the importance of developing a writing voice and how some of the chatbot's sentences lacked flair or sounded stilted.

Trevor James Medley, 11, felt that sentences written by students "have a little more feeling. More backbone. More flavor."

Next, the class turned to playwriting, or as the worksheet handed out by Piercey called it: "PI-ai Writing." The students broke into groups and wrote down (using pencils and paper) the characters of a short play with three scenes to unfold in a plot that included a problem that needs to get solved.

Piercey fed details from worksheets into the ChatGPT site, along with instructions to set the scenes inside a fifth grade classroom and to add a surprise ending. Line by line, it generated fully formed scripts, which the students edited, briefly rehearsed and then performed.

One was about a class computer that escapes, with students going on a hunt to find it. The play's creators giggled over unexpected plot twists that the chatbot introduced, including sending the students on

a time travel adventure.

"First of all, I was impressed," said Olivia Laksi, 10, one of the protagonists. She liked how the chatbot came up with creative ideas. But she also liked how Piercey urged them to revise any phrases or stage directions they didn't like. "It's helpful in the sense that it gives you a starting point. It's a good idea generator."

She and classmate Katherine McCormick, 10, said they can see the pros and cons of working with chatbots. They can help students navigate writer's block and help those who have trouble articulating their thoughts on paper. And there is no limit to the creativity it can add to classwork.

The fifth graders seemed unaware of the hype or controversy surrounding ChatGPT. For these children, who will grow up as the world's first native AI users, their approach is simple: Use it for suggestions, but do your own work.

"You shouldn't take advantage of it," McCormick says. "You're not learning anything if you type in what you want, and then it gives you the answer."

Associated Press writer Sharon Lurye contributed to this report from New Orleans.

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Russia denies claims it plans to destabilize Moldova

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia on Tuesday angrily rejected the Moldovan president's claims about an alleged plot by Moscow to overthrow her government and accused Moldovan authorities of trying to distract public attention away from the country's own domestic problems.

Moldova's President Maia Sandu said Monday that the purported Russian plot envisioned attacks on government buildings, hostage-takings and other violent actions by groups of saboteurs in order to put the nation "at the disposal of Russia" and derail its hopes to join the European Union.

Responding Tuesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed Sandu's claims as "absolutely unfounded and unsubstantiated."

"They are built in the spirit of classical techniques that are often used by the United States, other Western countries and Ukraine," Zakharova said. "First, accusations are made with reference to purportedly classified intelligence information that cannot be verified, and then they are used to justify their own illegal actions."

Sandu's claim came a week after neighboring Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country had intercepted plans by Russian secret services to destroy Moldova. Moldovan intelligence officials later said that they confirmed the allegations.

Zakharova charged that Ukrainian authorities made up the claim about a purported Russian plan to destabilize Moldova in order to draw it into a confrontation with Russia. She argued that Moldovan authorities used "the myth about a Russian threat to distract Moldovan citizens' attention from internal problems resulting from a disastrous social-economic course of the current administration and to step up the fight against dissent and political opponents."

Zakharova insisted that Russia poses no threat to Moldova and hopes to develop mutually beneficial cooperation.

Since Russian troops rolled into Ukraine nearly a year ago, Moldova, a former Soviet republic of about 2.6 million people, has sought to forge closer ties with its Western partners. Last June, it was granted EU membership candidate status, the same day as Ukraine.

In December, Moldova's national intelligence agency warned that Russia could launch a new offensive with the aim of creating a land corridor through southern Ukraine to Moldova's Moscow-backed breakaway region of Transnistria.

Transnistria broke away after a 1992 civil war but is not recognized by most countries. It extends roughly 400 kilometers (250 miles) from the eastern bank of the Dniester River to the country's border with Ukraine. Russia has about 1,500 troops nominally as "peacekeepers" in the breakaway region.

Rumors swirl about balloons, UFOs as officials stay mum

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Maybe they came from China. Maybe from somewhere farther away. A lot farther away.

The downing of four aerial devices by U.S. warplanes has touched off rampant misinformation about the objects, their origin and their purpose, showing how complicated world events and a lack of information can quickly create the perfect conditions for unchecked conjecture and misinformation.

The presence of mysterious objects high in the sky doesn't help.

"There will be an investigation and we will learn more, but until then this story has created a playground for people interested in speculating or stirring the pot for their own reasons," said Jim Ludes, a former national defense analyst who now leads the Pell Center for International Relations at Salve Regina University.

"In part," Ludes added, "because it feeds into so many narratives about government secrecy."

President Joe Biden and other top Washington officials have said little about the repeated shootdowns, which began with a suspected Chinese spy balloon earlier this month. Three more unidentified devices have been shot down, with the latest Sunday over Lake Huron. Pentagon officials said they posed no security threats but have not disclosed their origins or purpose.

On Monday, many social media sites in the U.S. lit up with theories that Biden had deployed the aerial devices as a way to distract Americans from other, more pressing issues. Those concerns included immigration, inflation, the war in Ukraine and Republican investigations into Hunter Biden, the president's son.

While the concentration of claims was highest on fringe sites popular with far-right Americans, the unfounded rumors and conspiracy theories popped up on bigger platforms like Twitter and Facebook, too.

One of the most popular theories suggested the White House and Pentagon are using the airborne devices to divert attention from a chemical spill earlier this month in Ohio.

That incident, caused by a train derailment, occurred several days before the most recent devices were shot down, and was covered extensively. Nonetheless, it remained the top subject searched on Google on Monday, showing continued public interest in the story.

Some commenters said Biden's decision to wait until the balloon had reached the East Coast before shooting it down showed he was in league with China. Others, meanwhile, chastised Biden for shooting down foreign aircraft that they imagined could be carrying bioweapons or nuclear weapons.

Misleading claims about the airborne devices have also prompted violent threats, according to an analysis by the SITE Intelligence Group, a firm that tracks extremist rhetoric online. After the White House said earlier surveillance flights went undetected during Donald Trump's presidency, an article circulated on far-right sites urging the execution of any Trump administration officials who may have withheld the information.

Trump administration officials have said they knew of no such surveillance craft.

Alongside the political conspiracy theories were suggestions that the aerial objects were extraterrestrial in origin. Photos of alleged UFOs were shared online and web searches for the term "UFO" soared around the world Sunday, according to information from Google Trends.

"Don't worry, just some of my friends of mine stopping by," Elon Musk, the CEO of Twitter, Tesla and SpaceX, joked in a tweet Sunday.

Humor aside, while the details of the different claims vary, they have two things in common: a lack of evidence and a strong distrust of America's elected leaders.

"Maybe Joe built the balloon & had Hunter launch it to scare we the people!" wrote one Facebook user. "How do WE know??? We don't!"

The federal government must balance the public's desire to know the details with the need for secrecy regarding national security and defense, Ludes said. That's not likely to satisfy Biden's critics, Ludes said, or prevent misleading explanations from going viral.

High-profile news stories and events often precede a spike in false and misleading claims as people turn to the internet for explanations. Conspiracy theories about Buffalo Bills player Damar Hamlin spread quickly after his dramatic on-field collapse in January. Something similar happened last year when the

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Nord Stream pipelines in the North Sea were damaged.

In that instance, Russia spread conspiracy theories blaming the U.S. for the sabotage. The baseless theories were quickly amplified by far-right users in the U.S. It's not the first time America's authoritarian adversaries have seized on global events to portray the U.S. as belligerent.

China has claimed the balloon shot down Feb. 4 was engaged in meteorological research. On Monday, China's foreign ministry said 10 U.S. balloons had entered Chinese airspace without permission in the past year.

Beijing's response to this latest diplomatic row seeks to portray China as the responsible actor, while sidestepping surveillance allegations made by the U.S., according to Kenton Thibault, a China expert at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, a Washington-based nonprofit that tracks foreign disinformation and propaganda.

"It's about projecting an image of responsibility and rationality, of being the adult in the room," Thibault said of China's response. "It's a clear signal to nations in the developing world that the U.S. is selfish, untrustworthy and hypocritical."

On Monday, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre did refute one viral claim to have emerged from the balloon saga.

"I know there have been questions and concerns about this, but there is no — again no indication — of aliens or extraterrestrial activity with these recent takedowns," Jean-Pierre told reporters. "I wanted to make sure that the American people knew that, all of you knew that and it was important for us to say that from here because we've been hearing a lot about it."

Gunman kills 3, then himself at Michigan State University

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and KEN KUSMER Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A gunman who opened fire at Michigan State University killed three people and wounded five, setting off an hourslong manhunt as frightened students hid in classrooms and cars. The shooter eventually killed himself, police announced early Tuesday.

Officials do not know why the 43-year-old man, whose name was not immediately released, targeted the campus. He was not a student or employee and had no affiliation with the university, according to campus police.

The shooting began Monday night at an academic building and later moved to the nearby student union, a popular gathering spot for students to eat or study. As hundreds of officers scoured the East Lansing campus, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) northwest of Detroit, students hid where they could. Four hours after the first shots were reported, police announced the man's death.

"This truly has been a nightmare we're living tonight," said Chris Rozman, interim deputy chief of the campus police department.

Ryan Kunkel, 22, was attending a class in the Engineering Building when he became aware of the shooting from a university email. Kunkel and about 13 other students turned off the lights and acted like there "was a shooter right outside the door," he said.

"Nothing came out of anyone's mouth" for over four hours, he said.

"I wasn't ready to accept that this is really going on next door," Kunkel said. "This is supposed to be a place where I'm coming, learning and bettering myself. And instead, students are getting hurt."

The shooting at Michigan State is the latest in what has become a deadly new year in the U.S. Dozens of people have died in mass shootings so far in 2023, most notably in California where 11 people were killed as they welcomed the Lunar New Year at a dance hall popular with older Asian Americans.

In 2022, there were more than 600 mass shootings in the U.S. in which at least four people were killed or wounded, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

"This is a uniquely American problem," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer lamented.

Rozman, of the campus police, said two people were killed at Berkey Hall and another was killed at the MSU Union, while five people were in critical condition at Sparrow Hospital.

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Police eventually confronted the shooter, who then died by a "self-inflicted gunshot wound," Rozman said. "We have no idea why he came to campus to do this tonight. That is part of our ongoing investigation," the deputy chief said.

Ted Zimbo said he was walking to his residence hall when he encountered a woman with a "ton of blood on her."

"She told me, 'Someone came in our classroom and started shooting,'" Zimbo told The Associated Press. "Her hands were completely covered in blood. It was on her pants and her shoes. She said, 'It's my friend's blood.'"

Zimbo said the woman left to find a friend's car while he returned to his SUV and threw a blanket over himself to hide for three hours.

During the manhunt, WDIV-TV meteorologist Kim Adams, whose daughter attends Michigan State, told viewers that students were worn down by the hourslong saga.

"They've been hiding, all the lights off in a dark room," Adams said.

Aedan Kelley, a junior who lives a half-mile (less than a kilometer) east of campus, said he locked his doors and covered his windows "just in case." Sirens were constant, and a helicopter hovered overhead.

"It's all very frightening," Kelley said. "And then I have all these people texting me wondering if I'm OK, which is overwhelming."

Michigan State has about 50,000 students, including 19,000 who live on campus. All classes, sports and other activities were canceled for 48 hours.

Interim university President Teresa Woodruff said it would be a time "to think and grieve and come together."

"This Spartan community — this family — will come back together," Woodruff said.

US defends decision to shoot down 3 unidentified objects

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House defended the shootdowns of three unidentified objects in as many days even as it acknowledged that officials had no indication the objects were intended for surveillance in the same manner as the high-altitude Chinese balloon that traversed American airspace earlier this month.

The three objects, including one shot down Sunday over Lake Huron, were unmanned and traveling at such a low altitude as to pose a risk to civilian commercial air traffic, said White House national security spokesman John Kirby. And though the Biden administration does not yet have evidence that they were equipped for spying purposes, officials have not ruled that out either, he said.

"These were decisions based purely and simply on what was in the best interests of the American people," Kirby said Monday of the action to shoot them down.

Meantime, off the coast of South Carolina where the Chinese balloon was shot down, crews have been able to recover significant debris from the site, according to a statement Tuesday from NORAD and U.S. Northern Command. It said crews have recovered "all of the priority sensor and electronics pieces identified as well as large sections of the structure."

The weeks-long succession of objects, starting with a giant white orb first detected over U.S. skies in late January, has puzzled American officials and stirred curiosity around the world. Though the three most recent objects differed in size, maneuverability and other characteristics from the surveillance balloon shot down Feb. 4 off the Carolina coast, officials moved to eliminate each one from the sky — actions that Pentagon officials believe have no peacetime precedent.

"Because we have not been able to definitively assess what these most recent objects are, we acted out of an abundance of caution to protect our security, our interests and flight safety," Kirby said.

One possibility that the U.S. has been able to rule out is any connection to extraterrestrial activity, the White House said Monday, tamping down lighthearted public speculation about aliens and outer space.

"I know there have been questions and concerns about this, but there is no — again, no — indication

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of aliens or extraterrestrial activity with these recent takedowns," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said at the outset of a press briefing.

Other Western nations are also trying to assess the spate of incidents. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Monday that the government would do "whatever it takes" to protect the country, as the U.K. announced a security review. And Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said "there is some sort of pattern" to the balloon and three other objects, though the U.S. has not echoed that claim.

Kirby spoke from the White House podium hours after China alleged that more than 10 U.S. high-altitude balloons have flown in its airspace during the past year without its permission. American officials have vigorously denied the claim, with Kirby saying Monday, "We are not flying surveillance balloons over China."

The Chinese allegation came after the U.S. shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon that had crossed from above Alaska to South Carolina over a period of multiple days, sparking a new crisis in bilateral relations that have sunk to their lowest level in decades and prompted Secretary of State Antony Blinken to cancel a planned visit to China.

At the time, Blinken said he hoped to reschedule the trip at an appropriate time. but there are several upcoming opportunities for high-level talks with the Chinese, including as early as this weekend. Blinken and Wang Yi, the Chinese Communist Party foreign policy chief, will both be in Munich, Germany, for the annual Munich Security Conference that begins Friday.

The State Department said no meeting between the men has been scheduled but spokesman Ned Price added that the U.S. is "always assessing options for diplomacy." "We are open and we are committed to keeping lines of communication open," he told reporters.

The latest of the three objects was shot down Sunday over Lake Huron after being detected a day earlier over Montana.

On Friday, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, the combined U.S.-Canada organization known as NORAD that provides shared defense of airspace over the two nations, detected and shot down an object near sparsely populated Deadhorse, Alaska.

Later that evening, NORAD detected a second object flying at a high altitude over Alaska, U.S. officials said. It crossed into Canadian airspace Saturday and was over the Yukon, a remote territory, when it was ordered shot down by Trudeau.

In both of those incidents, the objects were flying at roughly 40,000 feet (12,000 meters). The object on Sunday was flying at about 20,000 feet (6,000 meters).

None of the three most recent objects has been recovered, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters in Brussels, where he was scheduled to attend a NATO defense ministers meeting this week.

Austin said weather has impeded recovery efforts in Alaska, while in Canada the object was shot down in a very remote area that was also impeding efforts. In Alaska, where the object landed on sea ice, wind chill and safety concerns "are dictating recovery timelines," he said.

Rescuers find more alive in Turkey, more aid reaches Syria

By BERNAT ARMANGUÉ and ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

ANTAKYA, Turkey (AP) — Aid agencies and governments stepped up a scramble to send help to earthquake-hit parts of Turkey and Syria on Tuesday, as rescuers continued to pull survivors out of the rubble more than 200 hours after devastation swept the region.

Politics weighed on efforts to rush in aid, as many survivors still waiting for tents slept outside in freezing weather. Efforts to help survivors and count the dead and injured in Syria were marred by the continued divisions from 12 years of civil war.

On Tuesday, the United Nations announced a deal with Damascus to deliver U.N. aid through two more border crossings from Turkey to rebel-held areas of northwest Syria, which was likely to help in the short term.

The death toll eclipsed 35,500 — nearly 32,000 of those in Turkey. In Syria, the toll in the northwestern

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rebel-held region has reached 2,166, according to the rescue group known as the White Helmets. Over 1,400 people have died in government-held areas, according to the Syrian Health Ministry.

The toll is nearly certain to rise as search teams turn up more bodies following the magnitude 7.8 and 7.5 quakes that struck nine hours apart on Feb. 6 in southeastern Turkey and northern Syria — and the window for finding survivors was closing.

In Adiyaman province, rescuers reached 18-year-old Muhammed Cafer Cetin, and medics gave him an IV with fluids before attempting a dangerous extraction from a building that crumbled further as rescuers were working. Medics fitted him with a neck brace and he was carted away on a stretcher with an oxygen mask, Turkish TV showed.

Two others were rescued from a destroyed building in central Kahramanmaras, near the epicenter. Dozens of rescuers and Turkish soldiers at the site hugged and clapped after the rescues including that of Muhammed Enes, 17, who was seen wrapped in a thermal blanket and carried on a stretcher to an ambulance in images shown by broadcaster Haberturk.

Rescuers then asked for quiet, and one shouted “Can anyone hear me?” in the frenzied hunt for more survivors.

In hard-hit Hatay, Sengul Abalioglu lost her older sister and four nephews. “It doesn’t matter if they’re dead or alive, we just want our corpses so that they at least have a grave and we can bury them,” she told The Associated Press, devastated as she waited in front of the rubble where her family could be.

The United Nations said Monday that President Bashar Assad of Syria had agreed to open two new crossing points from Turkey to his country’s rebel-held northwest to allow in aid and equipment for millions of victims. The crossings at Bab al-Salameh and Al Raée are to be opened for an initial period of three months, but it wasn’t immediately clear when and if the U.N. aid would get through.

Until now, the U.N. has only been allowed to deliver aid to the Idlib area through a single crossing at Bab Al-Hawa, and the world body has been under intense pressure to get more aid and heavy equipment into northwest Syria.

Russia bristled about the deal, with its Foreign Ministry denouncing an alleged Western push to get aid “exclusively” to areas not controlled by the Syrian government.

“We are on day nine and we are still hearing the question of when will aid get in. We heard yesterday that two crossings may be opened,” Mahmoud Haffar, head of local council in Jenderis, one of the worst-hit communities in northwestern Syria, told AP. “We hope there is more international interaction and that international aid comes to alleviate the crisis.”

“But so far no aid has come,” he said.

A first Saudi aid plane, carrying 35 tons of food, landed in government-held Aleppo on Tuesday, according to Syrian state media. The wealthy Gulf kingdom has raised some \$50 million to help Turkey and Syria. Saudi planes have previously landed in Turkey, and Saudi trucks delivered some aid into impoverished rebel-held northwestern Syria.

Several other Arab countries have sent planes loaded with aid to government-held Syria, including Jordan and Egypt, the United Arab Emirates. Algeria, Iraq, Oman, Tunisia, Sudan and Libya have also delivered aid to Damascus.

The quake affected 10 provinces in Turkey that are home to some 13.5 million people, as well as a large area in northwest Syria that is home to millions.

Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay said late Monday that rescue work continued in Hatay province, along with Kahramanmaras — the epicenter — and Adiyaman. Rescue work appears to have ended in the remaining seven provinces.

The needs were immense, and incoming aid was still short of fulfilling them. Much of the water system in the quake-hit region was not working, raising the risks of contamination. Turkey’s health minister said samples taken from dozens of points of the water system showed the water was unsuitable to drink.

More than 41,500 buildings were either destroyed or so damaged that they need to be demolished, according to Turkey’s Ministry of Environment and Urbanization.

Many in Turkey have blamed faulty construction for the vast devastation, and authorities continued tar-

getting contractors allegedly linked with buildings that collapsed. Turkey has introduced construction codes that meet earthquake-engineering standards, but experts say the codes are rarely enforced.

Indian officials search BBC offices after Modi documentary

By KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Officials from India's Income Tax Department searched the BBC's offices in New Delhi and Mumbai on Tuesday, weeks after it broadcast a controversial documentary about Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the British broadcaster said.

The BBC said it was cooperating fully. "We hope to have this situation resolved as soon as possible," it said in a statement.

Teams from the tax department are looking at documents related to the BBC's business operations and its Indian arm, the Press Trust of India news agency reported, citing unidentified sources.

Indian tax authorities declined to comment.

Rights groups and opposition politicians denounced the move as an intimidation tactic intended to quash the media.

The search continues "a trend of using government agencies to intimidate and harass press organizations that are critical of government policies or the ruling establishment," the Editors Guild of India said in a statement.

The investigation is "undemocratic" and "reeks of desperation and shows that the Modi government is scared of criticism," tweeted K.C. Venugopal, general secretary of the opposition Congress party. "We condemn these intimidation tactics in the harshest terms."

Gaurav Bhatia, a spokesperson for Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party, said the BBC shouldn't have anything to fear if it follows Indian laws. But he added that the history of the BBC is "tainted" and "full of hatred" for India and called the broadcaster corrupt, without offering any specifics.

Last month, the BBC broadcast a documentary in the U.K. titled "India: The Modi Question" that examined Modi's role during 2002 anti-Muslim riots in the western state of Gujarat, where he was chief minister at the time. More than 1,000 people were killed in the violence.

Modi has denied allegations that authorities under his watch allowed and even encouraged the bloodshed, and the Supreme Court said it found no evidence to prosecute him. Last year, the court dismissed a petition filed by a Muslim victim questioning Modi's exoneration.

The second portion of the two-part documentary examined "the track record of Narendra Modi's government following his re-election in 2019," according to the program's description on the BBC website.

The program prompted an immediate backlash from the government, which invoked emergency powers under its information technology laws to block it. Local authorities scrambled to stop screenings organized at a number of Indian universities, and social media platforms including Twitter and YouTube complied with government requests to remove links to the documentary.

Critics and political opponents decried the ban as an assault on press freedom in India.

The BBC said in a statement at the time that the documentary was "rigorously researched" and involved a wide range of voices and opinions.

"We offered the Indian Government a right to reply to the matters raised in the series — it declined to respond," the statement said.

India's Foreign Ministry called the documentary a "propaganda piece designed to push a particularly discredited narrative" that lacked objectivity.

Many lawmakers from Modi's party criticized the program as an attack on India's sovereignty. Last week, Hindu right-wing nationalists petitioned the Supreme Court for a complete ban on the BBC. The court dismissed their plea, calling it "absolutely meritless."

Human Rights Watch said earlier that the banning of the documentary reflects a broader crackdown on minorities under the Modi government, which the rights group said has frequently invoked draconian laws to muzzle criticism. In recent years, India's Muslim minority has been at the receiving end of violence

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from Hindu nationalists emboldened by a prime minister who has said little about such attacks since he was first elected in 2014.

Press freedom in India has been on a steady decline in recent years. The country fell eight places, to 150 out of 180 countries, in the 2022 Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders. Media watchdog groups also accuse the Modi government of silencing criticism on social media under a sweeping internet law that puts digital platforms including Twitter and Facebook under direct government oversight.

Some media outlets critical of the government have been subjected to tax searches.

Authorities searched the offices of the left-leaning website NewsClick and independent media portal NewsLaundry on the same day in 2021. Tax officials also accused the Dainik Bhaskar newspaper of tax evasion in 2021 after it published reports of mass funeral pyres and floating corpses that disputed the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2017, the government's investigation bureau said it was probing cases of loan defaults when it raided the offices of New Delhi Television, known for its liberal slant.

Who should lead? Democrats, Republicans struggle to decide

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — While President Joe Biden and his predecessor, Donald Trump, are preparing for a possible rematch in 2024, a new poll finds a notable lack of enthusiasm within the parties for either man as his party's leader and a clear opening for new standard-bearers.

About a third of both Democrats and Republicans are unsure of who they want leading their party, according to the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

No single Democrat captivates significant support when asked who should be their party's leader; instead, Democrats sprinkle their attention across more than a dozen politicians. Yet they also feel more hopeful than dejected about their party. Some Republicans, meanwhile, coalesce around a couple of individuals — Trump included. But a majority remain uncommitted to him despite his grip on the party, and Republicans have grown somewhat more pessimistic about the GOP's future.

The findings reflect a deep sense of uncertainty about the future of the nation's political parties and the challenges both face in tethering their frayed — and perhaps disenchanted — coalitions.

For Democrats, it's another warning sign about the depth of Biden's support amid concerns about nominating someone who would be 86 at the end of a second term.

"He's certainly at an age where he's not going to run for office, he's gonna walk," said David Townsend, a 58-year-old veteran services manager in Indianapolis who leans toward the Democratic Party.

Townsend said he would support Biden if he were the nominee, but he wants a new voice to lead with vigor and energy. He suggests Biden could have a role in shaping the future.

"He needs to be on the lookout for a standard-bearer, someone that could carry his message forward," Townsend said.

Despite his status as an incumbent president who has accomplished many of the party's long-sought priorities, fewer than half of Democrats — 41% — identify Biden as the current leader of the party in an open-ended question. Just 12% said they want Biden in the role.

But Democrats are far from rallying behind someone else. They lack consensus on one individual — or even two or three — to lead them. Instead, in the open-ended question, 15 people are each mentioned by between 1% and 5% of Democrats. Thirty-seven percent say they don't know or don't answer the question.

By contrast, among Republicans, 22% name Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and 20% name Trump as the individual they want to lead the party.

Republican Daniel Alvarez, 30, of Lakeland, Florida, likes both his governor, DeSantis, and Trump.

"I would preferably take either one of those guys," said Alvarez, a lineman for a telephone company. But if it came down to it, he'd choose Trump in a primary.

"The country was better" when Trump was president, he said.

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Still, there appears to be openness to a new face among Republicans, as there is among Democrats, even if there isn't someone specific in mind.

A majority of Republicans don't choose Trump or DeSantis, though no other individual comes close to their level of support. Eleven others — including former Vice President Mike Pence and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who on Wednesday is expected to launch her 2024 bid — are each named by just 1% of Republicans.

Angela Foster became emotional talking about how she feels the country is going in the wrong direction under Biden's leadership. The 66-year-old Republican-leaning independent voted for Trump in 2020.

"I would love to see Trump back in the Oval Office to straighten things up. Followed by DeSantis. That's what I want. I want an eight-year plan," she said with a laugh.

But Foster, who lives in Gallipolis, Ohio, and works part-time as a cashier, said she wants to see the Republican Party get back to its traditional values and quit the infighting.

Only 38% of Republicans say they are optimistic about the future of the Republican Party, while 36% are pessimistic and 24% say they feel neither. Pessimism has grown since October, when 27% said they were.

By comparison, more Democrats look ahead with hope. Forty-four percent of Democrats say they are optimistic about the future of the Democratic Party, while 26% are pessimistic. An additional 30% say they are neither.

Republicans who are pessimistic are less likely than optimistic ones to name a chosen leader. Overall, 34% of Republicans — more than either Trump or DeSantis get individually — say they don't know or didn't respond to the question.

Hugh Lawing considers himself an independent who leans toward the Republican Party. He doesn't want Trump to run and isn't sure about DeSantis, who he said "wants to be "Trump Jr." The 59-year-old retiree in Marietta, Georgia, hopes that more options will come forward.

"It's a long way away and it's up in the air," Lawing said.

For Democrats, there's no shortage of options, including lawmakers and others unlikely to seek the nomination. Trailing Biden at 12% as the preferred leader, new House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez each earn 5%.

Greg Davis, 34, voted for Biden in the 2020 general election. But as a self-identified social Democrat, he was "not impressed" with Biden during the primary campaign and would prefer a progressive candidate.

"I would rather he not," the Hilliard, Ohio resident said of Biden running for reelection. "But I don't really have a specific candidate in mind."

Vice President Kamala Harris, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and even former President Barack Obama are each named as the preferred party leader by 3% of Democrats.

"I can't admire that man enough," Darlene Zwolinski said of Obama.

Zwolinski, a 63-year-old acupuncturist in Lakewood, Colorado, said she's happy with what Biden has done, but he was mainly the one "to get the win" against Trump and, for that reason, might have to be the one again.

"If there was somebody in the wings that was like (Obama) that could step in, I would love to see Biden bless that person and maybe graciously bow out," she said. "However, I don't see anybody right now."

Ford to cut 3,800 jobs in Europe, mostly in Germany, UK

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Ford said Tuesday that it will cut 3,800 jobs in Europe over the next three years in an effort to streamline its operations as it contends with economic challenges and increasing competition on electric cars.

The automaker said 2,300 jobs will be eliminated in Germany, 1,300 in the United Kingdom and 200 elsewhere on the continent. It said its strategy to offer an all-electric fleet in Europe by 2035 has not changed and that production of its first European-built electric car is due to start later this year.

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The Dearborn, Michigan-based company said it is looking for “a leaner, more competitive cost structure for Ford in Europe.” The automaker will embark on consultations “with the intent to achieve the reductions through voluntary separation programs.”

The job cuts come amid a sea change in the global auto industry from gas-guzzling combustion engines to electric vehicles. Governments are pushing to reduce the emissions that contribute to climate change, and a resulting race to develop electric vehicles has generated intense competition among automakers.

It’s even stirred tensions among Western allies as the U.S. rolls out big subsidies for clean technology like EVs that European governments fear could hurt homegrown industry.

Ford aims to cut 2,800 of the European jobs in engineering by 2025 as a result of the transition to electric cars that are less complex, though it plans to keep about 3,400 engineering jobs on the continent. The remaining 1,000 jobs will be cut on the administrative side.

“Paving the way to a sustainably profitable future for Ford in Europe requires broad-based actions and changes in the way we develop, build and sell Ford vehicles,” Martin Sander, general manager of Ford’s Model e unit in Europe, said in a statement. “This will impact the organizational structure, talent and skills we will need in the future.”

“These are difficult decisions, not taken lightly,” he added. “We recognize the uncertainty it creates for our team, and I assure them we will be offering them our full support in the months ahead.”

Ford also announced in August cuts of about 3,000 white-collar jobs in North America as it reduces costs to help make the long transition from internal combustion to battery-powered vehicles.

In a step in that direction, it said Thursday that it plans to build a \$3.5 billion factory in Michigan that would employ at least 2,500 people to make lower-cost batteries for new and existing EVs.

Company officials reported that its net income fell 90% in the last three months of 2022 from a year earlier. It said costs were too high and that it contended with a global shortage of computer chips and other parts used in its vehicles.

In Europe, Ford has some 34,000 employees at wholly owned facilities and consolidated joint ventures.

Idris Elba on James Bond: ‘I’m not going to be that guy’

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Actor Idris Elba says he’s going to stick with being the tormented detective John Luther — not James Bond.

Speaking Tuesday to the World Government Summit in Dubai, Elba brought up the persistent discussions about him taking over as Ian Fleming’s famed British spy. Those had grown louder after Daniel Craig’s demise as Bond in the 25th film in the franchise called “No Time to Die.”

Asked about his upcoming film based on the British series “Luther,” Elba clearly took himself out of playing 007.

“It’s very dark,” Elba said of the series. “We’ve been working on the television show for about 10 years and so the natural ambition is to take it to the big screen, and so we’re here with the first movie.”

He added: “You know, a lot of people talk about another character that begins with ‘J’ and ends with ‘B,’ but I’m not going to be that guy. I’m going to be John Luther. That’s who I am.”

“Luther: The Fallen Sun” is due to come out in American theaters on Feb. 24, then stream on Netflix beginning March 10. It also co-stars Andy Serkis and other actors from the television series.

Elba, 50, is known for a variety of television and film roles, ranging from Stringer Bell on the American television series “The Wire” and the recent movie “Beast.”

While on stage, Elba discussed an upcoming film he’s working on with the American actor and wrestler John Cena called “The Heads of State.”

“He plays the American president. I play the British prime minister,” Elba said. “We get into a caper. I’m very excited about doing that because leadership comes in many different forms.”

In recent weeks, Elba has appeared at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he and his wife Sabrina Dhowre Elba received an award for their work on food security in Africa. Elba also has

worked as an anti-crime ambassador with his "Don't Stab Your Future" initiative in the United Kingdom, where he grew up in east London.

During his talk, Elba urged nations to invest more in creative industries, saying it can provide an economic engine that provides jobs to their youth. In particular, he said creative jobs could greatly help countries in Africa.

"I believe that Africa, especially as a continent, needs to hold a narrative, change a narrative," he said.

Discussing storytelling, Elba also praised Dubai for its "incredible tourism story" that it has developed over the last decades. The city-state is seeing a new real estate boom, fueled in part by Russian cash amid Moscow's war on Ukraine.

"I think Dubai should win an Oscar because the (place) is incredible," Elba said to applause. "It's a very, very good job and other countries should take note."

3 people killed at Michigan State University; gunman dead

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and KEN KUSMER Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A gunman opened fire Monday night at Michigan State University, killing three people and wounding five more, before fatally shooting himself miles away after an hours-long manhunt that forced frightened students to hide in the dark.

Police announced the man's death early Tuesday, four hours after shootings broke out at Berkey Hall, an academic building, and later nearby at the MSU Union, a popular hub to eat or study.

"This truly has been a nightmare we're living tonight," said Chris Rozman, interim deputy chief of the campus police department.

Hundreds of officers had scoured the East Lansing campus, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) northwest of Detroit, for the suspect, whom police described as a short Black man with red shoes, a jean jacket and a ball cap.

The 43-year-old man was confronted by police off campus before killing himself with a "self-inflicted gunshot wound," Rozman said.

His name was not immediately released, nor any details about the gun or what police found at the scene. Rozman said the man was not a student or employee and had no affiliation with Michigan State.

"We have no idea why he came to campus to do this tonight. That is part of our ongoing investigation," the deputy chief said.

The shooting at Michigan State is the latest in what has become a deadly new year in the U.S. Dozens of people have died in mass shootings so far in 2023, most notably in California where 11 people were killed as they welcomed the Lunar New Year at a dance hall popular with older Asian Americans.

In 2022, there were more than 600 mass shootings in the U.S. in which at least four people were killed or injured, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

"This is a uniquely American problem," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer lamented.

Rozman said two people were killed at Berkey and another was killed at the MSU Union, while five people were in critical condition at Sparrow Hospital.

By 10:15 p.m., police said Berkey, as well as nearby residence halls, were secured.

Ted Zimbo said he was walking to his residence hall when he encountered a woman with a "ton of blood on her."

"She told me, 'Someone came in our classroom and started shooting,'" Zimbo told The Associated Press. "Her hands were completely covered in blood. It was on her pants and her shoes. She said, 'It's my friend's blood.'"

Zimbo said the woman left to find a friend's car while he returned to his SUV in a parking deck and threw a blanket over himself to hide for three hours.

Ryan Kunkel, 22, was attending a class in the Engineering Building when he became aware of the shooting from a university email. Kunkel and about 13 other students turned off the lights and acted like there "was a shooter right outside the door," he said.

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"Nothing came out of anyone's mouth" for over four hours, he said.

"I wasn't ready to accept that this is really going on next door, like right next to me. It's on my campus," Kunkel said. "This is supposed to be a place where I'm coming, learning and bettering myself. And instead, students are getting hurt."

Before the gunman was found dead, WDIV-TV meteorologist Kim Adams, whose daughter attends Michigan State, told viewers that students were worn down by the hourslong saga.

"They've been hiding, all the lights off in a dark room," Adams said.

Aedan Kelley, a junior who lives a half-mile (less than a kilometer) east of campus, said he locked his doors and covered his windows "just in case." Sirens were constant, and a helicopter hovered overhead.

"It's all very frightening," Kelley said. "And then I have all these people texting me wondering if I'm OK, which is overwhelming."

Michigan State has about 50,000 students, including 19,000 who live on campus. All classes, sports and other activities were canceled for 48 hours.

Interim university President Teresa Woodruff said it would be a time "to think and grieve and come together."

"This Spartan community — this family — will come back together," Woodruff said.

For Syrian women, quake adds disaster on top of war's pain

By SARAH EL DEEB and FAY ABOUELGASIM Associated Press

ATAREB, Syria (AP) — Draped in a heavy wool shawl against the cold, Ayesha dragged her feet, her toddler granddaughter trailing behind her, as they made the 15-minute walk from her tent to the nearest bathroom in a nearby building, the only place they have to wash.

Seven days after the earthquake leveled their home in the northwest Syrian town of Atareb, the 43-year-old still has no access to water, electricity or heat for her and 12 family members, all crammed into a single tent.

"When I look at our house, I wonder how did anyone come out alive?" Ayesha said. "Maybe it would have been better if I died," she added. "I came from under that rubble carrying the rubble of the whole world on my shoulders."

She doesn't know how much more she and other Syrians can take. Women in particular have shouldered the responsibility of keeping shattered families together during the past 12 years of civil war. The conflict and economic collapse left millions of people dependent on international aid. Now added to the litany of hardships is destruction from the earthquake, which killed tens of thousands and left millions homeless in southern Turkey and northern Syria.

With hospitals swamped by quake victims, Ayesha can't get medical services to treat and monitor her liver disease. She and her husband both lost their sources of income in the quake. His taxi was crushed, and her stock of clothes that she once sold to neighbors was destroyed.

They have nothing to provide for their six children and their five grandchildren, including two she took in after one of her sons was killed in the war. They have to share mattresses to sleep in their tent.

"If hardships are a sign of the love of God, it means God really loves the Syrian people," Ayesha said, breaking out in tears. Like most women in this conservative community, she spoke on condition her last name be withheld.

Their tent is in a camp for quake victims in Atareb, part of the last opposition-held territory in northwest Syria, which has seen bombardment and fighting for years. Walking between rows of destroyed homes in the town, it is hard to distinguish which collapsed from the quake and which from intense military operations at the height of fighting.

Syria's war has loaded a particular burden and isolation on women, with so many men who were killed, detained, maimed or forced out of the country. The number of female-headed households across Syria increased by around 80% to comprise more than a fifth of households in 2020, according to the U.N.

Even before the quake, over 7 million women and girls across Syria needed critical health services and

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support against physical and sexual violence. Child marriage was on the rise, and hundreds of thousands of girls were out of school.

The immediate impact of the earthquake put at least 350,000 pregnancies in Syria and Turkey at risk, according to U.N. figures.

Women in the opposition-held northwest are especially vulnerable. Most of the territory's population of 4 million fled there after being displaced from other parts of Syria. Health care was already stretched thin and dependent on foreign aid. Now non-emergency medical services have been suspended to deal with the earthquake.

"We can treat the women after trauma or after delivery, but they need to go back to a safe environment with minimum housing, nutrition and clean water. Unfortunately, this is in general lacking in northwest," said Basel Termanini, chairman of the Syrian American Medical Society which has dozens of facilities in the northwest.

Throughout the war, Ayesha and her family repeatedly fled from their home in Atareb during times of bombardment to safer areas, where they would stay for months until they could return. One of her sons was killed in 2019, and she's been taking care of his two young children since.

But, she said, "in 12 years of war, we never tasted terror and pain like that night" of the earthquake.

When the quake hit before dawn on Feb. 6, Ayesha and her family managed to get out of her building as part of it collapsed. They stood in the cold, pouring rain, looking at the destruction in disbelief.

The building next door was completely flattened, killing many of those inside -- including a woman who had just given birth, the baby, her seven other kids and her mother, who had arrived just hours earlier to help with the newborn.

The building's dead now lie in a mass grave on the far end of a neighboring piece of farmland. The owner of the plot donated the land because cemeteries have filled up with quake victims.

Things were already hard before the earthquake. In the opposition-held territory, 90% of the population is dependent on humanitarian assistance.

There has been no work for the men, and many of the men were handicapped in the war, she said. Some women find jobs in community service and with aid groups. Others do household crafts like making soap or sewing clothes. There are hundreds of female civil defense volunteers, many of whom participated for the first time in the rescue and search missions.

But in the largely conservative community, dominated by a group once affiliated with al-Qaida, jobs for women are not easy to come by.

Halima, a 30-year-old mother of two children, lost her husband in the early days of the war. For years, she has moved between shelters for the displaced in the northwest in search of more generous donated food baskets. The quake caused cracks in the place where she's currently staying and she's afraid to stay there but has nowhere else to go.

"I pray for God's grace. Maybe someone can take care of my children," she said Sunday as she picked donated clothes at a Turkish Red Crescent warehouse.

International aid has only trickled in for quake victims in the northwest, increasing anger at the United Nations.

The sentiment has been building for some time. Humanitarian aid to Syria, locked in one of the world's most complex crises for years, has been among the best funded by donors. But the gap between funding and need has grown, and U.N. appeals for emergency responses have gone more than 50% unanswered. In 2021, the health sector in northwest Syria was 60% underfunded, with only \$6.4 million of \$23.3 million covered.

When the earthquake hit, hospitals were not only damaged by the tremors but also overwhelmed by the injured and casualties, with supplies of essential emergency kits running out. Maternity hospitals were flooded with early deliveries and complications in pregnancies.

"Mothers are still living in the streets," said Ikram Haboush, director of the maternity hospital in Atareb. "We don't have enough incubators for early deliveries. The situation is far from stable."

Over the years of conflict, Syrian women have exhausted their coping strategies. A natural disaster is

the last thing they were prepared for.

"We are tired," said Ayesha.

"For 12 years, we didn't sleep a night from fear of bombings, from air strikes, or from displacement. Now we have eternal displacement," she said. "We are living the tragedy of all tragedies."

Love blossoms in Serbia between Ukrainian, Russian 'enemies'

By JOVANA GEC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — She is from Ukraine and he is from Russia. Their love blossomed online, but with their nations at war, the odds of carrying on their relationship were stacked against them. Even so, it didn't take long for the young couple to beat the odds.

Mariia Vyhivska and Iurii Kurochkin, now both 23, fell in love while playing an online video game. But Russia's invasion of its neighbor threatened to scuttle their relationship before it even got off the ground. They boldly turned their backs on the war-engendered enmity pervading their homelands and chose to be together.

Vyhivska was living in Zvyagel, near Ukraine's capital Kyiv, and Kurochkin in St. Petersburg in Russia. Despite the seemingly insurmountable distance, the couple didn't give up.

"It wasn't hard," said Vyhivska, smiling. "I wasn't afraid, not at all. I am happy. Because I am loved."

Kurochkin recalled how the couple started making plans to meet in person.

"It was a year ago ... I started to organize my international passport, to visit Mariia in Ukraine," recalled Kurochkin. "I finished it in January, and as you know, the war started in February and it crashed all our plans."

It seemed that all hope of meeting evaporated amid the Russian onslaught in Ukraine that drew global condemnation and saw millions of Ukrainian refugees stream out of the country.

Vyhivska and Kurochkin were at a loss. She moved to Czechia soon after the war started while he stayed at home in Russia. But they didn't give up. They started sizing up "some options to live together," said Kurochkin.

The answer turned out to be Serbia, a fellow-Slavic nation in the Balkans that remained friendly with Russia, and where Russians could enter without a visa. Serbia's capital Belgrade was where Vyhivska and Kurochkin met for the first time.

"I arrived to Serbia on 27th of April and I waited for her for several days," he said. "She arrived from the Czech Republic and we met each other at the central bus station."

He was all that she imagined, said Vyhivska.

"There was this moment of unbelievable joy," she said. "I traveled for 16 hours and had no sleep, I couldn't sleep. So, I came out of the bus and I fell into his arms."

Their new life together began in that instant. A hostel served as their first abode before the couple found a small flat in a Belgrade suburb. They took up various jobs while pursuing IT studies online at a St. Petersburg university.

Life together hasn't been without its problems. Last July pro-Russian extremists in Serbia drew a huge Z sign — a symbol of Russia's invasion — on their building and assailants broke into their flat. They were also attacked by a group of hooligans, Kurochkin said.

An estimated 200,000 Russians and some 20,000 Ukrainians have come to Serbia in the past year. Many Russians set up businesses in the Balkan country, which has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia despite seeking European Union membership.

"We talk about the war sometimes but we don't have any problems between each other," said Kurochkin. "With other people, of course (we have), because there are a lot of people, there are a lot of points of view, so it is impossible to handle them all."

For Vyhivska, the biggest concern has been how she'll be perceived by fellow Ukrainians because of her relationship, even through own family has no objections at all.

"What happens next? We'll see," she said. "We don't know what happens tomorrow, there is danger

even of nuclear war, they are frightening us with that now. I can't look too far ahead."

Kurochkin said they will just take things as they come: "We are happy because we are together."

Amid quake's devastation, parallel rescue bid targets pets

By BERNAT ARMANGUÉ Associated Press

ANTAKYA, Turkey (AP) — Six days after the earthquake that flattened parts of Turkey and Syria, two survivors emerged from the rubble. They were dogs, the focus of a parallel rescue effort underway.

"One of the dogs clung to its owner's corpse, and it was absolutely a miracle that it was rescued six days later," said Csenay Tekinbas, a representative of the local HAYTAP animal welfare group.

"I hope it holds on to life," Tekinbas said of the dog that finally left its dead owner. "I hope we can give it a new life."

Already, field hospitals have been set up in four cities to care for rescued pets.

Survival is just the first step. Those hurrying to find and care for pets also struggle to give them proper care. "There is no food, bird food, chicken feed or anything in any pet shop at the moment. Because everywhere is either closed or collapsed," Tekinbas said.

Large bags of pet food are stacked at a relief station in one Antakya square, their crisp images of green lawns and happily panting pets contrasting with the grim surroundings. Nearby, a burly dog nibbles at a bowl.

The outreach to save pets goes as far as pounding down doors. After being alerted to a dog apparently left alone on the fourth floor of a building, HAYTAP workers put on hard hats and broke into the apartment to rescue a large, fluffy German shepherd.

As the dog slurped noisily at a metal bowl of water downstairs in a crumbling alley, the workers lavished affection on it. _____

Robert Bandendieck in Istanbul contributed to this report.

Some Ukrainian soldiers freeze sperm amid war with Russia

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As Vitalii Khroniuk lay facedown on the ground taking cover from Russian artillery fire, the Ukrainian soldier had just one regret: He had never had a child.

Aware that he could die at any moment, the 29-year-old decided to try cryopreservation — the process of freezing sperm or eggs that some Ukrainian soldiers are turning to as they face the possibility that they might never go home.

"It's not scary to die, but it's scary when you don't leave anyone behind," said Khroniuk, who had quickly joined the war effort, without a thought about his future, when Russia invaded Ukraine nearly a year ago.

During a vacation home in January, he and his partner went to a private clinic in Kyiv, IVMED, that is waiving the \$55 cost of cryopreservation for soldiers. The clinic has had about 100 soldiers freeze sperm since the invasion, says its chief doctor, Halyna Strelko. Assisted conception services to get pregnant currently cost \$800 to \$3,500.

"We don't know how else to help. We can only make children or help make them. We don't have weapons, we can't fight, but what we do is also important," said Strelko, whose clinic had to close during the first months of the war as Kyiv was under attack but reopened after the Russian military retreated from the area.

When Khroniuk told his partner, Anna Sokurenko, 24, what he wanted to do, she initially was unsure.

"It was very painful to realize that there is a possibility that he will not return," said Sokurenko, adding that it took her a night of reflection to agree.

She and Khroniuk spoke to The Associated Press while sitting at the clinic, where posters of smiling babies, including one that reads, "Your future is securely protected," hang in the corridor. The clinic's lab has its own backup power supply that kicks in during frequent outages from Russian missile strikes damaging

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the electric infrastructure.

Dr. Strelko, who has been in the fertility business since 1998, said the service she is offering soldiers is particularly important now, pointing to "a very aggressive part of this war with massive losses."

Russian forces have been pushing their advance on the eastern city of Bakhmut with heavy shelling and attacks that are believed to have produced massive troop losses for both Ukraine and Russia. Neither side is saying how many have died.

Sokurenko and Khroniuk married a few days after their clinic visit, and he is now fighting in the Chernihiv region near the border. She believes that a chance to have a child, even after a partner is killed at war, could smooth the deep pain of loss.

"I think it's a very important opportunity in the future if a woman loses her loved one," she said. "I understand that it will be difficult to recover from this, but it will give the sense to continue to fight, to continue to live."

Nataliia Kyrkach-Antonenko, 37, got pregnant while visiting her husband in a front-line town a few months before he was killed in battle. Her husband, Vitalii, came home to Kyiv for a short vacation 10 days before his November death and got to see an ultrasound of his unborn baby girl. He also visited a fertility clinic to freeze his sperm.

Kyrkach-Antonenko hopes to eventually have another child using that sperm. She said being able to have her late husband's children "is an incredible support."

"We have loved each other incredibly strong for 18 years," she said.

She also sees cryopreservation as a fight for the country's future.

"Their dads did everything possible to make this future happen. Now it is our turn, as women, to fight for the future of Ukraine as well, raising people with dignity. People who can continue to change the country for the better," she said.

Another couple who went to the IVMED clinic in December, Oles and Iryna, asked that only their first names be used because of privacy concerns.

Oles is in the Donetsk region, where some cities were turned into hellscapes due to fierce battles over the past months, and sees cryopreservation as an assurance.

Iryna spends her nights alone in their apartment on the outskirts of Kyiv, tossing between anxiety for her husband as he fights on the most intensive and deadly part of the eastern frontline and the numerous visits to the clinic where she is trying to get pregnant.

"Yes, it is a difficult life, with worries, bombardment, with constant anxiety for relatives. But at the same time, it is what it is," she says. "It's better to be a parent now than to put it off until you can no longer have children."

"Family is what will hold our country, and children are our future," she said. "We fight for them."

Kenya seeks divine help to end crippling, ongoing drought

By WANJOHI KABUKURU Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — With the prospect of a sixth consecutive failed rainy season in the east and Horn of Africa, Kenya's president is hoping the heavens will finally open with the help of a national day of mass prayer on Tuesday.

William Ruto announced the plans for the country's first ever day of prayer on Sunday at a service in the drought-stricken city of Nakuru, some 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the capital Nairobi. It follows a joint call by the country's spiritual leaders to dedicate an entire day to prayer to ease drought conditions in the nation.

Ruto's own ambitious economic revival strategy for the country is also dependent on a successful rainy season.

"As a government we have set out elaborate plans for food security, we have seeds, ample fertilizer, and water harvesting strategies including dams. We now need God to send us the rain," Ruto said. "I urge all people from all faiths ... to pray for our country."

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Kenya and other east African nations have been experiencing some of the worst drought conditions in decades, causing crop failure, loss of livestock, wildlife and biodiversity, and malnutrition. Domestic agriculture is a large part of Kenya's economy.

The U.N. humanitarian agency has termed the ongoing drought in the region a "rapidly unfolding humanitarian catastrophe."

Meteorologists say human-caused climate change has been exacerbating the extreme conditions.

"It is time we started including climate change as factor in our development plans," Evans Mukolwe, former director of the Kenyan and U.N. weather agencies, told The Associated Press. "The current drought which we warned about some years ago has wider ramifications on the social economic conditions of the region including peace, security, and political stability."

Mukolwe added that climate change has contributed to below average rainy seasons in the region for about three decades.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development's climate center said that since 2020, five rainy seasons have failed, affecting over 50 million people. The center will release its projections for the long rains season, typically from March to May, later in February. Early projections from other meteorological groups are not optimistic.

Around the world people from different faiths have often sought divine intervention for rain or other favorable weather. Last summer Milan's Archbishop made a pilgrimage to three churches in hopes of ending the country's dry spell and Utah's governor called for citizens to pray for rain ahead of a weekend of extreme heat.

Some Kenyans intend to heed the president's call.

Nairobi business owner Millicent Nyambura said she supported the idea, "even though it will affect my colleagues in the flower business who expect to boost sales on Valentine's Day."

Reports: T-Mobile users experience service outages across US

BELLEVUE, Wash. (AP) — Customers of wireless provider T-Mobile US Inc. reported widespread service outages in the U.S. late Monday, according to websites tracking service interruptions.

Posts on Downtetector.com and Product-Reviews.net indicated T-Mobile service outages in multiple areas of the country. Many Twitter users also reported outages.

Numerous posts by users said their service had been changed to "SOS mode," meaning they were not directly connected to a network but could still make emergency calls.

T-Mobile President of Technology Neville Ray issued a statement about the outage on Twitter early Tuesday.

"We have seen significant improvement and are operating at near normal levels," Ray said. "Our teams continue to monitor and we greatly appreciate everyone's patience. We apologize for any impacts this issue may have had for our customers."

The company did not immediately provide details of the cause or extent of the outage.

Downtetector.com provided a chart tracking service complaints within the previous 24 hours indicating a peak of more than 69,000 reported outages in a two-hour period.

Posted comments on the site came from users who said they were located in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas and Washington.

Similar service complaints on Product-Reviews.net originated from some of the same states, as well as Alabama, Connecticut, Idaho, Minnesota, New York, Nevada, South Carolina and others.

Many posts reported service eventually was restored.

U-Haul driver's NYC 'rampage' leaves 1 dead, 8 hurt

By DEEPTI HAJELA and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A man driving a U-Haul truck swerved onto sidewalks and plowed into cyclists and scooter riders in New York City on Monday, killing one person and injuring eight others before police were

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able to pin the careening vehicle against a building following a milelong pursuit through Brooklyn.

The driver was arrested and taken to a police station. His son identified him as Weng Sor, 62, a troubled man with a history of harmful behavior and stints behind bars.

The mayhem unfolded over a harrowing 48 minutes as the truck tore through Brooklyn's bustling Bay Ridge neighborhood, hitting people at several points along the way before veering on and off a highway as police gave chase.

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell described it as a "violent rampage," but said there was no evidence of "terrorism involvement."

The nine people struck by the vehicle ranged in age from 30 to 66. All were men. One of the injured people was a police officer.

The 44-year-old man who was killed suffered a head injury when he was hit by the truck roughly a half hour after it struck the first victim, the police department said in a statement.

The truck's winding route ended when a police cruiser cut it off and blocked it against a building near the entrance to a tunnel leading from Brooklyn to Manhattan, more than 3 miles (5 kilometers) from where the chase began.

Weng Sor's son, Stephen Sor, 30, told The Associated Press that his father had a history of mental illness and, until recently, was living in Las Vegas, where records show he was convicted and served time for multiple acts of violence, including stabbing his own brother.

"Very frequently he'll choose to skip out on his medications and do something like this," Stephen Sor said in an interview outside his Brooklyn home. "This isn't the first time he's been arrested. It's not the first time he's gone to jail."

The destruction shattered the late-morning routine and immediately evoked memories of other vehicle assaults on bikers and pedestrians in the crowded city, including a terrorist's deadly 2017 attack that killed eight people on a Manhattan bike path and a disturbed motorist's rampage through Times Square the same year that killed one and injured 20.

The truck struck the first victim at 10:17 a.m., police said, and other reports followed as the vehicle moved through a busy section of Brooklyn, just north of the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge along New York Harbor.

The neighborhood, a melting pot of immigrants from Europe, Asia and the Middle East, is known as the setting of "Saturday Night Fever," and parts of TV's "Blue Bloods." Each fall, it hosts a leg of the New York City Marathon.

Katherine Aronova said she saw the U-Haul run a red light, hit a delivery worker on an e-bike in the middle of the road and drag him a short distance.

"His face was covered with blood. He was unconscious," and his shoes were scattered on the sidewalk, Aronova said. "The electric bicycle was destroyed completely."

A security camera captured the truck clipping a scooter, then swerving onto a sidewalk and nearly plowing into a pedestrian, who dived to safety just in time. A police patrol car then followed the truck down the sidewalk at high speed.

"I was in shock and didn't know what was happening until I saw the police patrol was chasing it," a witness, Andrea Vasquez, said in Spanish. "Thank God that man saved himself," she added of the person who narrowly escaped.

After the chase ended, authorities examined the vehicle to make sure it didn't contain explosives.

Sor rented the truck in West Palm Beach, Florida on Feb. 1 and was due to return it there on March 3, U-Haul spokesperson Jeff Lockridge said. He provided a valid driver's license and paid for a 30-day rental in advance. U-Haul had no record of Sor previously renting from the company, Lockridge said.

Stephen Sor said he was surprised when Weng Sor showed up in Brooklyn in the middle of the night about a week ago. He said they didn't speak often and described their relationship as "rocky."

"I try to just distance, as long as he leaves us alone," Stephen Sor said.

In 2015, Weng Sor stabbed his brother in Las Vegas and served about 17 months in a Nevada prison, according to court and prison records. In 2020, he stabbed someone in the arm and chest with a knife and was sentenced to 364 days in county jail, with about 10 months of time already served.

Before pleading guilty in that case, Sor underwent several months of evaluations at state psychiatric facilities until he was found competent to face charges, court records show. The records don't list a possible diagnosis, but note that Sor was placed on medications.

In an earlier Nevada case, Sor was ordered to undergo counseling and perform community service after pleading guilty to misdemeanor battery in 2005. The judge noted at the time that Sor was moving to New York and ordered him to submit to a mental health evaluation once there.

Nicaragua's vote to strip opponents of citizenship

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Last week Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega packed off 222 political leaders, priests, students, activists and other dissidents to the United States, their release long demanded by the international community.

Shortly after, Ortega's government voted to strip the former prisoners of Nicaraguan citizenship. Analysts, legal experts and human rights groups are calling it a political ploy but also a violation of international law that they say is unprecedented — at least in the Western Hemisphere — in terms of scale and impact.

A look at what has happened:

WHY DID NICARAGUA KICK THE DISSIDENTS OUT?

The expulsion comes amid a broader push by the Ortega government to quash political dissent dating back to 2018 anti-government street protests that were met by a violent response from Nicaraguan security forces.

Ortega has called his imprisoned opponents "traitors" and maintains they were behind the protests, which he claims were a foreign-funded plot to overthrow him. Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans have fled the government's crackdown.

The incarceration of government opponents became a sticking point internationally, particularly with the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden, which used their detention to justify sanctions on the Central American nation.

The release of the prisoners was, in part, a tactic to "minimize the public costs of his repression," particularly in the eyes of the international community, said Ivan Briscoe of International Crisis Group, a nonprofit research group focused on resolving conflicts around the world.

"He would prefer to revert to a steady, low-level authoritarian government in which there are no, perhaps none of the more visible forms of abuses, but continuing political control," Briscoe said.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters in Washington on Monday that the release of the prisoners was considered "a constructive step," and is something Biden officials have said would open a door to a dialogue between the two countries.

But Ortega's Congress simultaneously voting to strip the citizenship of the expelled prisoners is drawing criticism.

"This was in no way a panacea for the many concerns we have with the Nicaraguan regime, including the repression and oppression it continues to wield against its own people," Price said.

While Nicaragua's Congress still needs to carry out a second vote to approve the constitutional change to formally strip those expelled of their nationality, it was unanimously approved in the initial vote. Ortega's firm hold on power leaves any other outcome highly unlikely.

"I think the message is very clear: On my land, there will be no opposition," said Briscoe.

WHY DO EXPERTS SAY IT VIOLATES INTERNATIONAL LAW?

Peter J. Spiro, an international law professor at Temple University, and others say stripping away citizenship in this context violates a treaty adopted in 1961 by countries in the United Nations, including Nicaragua, which sets clear rules meant to prevent statelessness.

The treaty states that governments cannot "deprive any person or group of persons of their nationality

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on racial, ethnic, religious or political grounds.”

Spiro noted there are some circumstances when governments can terminate citizenship, such as ending nationality for someone who acquires citizenship in another country when the first nation prohibits dual citizenship. But, he said, ending citizenship is not allowed when it is used as a political weapon.

“This is banishment, and banishment is antithetical to modern conceptions of human rights,” he said.

Spain has offered its citizenship to the 222 exiles, while the U.S. granted the Nicaraguans a two-year temporary protection.

But many of the former prisoners in the United States are left in a state of legal and mental flux, said Jennie Lincoln, an academic in contact with many of the exiles.

“Psychologically they are stateless,” Lincoln said. “They’re in shock, going from one day being in prison, then hours later on a plane to the United States. Imagine the psychological impact of that, and then being stripped of your citizenship.”

HOW COMMON IS THE REVOCATION OF CITIZENSHIP?

The move by Ortega is unprecedented in the Western Hemisphere, in both its size and reach, according to analysts and legal experts.

Previous cases of states in the region moving to strip citizenship of political actors have always been limited in scale.

In Chile in the 1970s, the Pinochet dictatorship stripped the citizenship of Orlando Letelier, who was living in exile where leading opposition to political repression in the South American nation.

Spiro, at Temple University, said Ortega’s action does bear some resemblance to what has been done in Bahrain, in the Middle East.

Over the course of years, the Bahrain government has stripped hundreds of human rights and political activists, journalists and religious scholars of their nationalities, leaving them stateless. In 2018, a court stripped 115 people of their citizenship in one mass trial on accusations of terrorism, according to Human Rights Watch.

“But Ortega’s move is more high-visibility,” Spiro said.

WHAT ABOUT PRISONERS WHO DIDN’T GO TO THE U.S.?

Experts are especially concerned about Roman Catholic Bishop Rolando Álvarez, a vocal critic of Ortega who refused to board the plane to the U.S. with the other prisoners.

He told those close to him that if he got on the plane, it would be like admitting to a crime he never committed.

Shortly after, Álvarez was sentenced to 26 years in prison — famous for their poor conditions — and stripped of his citizenship within Nicaragua, something sharply condemned by State Department officials.

It left him in a legal limbo more extreme than his counterparts in the U.S.

Until now, no one has been able to contact Álvarez, nor confirm for themselves where he is or if the he is safe, said a person close to Álvarez, who asked not to be quoted by name out of fear of reprisal.

“From a legal point of view, his future looks completely grim, and he knows it,” the man said.

US inflation likely eased again last month if more gradually

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. inflation likely slowed again last month in the latest sign that consumer price increases are becoming less of a burden on America’s households. But Tuesday’s report from the government may also suggest that further progress in taming inflation could be slow and “bumpy,” as Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has described it.

Consumer prices are expected to have risen 6.2% in January from 12 months earlier, down from a 6.5% year-over-year surge in December. It would amount to the seventh straight slowdown.

On a monthly basis, though, inflation is expected to have jumped 0.5% from December to January, according to a survey of economists by the data provider FactSet. That would be much faster than the 0.1%

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uptick from November to December.

So-called core prices, which exclude volatile food and energy costs to provide a clearer view of underlying inflation, are also expected to have slowed on a 12-month basis. They are forecast to have increased 5.5% in January from a year earlier, down from a 5.7% year-over-year rise in December.

But for January alone, economists estimate that core prices jumped 0.4% for a second straight month — roughly equivalent to a 5% annual pace, far above the Fed's target of 2%.

"The process of getting inflation down has begun," Powell said in remarks last week. But "this process is likely to take quite a bit of time. It's not going to be, we don't think, smooth, it's probably going to be bumpy."

Average gasoline prices, which had declined in five of the past six months through December, likely rose about 3.5% in January, according to an estimate from Nationwide. Food prices are also expected to have risen, though more slowly than the huge spikes of last summer and fall.

On a brighter note, clothing and airfare costs are thought to have barely budged from December to January. And economists have estimated that hotel room prices fell sharply.

Overall, the government's inflation report will likely show the continuation of a pattern that has emerged in recent months: The costs of goods — ranging from furniture and clothing to toys and sporting goods — are falling. But the prices of services — restaurant meals, entertainment events, dental care and the like — are rising faster than they did before the pandemic struck and threaten to keep inflation elevated.

Goods have become less expensive because supply chain snarls that had inflated prices after the pandemic erupted in 2020 have unraveled. And Americans are shifting much of their spending toward services, after having splurged on items like furniture and exercise equipment during the pandemic.

Yet average wages are rising at a brisk pace of about 5% from a year ago. Those pay gains, spread across the economy, are likely inflating prices in labor-intensive services. Powell has often pointed to robust wage increases as a factor that's driving up services prices and keeping inflation high even as other categories, like rent, are likely to decelerate in price.

The Biden White House last week calculated a measure of wages in service industries excluding housing — the sector of the economy that Powell and the Fed are most closely tracking. The administration's Council of Economic Advisers concluded that wages in those industries for workers, excluding managers, soared 8% last January from a year earlier but have since slowed to about a 5% annual pace.

That suggests that services inflation could soon slow, especially if the trend continued. Still, wage gains of that level are still too high for the Fed's liking. The central bank's officials would prefer to see wage growth of about 3.5%, which they see as consistent with their 2% inflation target.

A key question for the economy this year is whether unemployment would have to rise significantly to achieve that slowdown in wage growth. Powell and other Fed officials have said that curbing high inflation would require some "pain" for workers. Higher unemployment typically reduces pressure on businesses to pay bigger wages and salaries.

Yet for now, the job market remains historically very strong. Earlier this month, the government reported that employers added 517,000 jobs in January — nearly twice December's gain. The unemployment rate dropped to 3.4%, the lowest level since 1969. Job openings remain high.

Powell said last week that the jobs data was "certainly stronger than anyone I know expected," and suggested that if such healthy readings were to continue, more rate hikes than are now expected could be necessary.

Other Fed officials, speaking last week, stressed their belief that more interest rate increases are on the way. The Fed foresees two more quarter-point rate hikes, at its March and May meetings. Those increases would raise its benchmark rate to a range of 5% to 5.25%, the highest level in 15 years.

The Fed lifted its key rate by a quarter-point when it last met on Feb. 1, after carrying out a half-point hike in December and four three-quarter-point increases before that.

The financial markets envision two more rate increases this year and don't expect the Fed to reverse course and cut rates until sometime in 2024. For now, those expectations have ended a standoff between the Fed and Wall Street investors, who had previously been betting that the Fed would be forced to cut

rates in 2023 as inflation fell faster than expected and the economy weakened.

Key witness testifies about bribing ex-Mexico security chief

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A key prosecution witness testified Monday that he delivered millions of dollars in payoffs destined for former Mexican public safety chief Genaro García Luna but that the two didn't directly discuss what the money was allegedly buying: impunity for the infamous Sinaloa cartel.

Former member Jesús "El Rey" Zambada testified at García Luna's U.S. drug trafficking trial four years after catalyzing the case by airing allegations about García Luna at the trial of Sinaloa kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. García Luna was subsequently arrested; he denies the charges.

Zambada is the latest in a series of ex-cartel members and admittedly corrupt former law enforcement officials to testify against García Luna. The former cartel member echoed descriptions of cocaine shipments by planes, trains and even submarines, abetted by police and officials under García Luna's oversight — and, Zambada said he was told, by the federal police leader-turned-presidential cabinet member himself.

Zambada described an arm's-length quid pro quo. He said he made payments to García Luna through an intermediary who told him that the security chief would shield the cartel, which the witness' brother, Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, helped lead.

The relayed message: "He was going to provide protection to my brother. He's not going to bother him. He was going to let him keep on working just as he had been," Jesús Zambada testified, through an English-language interpreter.

He said he was told that when the cartel wanted friendly police commanders in various locales, García Luna would help. And indeed, the cartel was able to get its preferred commanders placed, Zambada said.

The alleged intermediary died in 2010. Zambada didn't say he personally handed money to or got assurances from García Luna.

Indeed, Zambada said he quickly excused himself when García Luna showed up earlier than expected for a \$2 million meeting with the go-between in a fancy Mexico City restaurant in 2006. Zambada told jurors it had cost another \$3 million for a similar, earlier meeting.

On both occasions, Zambada said, he gave the money to the intermediary, who met with García Luna in a private room at an upscale Mexico City eatery called Champs Élysées. Zambada said that at least the first time, he waited in a bar area while the discussions happened and watched the security chief leave with luggage that had been packed with cartel cash.

García Luna indicated Monday he doesn't plan to testify at his trial. His lawyers haven't yet had their turn to present witnesses.

The attorneys have argued that the prosecution is relying on untrustworthy criminals who are cooperating with the government to trim their own sentences or to avenge themselves on García Luna for trying to crack down on the drug trade.

In questioning Zambada, defense lawyer César de Castro emphasized that the witness admitted to conspiring in cartel killings.

"That makes you responsible for these people's deaths, right?" the attorney asked.

"Partly, yes," Zambada replied.

Zambada was arrested in Mexico in 2008 and extradited to the U.S. four years later. He pleaded guilty to drug and other charges that could have gotten him life in prison.

He ultimately was sentenced to 12 years after cooperating with the government. He is now on supervised release.

De Castro noted that Zambada didn't mention García Luna until he'd met with U.S. prosecutors multiple times.

García Luna led Mexico's Federal Investigation Agency from 2001 to 2005, then served as secretary of public security to then-President Felipe Calderón from 2006 to 2012. In the latter role, García Luna was in charge of fighting drug cartels.

He moved to Miami in 2012 and became a security consultant.
If convicted, the 54-year-old could face decades in prison.

Experts found Chilean poet Neruda was poisoned, nephew says

By EVA VERGARA Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Forensic experts have determined that Chilean poet Pablo Neruda died of poisoning nearly 50 years ago, a family member of the Nobel Prize winner said Monday.

The revelation by Rodolfo Reyes, a Neruda nephew, is the latest turn in one of the great debates of post-coup Chile. The long-stated official position has been that Neruda died of complications from prostate cancer, but the poet's driver argued for decades that he was poisoned.

There was no confirmation of Reyes' comments from forensic experts from Canada, Denmark and Chile who are scheduled to publicly release a report Wednesday on the cause of Neruda's death.

The public release of the group's finding has been delayed twice this year, first due to internet connectivity issues of one of the experts and then again because a judge said the panel had yet to reach a consensus.

International forensics experts several years ago rejected the official cause of death as cachexia, or weakness and wasting of the body due to chronic illness — in this case cancer. But at that time they said they had not determined what did kill Neruda.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Reyes said forensic tests carried out in Danish and Canadian labs indicated a presence of "a great quantity of *Cloristridium botulinum*, which is incompatible with human life." The powerful toxin can cause paralysis in the nervous system and death.

Reyes first revealed the information to the Spanish news agency EFE earlier Monday.

As a lawyer in the judicial case over his uncle's death, Reyes said he has access to the forensic report, which was carried out after the same group of experts said in 2017 that there were indications of a toxin in the late poet's bones and a molar.

The lab tests concluded that the toxin was administered when the poet was alive, Reyes said.

The report is set to be released almost 50 years after the death of the poet and Communist Party member and 12 years after the start of a judicial investigation into whether he was poisoned, as his driver Manuel Araya maintains.

Araya told AP earlier this month he was confident that the forensic findings would support his assertion the poet died after being given "an injection in the stomach" at the clinic where he was hospitalized. Araya said he first heard that version of events from a nurse.

Neruda, who was 69 and suffering from prostate cancer, died in the chaos that followed Chile's Sept. 11, 1973, coup that overthrew President Salvador Allende and put Gen. Augusto Pinochet in power.

Neruda's body was exhumed in 2013 to determine the cause of his death but those tests showed no toxic agents or poisons in his bone. His family and driver demanded further investigation.

In 2015, Chile's government said it was "highly probable that a third party" was responsible for Neruda's death. Neruda was reburied in his favorite home overlooking the Pacific Coast last year.

In 2017, a team of international scientists determined that Neruda did not die of cancer or malnutrition, rejecting the official cause of death but not saying what he did die of.

"The fundamental conclusions are the invalidity of the death certificate when it comes to cachexia as a cause of death," Aurelio Luna, one of the panel's experts, said at that time. "We still can't exclude nor affirm the natural or violent cause of Pablo Neruda's death."

Neruda, who was best known for his love poems, was a friend of Allende, who killed himself rather than surrender to troops during the coup led by Pinochet.

Neruda was traumatized by the military takeover and the persecution and killing of his friends. He planned to go into exile, where he would have been an influential voice against the dictatorship.

But a day before his planned departure, he was taken by ambulance to a clinic in Chile's capital of Santiago where he had been treated for cancer and other ailments. Neruda officially died there Sept. 23, 1973, from natural causes.

But suspicions that the dictatorship had a hand in the death remained long after Chile returned to democracy in 1990.

The former Mexican ambassador to Chile at the time of the bloody military coup, Gonzalo Martínez Corbalá, told AP on two occasions that he saw Neruda the day before his death and that his body weight was close to 100 kilos (220 pounds). Martínez spoke to AP by phone in 2017, a few days before his death.

Araya told AP last month he still thinks that if Neruda "hadn't been left alone in the clinic, they wouldn't have killed him."

He recalled that on Neruda's instructions, on Sunday, Sept. 23, the poet's wife, Matilde Urrutia, and he were at the mansion to pick up the suitcases that would be taken to Mexico the following day. In the middle of the afternoon Neruda asked them to come back quickly. He died that same night.

During his life, Neruda accumulated dozens of prizes, including the 1971 Nobel Prize for Literature, but in recent years criticism has appeared from feminist groups over a rape he committed in the 1930s and which he recounted in his book "I Confess That I Have Lived." He also is criticized for abandoning his only daughter, Malva Marina, because she was born with hydrocephalus.

Death penalty phase begins in trial of NYC bike path killer

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jurors began hearing testimony Monday to help them decide whether an Islamic extremist who killed eight people on a New York City bike path should get a death sentence, an extraordinarily rare penalty in a state that hasn't had an execution in 60 years.

Sayfullo Saipov, 35, was convicted last month in the attack. He intentionally drove a truck at high speed down a path along the Hudson River in 2017, running over bicyclists on a sunny morning just hours before the city's Halloween celebrations.

The same jurors who found Saipov guilty returned to work after a two-week break to hear from additional witnesses in the trial's penalty phase. Anything less than a unanimous vote for death will mean Saipov will spend the rest of his life in prison.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Amanda Houle said Saipov remains proud, defiant and unrepentant for the lives he ruined and that he remains dangerous, even behind bars. She said he once smashed his prison cell door while screaming about slitting the throats of guards.

She told jurors that Saipov smiled when he described his attack to investigators hours afterward because his massacre "made him happy."

"He had no remorse then," Houle said. "And the evidence will show he has continued to have no remorse."

Defense attorney David Stern told jurors to let Saipov spend the rest of his life in a prison cell the size of a parking space in a high-security supermax prison in Florence, Colorado.

"Sayfullo Saipov did a terrible, terrible thing, and whatever you decide, he'll pay a terrible price," Stern said, referencing the attack that killed five friends from Argentina, a woman from Belgium and two Americans.

He said Saipov's family will describe what a kind person Saipov was before he fell under the spell of propaganda from the Islamic State group.

Stern told jurors to "not be like him" and think death is the solution to the pain they witness.

Saipov's lawyers achieved a legal victory Monday when Judge Vernon S. Broderick ruled that a prisoner at the Colorado supermax facility, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, can testify from the prison instead of the Manhattan courtroom.

Stern said Mohamed, 49, will testify in the penalty phase about what life is like under such strict prison conditions.

Mohamed and another man were the last two defendants to face a death penalty phase in Manhattan federal court. A jury in 2001 voted against death after the men were convicted in the 1998 synchronized bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa that killed 224 people, including a dozen Americans, and wounded thousands of others.

Stern represented Mohamed at the trial, where prosecutors said Mohamed helped build a bomb that

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exploded at the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania.

New York does not have capital punishment and hasn't executed anyone since 1963, but Saipov's trial is in federal court, where a death sentence is still an option. The last time a person was executed for a federal crime in New York was in 1954.

President Joe Biden put a moratorium on federal executions after taking office and his Justice Department has not, until now, initiated any new death penalty proceedings.

Saipov's lawyers have argued it is unconstitutional for prosecutors to seek his execution when the government has stopped seeking death in so many other cases, including some with defendants who killed more people.

"There is no rhyme, reason, or predictability as to why the government chooses to seek death in some murder cases but not in others," they wrote in one recent court filing.

They noted that then-President Donald Trump quickly urged a death sentence, tweeting a day after the attack that Saipov "SHOULD GET DEATH PENALTY!" The lawyers said it was Trump's way of furthering "his anti-immigrant agenda."

"There is a legitimate concern that the death penalty sometimes (and impermissibly) turns on the defendant's race, ethnicity, national origin, and religious beliefs," they wrote.

Broderick rejected the argument Monday before opening statements in the penalty phase began.

Houle told jurors that more victims will describe their pain during the penalty phase. In the first phase of the trial, jurors heard from survivors who described the horror and sorrow at losing loved ones and the pain they continue to suffer from injuries.

Stern acknowledged that Saipov has been unrepentant since he was shot after emerging from his truck and waving pellet and paintball guns at a police officer. Later, in a hospital bed, the Uzbekistan citizen smiled as he requested that a flag of the Islamic State group that inspired his rampage be put on his room's wall, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors plan to introduce evidence intended to show jurors that, if kept alive, Saipov may still be able to communicate with sympathizers.

Saipov's lawyers said before trial that he would be willing to plead guilty and consent to life in prison if death was not sought.

Any death sentence rendered by the jury would likely be subject to years of appeals.

New York's last federal death penalty case involved a man who murdered two police officers in 2003. Federal juries in Brooklyn twice imposed a death sentence, first in 2007 and again in 2013, but each time that sentence was ultimately overturned on appeal.

Super Bowl averages 113 million, 3rd most-watched in history

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

Fox was hoping the matchup of two top teams in the Super Bowl and a close game would lead to a record night.

Even though Sunday's game between the Kansas City Chiefs and Philadelphia Eagles came down to a field goal with 8 seconds remaining, Fox fell just short of its goal.

The Chiefs' rally to defeat the Eagles 38-35 is on pace to become the third most-watched television show in history, with an estimated 113 million people watching, according to preliminary numbers released Monday.

Fox said the audience estimate includes the broadcasts on Fox and Fox Deportes as well as streaming on Fox and the NFL's digital sites. The figures are via Nielsen's Fast National data and Adobe Analytics.

The 2015 game between New England and Seattle on NBC holds the record at 114,442,000 viewers (not including streaming), followed by Super Bowl 51 in 2017 on Fox between Atlanta and New England (113,668,000).

This was Fox's 10th Super Bowl since it began airing NFL games in 1994 and the second most-watched program in Fox Sports history.

It would also be a slight increase over the 112.3 million average for last year's Super Bowl. The Los

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Angeles Rams' victory over the Cincinnati Bengals was broadcast by NBC and Telemundo and streamed on Peacock and NFL digital sites.

According to Adobe Analytics, this year's digital feed averaged a Super Bowl-record 7 million streams, an 18% increase over last year (6 million) and more than double Fox's last Super Bowl in 2020 (3.4 million).

It was the third straight year the streaming average has surpassed 5 million. The first Super Bowl to be streamed, in 2012, averaged 346,000.

Rihanna's halftime show averaged 118.7 million viewers, making it the second-most watched in Super Bowl history. Katy Perry's 2015 performance holds the top mark at 121 million.

The Spanish-language audience average for the game was 951,000, a record for the most-watched Super Bowl game in Spanish-language cable television history. It was also the most watched non-soccer event in Spanish-language cable history.

The Spanish-language number is down from last year's record of 1.9 million on Telemundo, which unlike Fox Deportes has broadcast affiliates in 90 markets.

The Super Bowl has been televised in Spanish in the United States since 2014.

Final Nielsen data will be available on Tuesday, including the English-language television-only figures. After Super Bowls averaged over 100 million viewers from 2010-18, four of the five games before this year had fallen short of that number because of cord-cutting. That included 95.2 million for the 2021 Super Bowl between Tampa Bay and Kansas City, which was the game's lowest TV-only average since 2007.

If Sunday's number can better the 99.18 million from last year, it would mark the first time since 2015 there had been two straight years of increases.

Unsurprisingly, Kansas City and Philadelphia were the two highest-ranked markets. Kansas City led the way with a 52.0 rating and 87 share followed by Philadelphia's 46.3/77.

The rating is the percentage of television households tuned in. The share refers to a percentage of the TV-watching audience viewing a particular program at the time.

Cincinnati, which lost to the Chiefs in the AFC championship game, and Minneapolis also recorded 77 shares.

The flood of ads during what is easily television's most-watched event of the year was heavy on celebrities — Ben Affleck, Ozzy Osbourne, Matt Damon, Maya Rudolph, Martha Stewart and "Breaking Bad" cast members.

Steve Williamson, senior vice president of the market research firm GWI. said surveys show that trust in brands is down this year and companies were looking for well-known names for a boost.

"There wasn't a primary brand that took over the Super Bowl," he said. "There were all sorts of brands from alcohol to gambling to Jesus."

Fox also said 15.5 million people watched the season premiere of Gordon Ramsay's competition show "Next Level Chef" following the game. The spot after the Super Bowl is usually the most-coveted time slot on television.

Aliens? Lack of US info on shootdowns breeds wild ideas

By ZEKE MILLER, COLLEEN LONG and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With few confirmed details from President Joe Biden's White House, the downing of three unknown aerial objects in as many days by U.S. fighter jets has prompted wild speculation about what they were and where they came from. It even fell to his press secretary on Monday to announce earnestly there was no indication of "aliens or extraterrestrial activity."

The president had no public events Monday and has offered little reassurance or explanation of what to make of it all, following the discovery of a Chinese spy balloon crossing the country and the unprecedented peacetime shootdowns that have followed.

U.S. officials said they still know little about the three objects downed Friday off the coast of Alaska, Saturday over Canada and Sunday over Lake Huron. But those shootdowns have been part of a more assertive response to aerial phenomena following the balloon episode blamed on an ongoing Beijing es-

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pionage program.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre did have at least one definitive statement to try to tamp down unrestrained theories: "I know there's been questions and concerns about this, but there is no — again, no — indication of aliens or extraterrestrial activity."

The U.S. government insists the three objects did not pose a threat to American security and that even the massive spy balloon provided "limited additive capabilities" to China's other surveillance programs. Still, they were shot out of the sky "out of an abundance of caution," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

Biden's unparalleled decision to shoot down four objects over North America in eight days — when combined with U.S. officials' efforts to publicly downplay the foreign threat — has furthered the dissonant messages being sent about sensitive efforts to protect the homeland.

U.S. officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, acknowledge the confusion, saying the administration wants to keep the American public from becoming unnecessarily worried while also trying to maintain a tough posture toward China.

Kirby said that while the U.S. has no specific reasons to suspect the aerial objects were spying, "we couldn't rule that out." He added that the most recent objects, flying between 20,000 and 40,000 feet, could have posed a remote risk to civilian planes.

That legal justification for the downings — that the objects might imperil civilian flight — is viewed by some officials as such a remote possibility that it raises questions about whether it was a mere pretext for acting tough.

Biden "wants to appear tough on China, and this is a good example of where actions speak louder than words," said Brian Ott, co-author of "The Twitter Presidency: Donald J. Trump and the Politics of White Rage."

"If we find ourselves next year in a presidential debate between the two of them, Trump will try to cast Biden as weak on national security, and Biden will be able to turn to Trump and say, 'How many of these Chinese balloons and unidentified objects did you shoot out of the sky?'"

Ott, a professor of communications at Missouri State University, said Biden's relative silence on the takedown of the Chinese balloon and other objects could be guided, at least in part, by his 2024 reelection considerations. Republicans, from Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell to right-wing firebrand Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, criticized Biden in the days after the Chinese balloon was spotted in U.S. airspace for being slow to act.

When pressed on whether the decision to shoot the objects down came in response to such criticism, Kirby insisted, "These were decisions based purely and simply on what was in the best interests of the American people."

With little information to go on, senators in both parties demanded answers as they returned to Washington on Monday.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced that senators would receive a classified briefing Tuesday morning and that Congress would work in coming weeks to get the "full story of what happened." Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the No. 2 Democrat behind Schumer, said Biden "owes the country some answers."

Republican McConnell said Biden "needs to communicate and level with the American people." He questioned what the administration knew about China's surveillance efforts before the first balloon crossed the country.

After the balloon was shot down, the White House revealed that such balloons had traversed U.S. territory at least three times during Trump's administration unbeknownst to the former president or his aides — and that others have flown over dozens of nations across five continents. Kirby emphasized Monday that they were only detected by the Biden administration.

Jim Ludes, a former national defense analyst who now leads the Pell Center for International Affairs and Public Policy at Salve Regina University, said political parrying is inevitable.

"It doesn't matter what the administration says. People are going to play politics with it and try to score

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points," he said. "Either they acted too slowly, or too hastily."

There's good reason for the Biden administration to be cautious, Ludes added, noting that the blow-up over the aerial devices comes amid heightened tensions between China and Taiwan. The wrong statement from Biden could destabilize an already fraught situation.

"Next time we fly a B-52 down the straits, what does China do?" Ludes said. "There are opportunities for this to become very complex very quickly."

Kirby on Monday sought to draw a distinction between the latest objects and the confirmed surveillance balloon, emphasizing their far smaller size, lack of maneuverability and the lack of any indication they were communicating before they were shot down. They were only detected, he said, because the U.S. had adjusted the sensitivity on air defense radars to detect high-flying, slow-moving objects like the surveillance balloon.

Officials have yet to retrieve any parts of the three unidentified objects, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said, citing the treacherous terrain, water and weather where they were brought down. U.S. officials could not even say whether they were balloons or some other type of aerial vehicle, and have thus far declined to share imagery taken before they were shot down.

All that is clear, it seems, is that it wasn't ET.

Kirby echoed Jean-Pierre on that: "I don't think the American people need to be worried about aliens with respect to these craft."

Indonesia promises move to clean energy, but challenges loom

By VICTORIA MILKO and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

SAMARINDA, Indonesia (AP) — In Indonesia's region of East Kalimantan, the country's dependence on coal is on full display.

Driving on the region's toll road, passersby can watch excavators digging coal from shallow pits as trucks filled with the carbon-rich rocks rush by. Under a bridge in Samarinda, the region's capital, hundreds of mammoth, jet-black mountains of coal sit in barges being pulled along the waterway, headed to plants across Indonesia or other countries.

They're sights that Indonesia has pledged to phase out — or at least drastically reduce — by agreeing to some five schemes with international stakeholders, including the largest-signed \$20 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership deal. While the deals aim to turn one of the largest coal-producing countries toward its vast greener energy sources, experts warn that financial, policy, infrastructure and other challenges need to be overcome.

Indonesia's energy transition is "very unique" because of high economic growth, geography, population centers and clean energy potential, said David Elzinga, a principal energy specialist at the Asian Development Bank.

Despite Indonesia's energy potential from solar, hydropower, geothermal, wind and other sources, only some 12% of them are tapped, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency. Nearly all energy demand is met by fossil fuels, with 60% coming from highly-polluting coal.

That means people like boat maker Jembong, 55, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, can rely on solar for a lightbulb or to watch television. But for the energy-intensive power tools he uses to handcraft boats from his home on Karampuang Island, he needs diesel.

"If I can't use the diesel engine, I can't work," he said.

It's impacted the environment: In 2021, Indonesia's energy sector emissions were around 600 million tons of carbon dioxide, the world's ninth highest, according to the International Energy Agency. And population and economic growth are expected to triple the country's energy consumption by 2050.

"It's a challenging environment to make change while you have such substantial growth," said Elzinga. "It is different than a developed country which is characterized by having significant financial resources and low economic growth." Many more-developed economies have stronger renewable ambitions, though researchers say no country is currently in line with global climate goals.

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Indonesian officials have signaled they've started the shift: They've announced new regulations around solar, set a goal to raise the market share of electric vehicles in Indonesia to 25% of total vehicle sales by 2030 and have deployed charging stations. But experts warn Indonesia is lagging behind its Southeast Asian peers.

Indonesia has voiced it needs help from more-developed nations.

"We don't want to be limited in terms of our ability to grow economically," said Deputy Coordinating Maritime Affairs and Investment Minister Rachmat Kaimuddin. "Industrialized nations can support us."

With the new JETP deal, Indonesia will aim to reach net zero emissions from the power sector by 2050, bringing forward its target by a decade, and reach a peak in those emissions by 2030. It's increasing its target for renewable energy to make up over a third of all power generation by 2030, which would mean doubling the pace of current deployment.

But financing remains an obstacle, said Erika Hamdi, an Indonesia-based energy finance analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. By one estimate, Indonesia will need up to \$2.4 trillion in cumulative investment across the energy system by 2050 — a number far larger than the money currently pledged.

"We still have a long way to go to find out ... how we could gather up the financing to do this," said Hamdi.

How the money is provided — be it loans, grants or other funding schemes — is also a concern, said Grita Anindarini, a program director at the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law.

"We just want to make sure that these funds won't lead to a debt trap," said Anindarini.

Hamdi raised concerns over how money from transition schemes could be spent. In a recent report, she critiqued "a lack of disclosure on the selection criteria" for plants selected for early retirement buyouts by Indonesia's state-owned electric company, PLN, including some plants that will be "beyond their economic useful life by 2055." JETP funding could be used to support the buyouts.

"PLN should retire them within the next couple of years and write them off," Hamdi wrote in the report.

Another concern raised by activists is that the JETP deal doesn't make clear what, if any, restrictions it will put in place regarding Indonesia building new coal plants, or whether Indonesia would be required to decrease coal exports. A 2022 presidential regulation provides an exemption to build previously planned coal plants or those attached to nationally strategic projects.

Coal is a valuable part of Indonesia's economy, with the country being the largest exporter by tonnage in the world. Customers include China, India and Japan. The war in Ukraine has caused a spike in energy costs, with the increased price likely to remain for the next two or three years, said Hamdi.

"You can understand the rationale for them wanting to develop their industries and their natural resources," said Elzinga. "The responsibility of the development community and those who want to support Indonesia is very much to come up with solutions that allow them to do both."

In a written statement sent to The Associated Press, Darmawan Prasodjo, the CEO of PLN, wrote that the company has already cancelled some coal-fired plants in their near-term business plan and is "committed to lead the energy transition in Indonesia."

Muliawan Margadana, vice chairman of the Indonesia Mining Association, and experts raised concerns over the future of communities reliant on the coal industry, which makes up 35% of East Kalimantan's GDP and employs nearly 9% of its population.

"More than 250,000 people are directly employed by coal mining. If we calculate their families, about 1 million people are impacted," said Margadana.

But he said that reskilling workers is possible — something Hamdi agrees with.

"What's important, and will be considered as just, is how the transition funding will be allocated to help these impacted workers, whether through upskilling, reskilling, or community development," said Hamdi.

Domestic energy policy is also not up to speed with the transition — especially for solar energy, which is a key source on Indonesia's pathway to net zero — noted Daniel Kurniawan, a researcher who focuses on solar for the Institute for Essential Services Reform.

There is a lack of a solid policy-making environment and political commitment for Indonesia to "transition

to clean energy amidst the overcapacity, driven by overreliance on coal power," he said. "Although that is bound to change with JETP."

Geography presents another challenge. Indonesia is a large archipelago with significant differences in energy resources, distribution and populations centers, said Elzinga. For example Java, the country's administrative center, accounts for around 60% of the population and some 75% of electricity consumption, but only a small percent of renewable potential.

While the challenges are varied, they're not insurmountable, said Hamdi. Her organization and others are monitoring developments with Indonesia's energy transition.

"We have to watch as well how this energy transition will create a better impact and a better future for our communities," said Hamdi. "It has to be for the whole range of citizens."

Pandemic youth mental health toll unprecedented, data show

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

The pandemic took a harsh toll on U.S. teen girls' mental health, with almost 60% reporting feelings of persistent sadness or hopelessness, according to a government survey released Monday that bolsters earlier data.

Sexual violence, suicidal thoughts, suicidal behavior and other mental health woes affected many teens regardless of race or ethnicity, but girls and LGBTQ youth fared the worst on most measures, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report. More than 17,000 U.S. high school students were surveyed in class in the fall of 2021.

In 30 years of collecting similar data, "we've never seen this kind of devastating, consistent findings," said Kathleen Ethier, director of CDC's adolescent and school health division. "There's no question young people are telling us they are in crisis. The data really call on us to act."

The research found:

— Among girls, 30% said they seriously considered attempting suicide, double the rate among boys and up almost 60% from a decade ago.

— Almost 20% of girls reported experiencing rape or other sexual violence in the previous year, also an increase over previous years.

— Almost half of LGBTQ students said they had seriously considered a suicide attempt.

— More than a quarter of American Indians and Alaska Natives said they had seriously considered a suicide attempt — higher than other races and ethnicities.

— Feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness affected more than one-third of kids of all races and ethnicities and increased over previous years.

— Recent poor mental health was reported by half of LGBTQ kids and almost one-third of American Indian and Alaska Native youth.

The results echo previous surveys and reports and many of the trends began before the pandemic. But isolation, online schooling and increased reliance on social media during the pandemic made things worse for many kids, mental health experts say.

The results "reflect so many decades of neglect towards mental health, for kids in particular," said Mitch Prinstein, the American Psychological Association's chief science officer. "Suicide has been the second- or third-leading cause of death for young people between 10 and 24 years for decades now," and attempts are typically more common in girls, he said.

Prinstein noted that anxiety and depression tend to be more common in teen girls than boys, and pandemic isolation may have exacerbated that.

Comprehensive reform in how society manages mental health is needed, Prinstein said. In schools, kids should be taught ways to manage stress and strife, just as they are taught about exercise for physical disease prevention, he said.

In low-income areas, where adverse childhood experiences were high before the pandemic, the crisis has been compounded by a shortage of school staff and mental health professionals, experts say.

School districts around the country have used federal pandemic money to hire more mental health specialists, if they can find them, but say they are stretched thin and that students who need expert care outside of school often can't get it because therapists are overburdened and have long waitlists.

Twitter's plan to charge for crucial tool prompts outcry

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria, thousands of volunteer software developers have been using a crucial Twitter tool to comb the platform for calls for help — including from people trapped in collapsed buildings — and connect people with rescue organizations.

They could soon lose access unless they pay Twitter a monthly fee of at least \$100 — prohibitive for many volunteers and nonprofits on shoestring budgets.

"That's not just for rescue efforts which unfortunately we're coming to the end of, but for logistics planning too as people go to Twitter to broadcast their needs," said Sedat Kapanoglu, the founder of Eksi Sozluk, Turkey's most popular social platform, who has been advising some of the volunteers in their efforts.

Nonprofits, researchers and others need the tool, known as the API, or Application Programming Interface, to analyze Twitter data because the sheer amount of information makes it impossible for a human to go through by hand.

Kapanoglu says hundreds of "good Samaritans" have been giving out their own, premium paid API access keys (Twitter already offered a paid version with more features) for use in the rescue efforts. But he says this isn't "sustainable or the right way" to do this. It might even be against Twitter's rules.

The loss of free API access means an added challenge for the thousands of developers in Turkey and beyond who are working around the clock to harness Twitter's unique, open ecosystem for disaster relief.

"For Turkish coders working with Twitter API for disaster monitoring purposes, this is particularly worrying — and I'd imagine it is similarly worrying for others around the world that are using Twitter data to monitor emergencies and politically contested events," said Akin Unver, a professor of international relations at Ozyegin University in Istanbul.

The new fees are just the latest complication for programmers, academics and others trying to use the API — and they say communicating with anyone at the company has become essentially impossible since Elon Musk took over.

Twitter had originally planned to introduce the changes last week, but delayed it until Monday. On Monday, the company tweeted that it was delaying the launch again "by a few more days," without providing more details.

The API paywall is Musk's latest attempt to squeeze revenue out of Twitter, which is on the hook for about \$1 billion in yearly interest payments from the billionaire's acquisition, completed in October.

It's not just disaster relief groups that are concerned. Academic and non-governmental researchers for years have used Twitter to study the spread of misinformation and hate speech or research public health or how people behave online.

Rebekah Tromble, director of the Institute for Data, Democracy, and Politics at George Washington University, used the Twitter API to track conversations on Twitter to see what kinds of tweets elicited attacks from trolls — and what got them to go away — in one study.

"With so little information from Twitter about the practicalities of this new policy, the specifics of it, we just don't know where to go. We have no way to do the planning. And for many of us who are in the field, running programs, running projects that have real world consequences, that's pretty scary," she said.

Twitter wasn't alone but was unique among social media companies in making its API open and free. TikTok, for instance, is working on it now but so far has not released its API. Facebook's is more limited because the company is very protective of the data it collects.

Tromble said social platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and others are taking steps to increase researcher access and transparency — largely due to new European regulations. Twitter, on the other hand, is moving in the opposite direction.

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"They've gone from first in class to absolute dead last," she said.

It costs money to maintain an API. As a private company, Twitter is free to charge for its tools. But researchers and developers say it wouldn't take much for Musk to carve out exceptions for academic research and nonprofits.

"No other technology has changed society as quickly and as profoundly as social media. Having access to the thoughts and emotions of other people worldwide, that's a fundamental change to society," said Kristina Lerman, a computer science professor at the University of Southern California who studies misinformation. "And you can't understand it without access to data, access to observe."

Takeshi Kawamoto, a Japanese software developer who runs a popular earthquake alert bot with more than 3 million followers, created the account back in 2007 as a hobby.

There are an incredible number of such bots on Twitter — useful, friendly or quirky accounts set up by people or group with a specific interest. There are weather bots, tools that combine long Twitter threads into one easy-to-read file, bots that send quotes from famous books or people, bots that remind you to stand up and stretch at random intervals during the day, bots that insert a little bit of nonsense and weirdness into your Twitter scrolling.

The earthquake bot Kawamoto created didn't take off until the devastating 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster that hit Japan, when people turned to it for information about quakes and aftershocks.

Kawamoto was ready to shut down the bot when Twitter first announced it was going to charge for API access. Paying \$1,200 a year for an account that is decidedly not making a profit was not going to be possible. Last week, Twitter announced that it would make a small exception to offer "write-only" API access for free to accounts that send fewer than 1,500 tweets a month.

This might help, but Kawamoto says the 1,500 limit will present a problem after a big earthquake with a lot of aftershocks. He would like to ask Musk to allow accounts to post more than 1,500 tweets on a pay-as-you-go basis.

So far, San Francisco-based Twitter has offered no other exceptions, although it's possible that Musk will see one of the many tweets from developers working on earthquake relief who have been pleading for a solution.

For Mark Sample and his small army of Twitter bots, such as one that would send carefully curated quotes from Herman Melville's "Moby Dick" at random intervals, it's too late. The Moby Dick bot, as well as one that sent out computer clip art from 1994 and one called "weird satellite" have all left Twitter. Some have moved to Mastodon, the social platform that some discouraged Twitter users have been migrating to.

Sample's bots were part of "weird Twitter," a quirky subculture of Twitter that peaked in the mid-2010s and included strange, fun, nonsensical bots sending bursts of randomness into people's feeds.

"I'm kind of going through a mourning process, kind of grieving," said Sample, a professor of digital studies at Davidson College in North Carolina. With the API "Twitter was doing something that none of the other social media platforms did, which is kind of like having this open playground. I mean, there were ways that people could take advantage of it and distort things and use it in malevolent ways. But it was also this terrific playground for hobbyists and creative people. None of the other social media platforms had that."

For Sample, the breaking point was not the API announcement. It came last fall when Musk began mass firing Twitter workers and going after journalists who questioned or criticized him, he said. Building apps for a platform when someone just shut it all down on a whim, he said, is "not a good use of our time and creative energy."

"I mean, it had a good run," he said. "It's like 15 years or whatever. So it's a pretty good run. And maybe it's time for something else."

Rihanna's pregnancy reveal raises bar in all kinds of ways

By LEANNE ITALIE AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When one becomes a mother, Rihanna mused before her epic Super Bowl halftime show, "there's something that just happens where you feel like you could take on the world — you can

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do anything.”

And so she did Sunday, on one of the biggest stages in the world. Live. Just about nine months after giving birth to her first child, a boy (whose name hasn't yet been revealed), with A\$AP Rocky.

While haters and stans debate Rihanna's performance, some of the former trashing the show overall, she joins a contingent of famous women to capture a cultural moment with a pregnancy reveal.

And she did it while floating on a platform, in a fire-engine-red boiler suit zipped strategically down to reveal her substantial bump. Underneath was a matching bodysuit with a leather breastplate tied on.

She did it wearing three vintage diamond brooches, in a pair of low sneakers. And halfway through, she did it in a huge red puffer coat and matching gloves.

To her navy, she shined like a diamond.

Rihanna didn't talk about the pregnancy before the Super Bowl. Instead, she focused on the decision to spend time away from her son for the first time, and how difficult that was. If she was going to leave her baby to perform, she said, she was going to do it for something big.

That alone turned the pre-Super Bowl discourse to working mothers, without her even mentioning she was having another child.

Rihanna fans were having none of it when it came to criticism of her performance.

“What I don't wanna hear, and def not from ANY MAN was that Rihanna didn't do enough during her #Superbowl performance. Y'all get a cold and you'll think the Bubonic Plague got you. This woman is pregnant, performed and danced for 13 mins while suspended in the air,” tweeted the writer Luvvie Ajayi Jones.

Added actor and writer Danielle Pinnock on Twitter: “My girl was pregnant and y'all still not happy with the performance?! The internet is wild. Preggers and probably swollen AF, Rihanna gave us choreography in the sky, dancers that look like the Michelin men, hit after HIT all while pregnant! Go AWF sis!”

To be clear, women the world over have worked while pregnant since the beginning of time. So while social media sorts its feelings on Rihanna's show, here's a quick look back on a few other pregnancy reveals that played out while the expectant mothers were essentially at work.

KEKE PALMER

Palmer did it during her opening monologue Dec. 3 while hosting “Saturday Night Live.” She got right down to baby business.

“There's some rumors going around, people have been in my comments saying, ‘Keke's having a baby, Keke's pregnant,’” she said. “And I wanna set the record straight — I am!”

Palmer unbuttoned her long, roomy brown coat and slightly pushed down her trousers to proudly reveal her exposed bump under a matching crop top.

She's currently expecting her first child, with boyfriend Darius Jackson.

BEYONCÉ

Palmer's style move, according to Vogue, was “not dissimilar” to Beyoncé's famous pregnancy reveal with eldest Blue Ivy at the 2011 MTV VMAs.

After performing, a huge smile on her face, she dropped her mic (in the truest sense), unbuttoned her bedazzled purple blazer and stroked her belly under black trousers to massive cheers.

For the twins Sir and Rumi, Bey took to Instagram to announce, wearing a long veil and kneeling in front of a floral display in lingerie while holding her bump.

KATY PERRY

Perry and Orlando Bloom welcomed their first child together, Daisy Dove, in August 2020 after she announced her pregnancy that March in a music video for “Never Worn White.”

And Perry did it, yes, in white, while stroking her bump and singing about her love for Bloom. She later confirmed the pregnancy on social media.

“omg so glad I don't have to suck it in anymore,” Perry tweeted.

Bloom has a son, Flynn, with his ex-wife, Miranda Kerr.

JASMINE TOOKES

Many others have leaned on Instagram to spread the baby word to their millions of followers

The model did it in a series of Old Hollywood black-and-white video clips with husband Juan David Bor-

rero on Nov. 22.

Wearing a creamy, elegant gown, Tookes caressed her bump and exposed the behind-the-scenes underpinnings of the pregnancy shoot, including projecting her own image on a computer screen in one clip. Another had Borrero embracing her from behind.

ZAWA ASHTON

Ashton was solo when she attended the "Mr. Malcolm's List" premiere last June, walking the red carpet in a tan, floor-length gown that showcased her bump.

Fiance Tom Hiddleston didn't attend, but the reveal came two weeks after Hiddleston confirmed he popped the question. Ashton, who played Julia Thistlewaite in the period drama, was accompanied by co-stars Theo James, Freida Pinto, Șopé Dìrísù and Siânad Gregory.

News outlets confirmed in October that the couple welcomed their child, but no name has been publicly announced.

Moldovan leader outlines Russian 'plan' to topple government

By STEPHEN McGRATH and CRISTIAN JARDAN Associated Press

CHISINAU, Moldova (AP) — Moldova's president outlined Monday what she described as a plot by Moscow to overthrow her country's government using external saboteurs, put the nation "at the disposal of Russia" and derail its aspirations to one day join the European Union.

President Maia Sandu's briefing comes a week after neighboring Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country had intercepted plans by Russian secret services to destroy Moldova, claims that were later confirmed by Moldovan intelligence officials.

"The plan for the next period involves actions with the involvement of diversionists with military training, camouflaged in civilian clothes, who will undertake violent actions, attack some state buildings, and even take hostages," Sandu told reporters at a briefing.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine nearly a year ago, Moldova, a former Soviet republic of about 2.6 million people, has sought to forge closer ties with its Western partners. Last June, it was granted EU candidate status, the same day as Ukraine.

Sandu said the alleged Russian plot's purpose is "to overthrow the constitutional order, to change the legitimate power from (Moldova's capital) Chisinau to an illegitimate one," which she said "which would put our country at the disposal of Russia, in order to stop the European integration process."

She defiantly vowed: "The Kremlin's attempts to bring violence to our country will not succeed."

There was no immediate reaction from Russian officials to Sandu's claims.

Sandu said that between October and December Moldovan police and its Intelligence and Security Service, the SIS, have intervened in "several cases of organized criminal elements and stopped attempts at violence."

Over the past year, non-NATO member Moldova has faced a string of problems. These include a severe energy crisis after Moscow dramatically reduced gas supplies; skyrocketing inflation; and several incidents in recent months involving missiles that have traversed its skies, and debris that has been found on its territory.

Moldovan authorities confirmed that another missile from the war in Ukraine had entered its airspace on Friday.

Last April, tensions in Moldova also soared after a series of explosions in Transnistria — a Russia-backed separatist region of Moldova where Russia bases about 1,500 troops — which had raised fears it could get dragged into Russia's war in Ukraine. Transnistria has a population of about 470,000 and has been under the control of separatist authorities since a civil war in 1992.

Sandu claimed that Russia wants to use Moldova in the war against Ukraine, without providing more details, and that information obtained by intelligence services contained what she described as instructions on rules of entry to Moldova for citizens from Russia, Belarus, Serbia, and Montenegro.

"I assure you that the state institutions are working to prevent these challenges and keep the situation

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under control," Sandu said.

She said that Moldova's Parliament must adopt draft laws to equip its Intelligence and Security Service, and the prosecutor's office, "with the necessary tools to combat more effectively the risks to the country's security."

Costin Ciobanu, a political scientist at the Royal Holloway University of London, said it's likely there "was a huge pressure" on Moldovan authorities to explain more to the public after Zelenskyy first went public with the security information last week in Brussels.

"Today's announcement by President Sandu legitimizes the narrative that Moldova needs to focus on its security," he told The Associated Press. "Probably, based on the evidence they received, they are now more sure of these kinds of attempts by Russians."

He added that Sandu going public could also be a preemptive bid to thwart "Russia's attempts to destabilize Moldova," in the same way Western officials called out the Kremlin's war plans before its invasion of Ukraine.

The president added that the plan would "rely on several internal forces, but especially on criminal groups" and went on to name two Moldovan oligarchs, Ilan Shor and Vladimir Plahotniuc, both of whom are currently in exile. Both men last year were sanctioned by the U.S. and the U.K.

Last fall, a series of mass anti-government protests organized by Shor's populist, Russia-friendly Shor Party, also rocked Moldova amid the energy crunch.

The president's press briefing Monday comes after the surprise resignation on Friday of Moldova's Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita. The same day, Sandu appointed her defense and security adviser, pro-Western economist Dorin Recean, to succeed Gavrilita.

On Friday, after Moldovan authorities confirmed the missile incident, U.S. State Department deputy spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters in Washington that "Russia has for years supported influence and destabilization campaigns in Moldova, which often involve weaponizing corruption to further its goals."

Questionable late flag takes drama out of Super Bowl ending

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP) — A questionable late penalty on Philadelphia Eagles cornerback James Bradberry with less than two minutes remaining meant that a scintillating Super Bowl 57 had a bit of an underwhelming finish.

Kansas City won its second Super Bowl in four years by beating the Eagles 38-35 on Sunday in Glendale, Arizona. It was an exciting back-and-forth game that saw the Chiefs claw back from a 10-point halftime deficit.

One of the few gripes for football fans — particularly Eagles fans — was the anticlimactic ending.

The Chiefs were driving and faced third-and-8 at the Eagles 15-yard line with 1:54 remaining when Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes threw incomplete to JuJu Smith-Schuster. But officials flagged Bradberry for defensive holding, which negated the incompletion and, more importantly, gave the Chiefs a first down.

Replays showed that Bradberry made light contact with Smith-Schuster, though it didn't appear to affect the play much.

Many fans — and some football commentators — disagreed with the call. Former NFL tight end Greg Olsen wasn't happy with the decision on the Fox broadcast and ESPN and Amazon analyst Kirk Herbstreit was also critical on social media.

The only person who didn't seem upset with the call was Bradberry himself.

"It was a holding. I tugged his jersey," Bradberry said. "I was hoping they would let it slide."

Referee Carl Cheffers said it was a "clear case of a jersey grab."

"The receiver went to the inside and he was attempting to release to the outside," Cheffers told a pool reporter. "The defender grabbed the jersey with his right hand and restricted him from releasing to the outside. So, therefore, we called defensive holding."

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Kansas City was able to essentially run out the clock from that point forward. Chiefs running back Jerick McKinnon made a smart move on the ensuing down, purposefully sliding 2 yards short of the goal line instead of scoring a touchdown.

Mahomes then was able to kneel twice as the clock ran down after the Eagles used their final timeout. Harrison Butker kicked a 27-yard field goal with 8 seconds remaining that proved to be the winner.

Moldova again at center of tug between Moscow and the West

By CRISTIAN JARDAN and STEPHEN McGRATH Associated Press

CHISINAU, Moldova (AP) — Sandwiched between Ukraine and Romania, the country of Moldova has often been at the center of a struggle between Moscow and the West. It finds itself in that uncomfortable position again.

On Monday, its president alleged that Russia was plotting to overthrow her country's government by force to derail its aspirations of joining the European Union — plans first disclosed last week by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, tensions in Moldova have risen periodically, especially because of a Kremlin-backed breakaway region on its eastern border where Russia has stationed about 1,500 troops.

A look at recent events in Moldova:

WHAT ARE ITS TIES TO MOSCOW AND THE EU?

Once part of the Soviet Union, Moldova declared its independence in 1991. One of Europe's poorest countries with a population of about 2.6 million people, it has historic ties to Russia but wants to join the 27-nation EU.

The country has lurched from one political crisis to another, often caught in limbo between pro-Russian and pro-Western sentiments. In recent years, Moldova has seen widespread disillusionment with post-Soviet politics, and an exodus of hundreds of thousands of its citizens seeking a better life abroad.

The situation is complicated following a separatist war that broke out in its eastern region of Transnistria in 1990 — a strip of land about 400 kilometers (249 miles) between the eastern bank of the Dniester River in Moldova and the border with Ukraine. As part of a cease-fire in 1992, a contingent of Russian troops remains there as nominal peacekeepers. Since then the region has insisted it is not part of Moldova, and most of its 470,000 people speak Russian, although residents identify themselves as ethnically Moldovan, Ukrainian or Russian.

In 2021, after decades of largely oligarchic power structures and various Russia-friendly leaders, Moldovans elected pro-Western, pro-European leaders to put it on a more distinctly Western path.

HOW HAS THE WAR IN UKRAINE AFFECTED MOLDOVA?

Since the invasion nearly a year ago, Moldova has sought to forge closer ties with the West. Last June, it was granted EU candidate status, the same day as Ukraine, but full membership will be a long road, contingent on tackling corruption and organized crime, and strengthening human rights and the rule of law.

Over the past year, tensions in Moldova have periodically risen as it faced a string of unsettling problems and incidents. These include a severe energy crisis after Moscow dramatically reduced gas supplies to the country. It also has seen skyrocketing inflation and a huge flow of refugees from the war next door.

In April, explosions were reported in Transnistria's de facto capital, Tiraspol, amid fears the war in Ukraine could spill over. In recent months, several missiles have traversed Moldova's skies, and rocket debris has also been found on its territory.

WHAT HAS MOLDOVA'S PRESIDENT ALLEGED?

On Monday, Moldova's President Maia Sandu said in Moldova's capital of Chisinau that Moscow was plotting to overthrow her government via outside saboteurs "with military training, camouflaged in civilian clothes, who will undertake violent actions, attack some state buildings, and even take hostages."

Its purpose, Sandu said, would be to install an illegitimate government "which would put our country at the disposal of Russia in order to stop the European integration process."

She claimed Russia wants to use Moldova in the war against Ukraine, without elaborating, and added

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that Parliament must adopt laws to equip its Intelligence and Security Service and prosecutors with the tools "to combat more effectively the risks to the country's security."

Zelenskyy said last week his country had intercepted plans by Russian security services to destroy Moldova, claims that were later confirmed by Moldovan intelligence officials.

There was no immediate reaction from Moscow, but Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said earlier this month that the West was considering turning Moldova into "another Ukraine."

Costin Ciobanu of the Royal Holloway University of London said it's likely there was pressure on Moldovan officials to follow up to the public on Zelenskyy's statements last week. He said Sandu's remarks could be a preemptive bid to thwart Russian attempts to destabilize Moldova in the same way Western officials called out Moscow's war plans before it invaded Ukraine.

11 states consider 'right to repair' for farming equipment

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press/Report for America

DENVER (AP) — On Colorado's northeastern plains, where the pencil-straight horizon divides golden fields and blue sky, a farmer named Danny Wood scrambles to plant and harvest proso millet, dryland corn and winter wheat in short, seasonal windows. That is until his high-tech Steiger 370 tractor conks out.

The tractor's manufacturer doesn't allow Wood to make certain fixes himself, and last spring his fertilizing operations were stalled for three days before the servicer arrived to add a few lines of missing computer code for \$950.

"That's where they have us over the barrel, it's more like we are renting it than buying it," said Wood, who spent \$300,000 on the used tractor.

Wood's plight, echoed by farmers across the country, has pushed lawmakers in Colorado and 10 other states to introduce bills that would force manufacturers to provide the tools, software, parts and manuals needed for farmers to do their own repairs — thereby avoiding steep labor costs and delays that imperil profits.

"The manufacturers and the dealers have a monopoly on that repair market because it's lucrative," said Rep. Brianna Titone, a Democrat and one of the bill's sponsors. "(Farmers) just want to get their machine going again."

In Colorado, the legislation is largely being pushed by Democrats while their Republican colleagues find themselves stuck in a tough spot: torn between right-leaning farming constituents asking to be able to repair their own machines and the manufacturing businesses that oppose the idea.

The manufacturers argue that changing the current practice with this type of legislation would force companies to expose trade secrets. They also say it would make it easier for farmers to tinker with the software and illegally crank up the horsepower and bypass the emissions controller — risking operators' safety and the environment.

Similar arguments around intellectual property have been leveled against the broader campaign called 'right to repair,' which has picked up steam across the country — crusading for the right to fix everything from iPhones to hospital ventilators during the pandemic.

In 2011, Congress passed a law ensuring that car owners and independent mechanics — not just authorized dealerships — had access to the necessary tools and information to fix problems.

Ten years later, the Federal Trade Commission pledged to beef up its right to repair enforcement at the direction of President Joe Biden. And just last year, Titone sponsored and passed Colorado's first right to repair law, empowering people who use wheelchairs with the tools and information to fix them.

For the right to repair farm equipment — from thin tractors used between grape vines to behemoth combines for harvesting grain that can cost over half a million dollars — Colorado is joined by 10 states including Florida, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, Texas and Vermont.

Many of the bills are finding bipartisan support, said Nathan Proctor, who leads Public Interest Research Group's national right to repair campaign. But in Colorado's House committee on agriculture, Democrats pushed the bill forward in a 9-4 vote along party lines, with Republicans in opposition even though the

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bill's second sponsor is Republican Rep. Ron Weinberg.

"That's really surprising, and that upset me," said the Republican Wood.

Wood's tractor, which flies an American flag reading "Farmers First," isn't his only machine to break down. His grain harvesting combine was dropping into idle, but the servicer took five days to arrive on Wood's farm — a setback that could mean a hail storm decimates a wheat field or the soil temperature moves beyond the Goldilocks zone for planting.

"Our crop is ready to harvest and we can't wait five days, but there was nothing else to do," said Wood. "When it's broke down you just sit there and wait and that's not acceptable. You can be losing \$85,000 a day."

Rep. Richard Holtorf, the Republican who represents Wood's district and is a farmer himself, said he's being pulled between his constituents and the dealerships in his district covering the largely rural north-east corner of the state. He voted against the measure because he believes it will financially impact local dealerships in rural areas and could jeopardize trade secrets.

"I do sympathize with my farmers," said Holtorf, but he added, "I don't think it's the role of government to be forcing the sale of their intellectual property."

At the packed hearing last week that spilled into a second room in Colorado's Capitol, the core concerns raised in testimony were farmers illegally slipping around the emissions control and cranking up the horsepower.

"I know growers, if they can change horsepower and they can change emissions they are going to do it," said Russ Ball, sales manager at 21st Century Equipment, a John Deere dealership in Western states.

The bill's proponents acknowledged that the legislation could make it easier for operators to modify horsepower and emissions controls, but argued that farmers are already able to tinker with their machines and doing so would remain illegal.

This January, the Farm Bureau and the farm equipment manufacturer John Deere did sign a memorandum of understanding — a right to repair agreement made in the free market and without government intervention. The agreement stipulates that John Deere will share some parts, diagnostic and repair codes, and manuals to allow farmers to do their own fixes.

The Colorado bill's detractors laud that agreement as a strong middle ground while Titone said it wasn't enough, evidenced by six of Colorado's biggest farmworker associations that support the bill.

Proctor, who is tracking 20 right to repair proposals in a number of industries across the country, said the memorandum of understanding has fallen far short.

"Farmers are saying no," Proctor said. "We want the real thing."

Newborn saved from rubble in quake-hit Syria in good health

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A baby girl born under the rubble of her family's home in northern Syria after last week's devastating earthquake was in good health Monday and being breast-fed by the wife of the director of the hospital where she is being cared for, her doctor said.

The infant, named Aya — Arabic for "a sign from God" — by hospital workers, may be able to leave the hospital as soon as Tuesday or Wednesday, according to her great-uncle, Saleh al-Badran. He said the baby's paternal aunt, who recently gave birth and survived the quake, will raise her.

The newborn's mother died after giving birth to her in the aftermath of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria. Her father and four siblings were also killed in the quake.

Dr. Hani Maarouf, a pediatrician at Cihan Hospital in the northern Syrian city of Afrin, told The Associated Press that the wife of the hospital's director has been breast-feeding the baby girl.

"We have stopped all the medicines that we were giving Aya and now she is being breast-fed when she needs," Maarouf said by telephone from Afrin.

Maarouf said local policemen were standing guard at the hospital to make sure that no one tries to kidnap the child after a series of people showed up falsely claiming to be her relatives.

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Rescue workers in the northern Syrian town of Jinderis discovered the dark-haired baby girl more than 10 hours after the Feb. 6 quake hit, as they were digging through the wreckage of the five-story apartment building where her parents lived.

Buried under the concrete, the baby still was connected by her umbilical cord to her mother, Afraa Abu Hadiya. The baby was rushed to the hospital in nearby Afrin where she has been cared for since.

The devastating quake followed by a series of tremors that struck southeastern Turkey and northern Syria reduced much of the towns and cities inhabited by millions to fragments of concrete and twisted metal. More than 35,000 people were killed, a toll expected to rise considerably as search teams find more bodies.

The earthquake destroyed dozens of housing units in the town of Jinderis where Aya's family had been living since 2018.

Aya's father, Abdullah Turki Mleihan, was originally from the village of Khsham in eastern Deir el-Zour province, but left in 2014 after the Islamic State group captured their village, said al-Badran, an uncle of Aya's father.

Roslyn Pope, author of 'Appeal for Human Rights,' dies at 84

By MICHAEL WARREN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Roslyn Pope, a college professor and musician who wrote "An Appeal for Human Rights," laying out the reasons for the Atlanta Student Movement against systemic racism in 1960, has died. She was 84.

Pope died Jan. 18 in Arlington, Texas, where she moved from Atlanta to be with her daughters after her health began to fail in 2021, according to her family's obituary.

The document Pope wrote as a 21-year-old senior at Spelman College launched a nonviolent campaign of boycotts and sit-ins by Black college students protesting discrimination not just in voting but in education, jobs, housing, hospitals, movies, concerts, restaurants and law enforcement.

"We do not intend to wait placidly for those rights, which are already legally and morally ours, to be meted out to us one at a time," the Appeal declared. "We plan to use every legal and non-violent means at our disposal to secure full citizenship rights as members of this great Democracy of ours."

Atlanta's white-owned newspapers wouldn't publish it, and Georgia's segregationist leaders tried to dismiss it, saying it couldn't possibly be the work of college students. But The New York Times ran it on a full page, as did other publications across the U.S. It was read into the Congressional Record as a testament to how segregation was stifling the ability of people to coexist with equality and dignity.

"She really kicked off our movement and made it acceptable," Charles Black, who was a Morehouse College student when he joined Pope and others organizing the campaign, recalled Monday.

Pope showed that change doesn't depend on "great men" like the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and that a few committed people can make a real difference, Black said. "Because of her words, everybody understood what we were trying to do, and that's why we had such broad, community-wide support."

Born Oct. 29, 1938, in Atlanta, Pope was exceptional from an early age. She belonged to an all-Black Girl Scout troop and was sent as Georgia's representative to a national camp in Cody, Wyoming, that no Black Scout had attended before.

"I was one little dark person among 50 white faces," she recalled in an AP interview in 2020. "It became national news. Nobody in Atlanta could fathom that such a thing could happen."

Pope was elected student body president at her segregated Booker T. Washington high school and at college. Her piano playing at Friendship Baptist Church led to a performance with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and later, a Merrill scholarship to study music during her junior year in Paris.

The experience was life-changing after growing up in a society where race laws restricted her every move, she told the AP.

In Paris, "there were no boundaries — no places I couldn't go, no programs I couldn't take advantage of, no limits to my existence. I could eat where I wanted — I couldn't do that in Atlanta. It felt like shackles had been taken off me. It was just unbelievable."

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Along with movement co-founder Lonnie King, a Morehouse student who had been in the Navy, she felt suffocated after returning to the segregated South. "We just could not pretend that being treated as inferior was all right," she said.

Pope said she was sharing her misery with future state lawmaker and NAACP chairman Julian Bond at an off-campus drugstore when King walked in waving a newspaper: Four Black students had been arrested at a sit-in the day before in Greensboro, North Carolina.

"It just clicked," she said. "Why aren't we doing that?" we said to each other. And before the day was over, we decided to start a movement. We would no longer bear the mantle of inferiority."

Working in secret, they recruited other students at Morehouse, Spelman, Clark and Morris Brown colleges, Atlanta University and the Interdenominational Theological Center. The six university presidents got wind of their efforts and tried to quash it. When the students refused, they were told to write up a clear explanation of what they hoped to accomplish.

King appointed Pope to a committee to draft the document, and after the young men let days pass without contributing, told her to "write the damn thing," Black said.

And so Pope did, longhand. She and Bond then spent the night at the dining room table of Spelman professor Howard Zinn, who offered his typewriter. "Julian Bond was typing while I handed him the pages," Pope said. "We were there all night because we didn't have a lot of time."

While the students' campaign of civil disobedience would eventually break Atlanta's stalemate over civil rights and hasten the end of racist Jim Crow laws and policies across the U.S., Pope remained a mostly private figure.

She earned a masters in English at Georgia State University and then a doctorate in humanities at Syracuse University, all while raising two daughters, Rhonda and Donna Walker, after a brief marriage to John W. Walker.

She later taught religious studies and led the music department at Penn State University, but said she faced a losing battle there against white prejudice, so she moved to Bishop College in Dallas. After that historically Black college closed, she taught literature and humanities at the University of Texas at Arlington. She later worked in advertising for 20 years at Southwestern Bell before retiring to Atlanta.

"She was a very quiet and unassuming person, not the kind of person you would expect to achieve that kind of status and leadership, necessarily, but she did," said Black, who described Pope as a "sage."

"The fact that she was able to put that document in the frame of human rights rather than civil rights was rather prophetic and very forward thinking. Civil rights can be voted in and out of existence, but human rights are inherent in our mere existence, and she recognized that early on," he said.

Pope said she was thrilled in 2020 to share her experiences with students at Decatur High School as they researched the student movement and the related imprisonment of Martin Luther King for a Georgia Historical Society marker. The same students then campaigned to bring down a nearby Confederate monument.

The Appeal "is just as relevant now as it was when I wrote it," she told them. "I'm glad that I could do something. It might have been a small contribution, but I contributed."

The Friendship Baptist Church plans a Feb. 17 service in her memory, and a celebration of Pope's contributions to racial equality will be held at Spelman College on March 9, Black said.

Super Bowl top moments happened on, off and above the field

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

GLENDAL, Ariz. (AP) — The Kansas City Chiefs beat the Philadelphia Eagles 38-35 in a memorable Super Bowl that included plenty of big plays on and off the field. Here's a look at some top moments from Sunday night's game:

CHIEFS WIN

Harrison Butker kicked a 27-yard field goal with 8 seconds remaining to lift the Chiefs to their 38-35 win over the Eagles. The Chiefs have won the Super Bowl in two of the past four seasons and their roll

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shows no sign of stopping, especially with Patrick Mahomes throwing the passes. Kansas City's quarterback overcame a sprained ankle to earn Super Bowl MVP honors after throwing for 182 yards and three touchdowns. Coach Andy Reid also captured his second Super Bowl title and this one came at the expense of the franchise he coached for 14 seasons before coming to Kansas City.

RIHANNA

Rihanna provided a high-flying halftime performance in Arizona. The nine-time Grammy Award winner began and ended the halftime show suspended high above the field. She wore a puffy, bright red jumpsuit with tight, rubbery garb underneath as she stood on a transparent rectangular platform that raised and lowered as she belted out the lyrics to her hit songs over the turf.

Oh yeah, and to top it off, she did the performance while pregnant, news that was revealed after the show.

VALLEY OF FUN

The Phoenix area is no stranger to hosting big events, but this was a huge weekend even by its standards. The winter and spring months are already tourist season in Arizona and the Super Bowl added another layer of revelry, adding tens of thousands of people who filled bars and restaurants and at times spilled into the streets. Throw in the Phoenix Open, the PGA Tour's version of a boozy mosh pit on grass, and the Phoenix area transforms into a weeklong Valley of Fun.

"The buzz is definitely here," said Jay Parry, president and CEO of the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee.

BRADBERRY SEES YELLOW

This could be a highlight or lowlight, depending on rooting allegiances, but James Bradberry's penalty on the final drive was undeniably a huge moment. The Chiefs were driving and faced third-and-8 at the Eagles 15-yard line with 1:54 remaining when Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes threw incomplete to JuJu Smith-Schuster. But officials flagged Bradberry for defensive holding, which negated the incompleteness and, more importantly, gave the Chiefs a first down. Replays showed Bradberry made light contact with Smith-Schuster, though it didn't appear to affect the play much. Many fans — and some football commentators — disagreed with the call. The only person who didn't seem upset with the call was Bradberry himself.

"It was a holding. I tugged his jersey," Bradberry said. "I was hoping they would let it slide."

BETTING BONANZA

Mahomes rallied the Chiefs to victory and for that, casinos around the U.S. were pleased. Kansas City's 38-35 win meant the books were winners on the betting line, which generally favored the Eagles by 1 1/2 points and drew plenty of wagering on the NFC champions. That victory by the casinos offset a loss on the total, which was 51 1/2 points at many places. Sports betting has become huge business in the U.S. now that two-thirds of the country can do so legally.

TONEY'S EMERGENCE

Kadarius Toney's struggles with injuries and inconsistency prompted the New York Giants to give up on him midway through his second NFL season. The Kansas City Chiefs gave him a second chance and the talented receiver proved he's no first-round bust. Toney made history and two of the biggest plays in the Chiefs' win. His 65-yard punt return in the fourth quarter was a particularly big moment. It was the longest punt return in Super Bowl history.

BOLTON'S SCOOP, SCORE

The first hint it might be the Chiefs' night came in the second quarter when Hurts fumbled and Chiefs linebacker Nick Bolton scooped up the football and ran 36 yards for the touchdown. It was at a pivotal moment in the evening: The Eagles were ahead 14-7 and driving at midfield when Bolton's game-changing play occurred. Suddenly, the game was tied and the drama was just beginning.

STAPLETON'S ANTHEM

The Super Bowl might be known for its extravagance, but country singer and songwriter Chris Stapleton didn't need any high-tech help for a stellar performance during the national anthem. Stapleton stood at midfield with just a guitar and his smooth baritone voice, belting out an emotional rendition that had Eagles coach Nick Sirianni in tears by the end.

HURTS SO GOOD

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Hurts wasn't victorious in his first Super Bowl appearance, but the young quarterback has no reason to be ashamed. He was phenomenal in Arizona, setting a Super Bowl record with three rushing touchdowns. On top of that, he completed 27 of 38 passes for 304 yards and a touchdown, showing poise and perfect throwing touch on a number of occasions.

SLICK FIELD

The field at State Farm Stadium may have looked immaculate, but by the second half, it was clear that traction was not great. Said Eagles left tackle Jordan Mailata: "It was like playing on a water park." The grass at State Farm Stadium is on a giant tray that is rolled in and out of the retractable roof stadium. The field sits out in the Arizona sun on warm days and is brought back inside when it gets cold. This particular batch of grass started growing in May of 2021, but even a nearly two-year process couldn't produce a flawless field.

HELLO HAMLIN

Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin made it to the Super Bowl. He made three appearances during the week in Arizona, including on the field at State Farm Stadium prior to the game. It's been a little more than a month since Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and needed to be resuscitated on the field in Cincinnati. Sunday's appearance was another milestone in his remarkable recovery. "I'm allowing that to be in God's hands," Hamlin said in an interview with Fox's Michael Strahan. "I'm just thankful he gave me a second chance."

5 years after Parkland, families cope through good works

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — After a gunman murdered 14 students and three staff members at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School five years ago Tuesday, their families were left with a burning question: How do we go on with our lives while honoring our loved one's memory?

Most have answered by starting foundations or performing other charitable work dedicated to a variety of causes: protecting students; building parks and gardens; providing scholarships; fighting disease and helping the disabled; sending kids to camp; teaching children to swim, dance, create art or play music and sports; and tightening gun laws.

"For all of them, their biggest fear was that their loved one would be forgotten," said Florida state Rep. Christine Hunschofsky, who was Parkland's mayor in 2018 when the shooting happened. "They do this work to keep their spirit alive."

Still, she said, "it is really important to remember that no matter how many 'good things' have come out of the aftermath, no one is ever the same again. No one loses that pain."

Most of the families also belong to their group, Stand With Parkland. Putting aside political differences, those families work with lawmakers nationally to see tougher school safety regulations enacted, train administrators to conduct more thorough threat assessments and assure threats reported to the FBI are passed to local law enforcement. The group also promotes gun safety.

"When we listen to each other, politics doesn't have to be a bad thing," said Philip Schentrup, who lost his 16-year-old daughter Carmen in the shooting. "If you realize that 90% of the stuff in this world we agree on, it is not hard to make positive change."

Some family projects have a political bent, but most don't. Overall, millions of dollars have been raised. These are their causes:

ALYSSA ALHADEFF

After losing their 14-year-old daughter Alyssa, Ian and Lori Alhadeff began their foundation, Make Our Schools Safe. It advocates in state legislatures for "Alyssa's Law," which requires that teachers receive panic buttons tied directly to law enforcement. The law has been enacted in Florida, New York and New Jersey, and it is being considered federally and in several states.

The foundation has also distributed to schools kits for treating gunshot victims, and it started high school

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Make Our Schools Safe clubs to give students a voice and instruction on violence-prevention.

"We want to do everything that we can to create a safer school environment," said Lori Alhadeff, who was elected to the Broward County school board nine months after the shooting. She is now its chairwoman.

"We want to make sure that (children) are protected and that they come home alive."

She said being on the school board and running the foundation "turned my pain and grief into action."

Her daughter frequented the beach, excelled in math and Spanish, was a gifted writer and captain of her soccer team. She wasn't afraid to speak her mind.

"Through Alyssa's Law, I know Alyssa is saving a lot of lives," she said.

SCOTT BEIGEL

Geography teacher and cross country coach Scott Beigel died a hero, shot as he herded panicked students into his classroom, where they all survived. In a few months, Beigel, 35, would have been working as a summer camp counselor. He loved camp, attending every year since he was 6.

"(Camp) was Scott's magic place," his mother, Linda Beigel Schulman, said. "He could be a kid. He could be whoever he wanted to be."

So, two days after her son's murder, she and Beigel's stepfather, Michael Schulman, started the Scott J. Beigel Memorial Fund, which pays for underprivileged children touched by gun violence to attend sleep-away camp — and return annually if they maintain good grades and stay out of trouble. This summer, 250 children will participate.

"I want to keep the kids away from drugs and gangs. I want to do it so they don't have to be rehabilitated after they are incarcerated," his mother said. "Every one of those kids has a piece of Scott's heart."

MARTIN DUQUE

Martin Duque, 14, was born in Mexico but wanted to become a U.S. Navy Seal; he belonged to the school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. He loved sports and was a devoted churchgoer. His family has no known foundation or charity and has kept out of the public eye.

"He was a smart kid who always helped others even before himself," his family said in a statement that was read at the shooter's trial. "His favorite movie was 'Star Wars.' He was basically an old soul. His family loved him in every situation and he would tell his parents that when he grew up, he would buy them a house. We miss him very much."

NICK DWORET

Nick Dworet was a star swimmer who loved to promote his sport. The night before the 17-year-old died, he spoke to the younger swimmers at his club to encourage them. That's why his parents, Mitch and Anika Dworet, have focused the Nicholas Dworet Memorial Fund on swimming and water safety.

The fund provides college scholarships to swimmers and divers in South Florida and at Indianapolis University, where Nick Dworet planned to compete. It organizes training days for swimmers, works with the Special Olympics and offers swimming lessons for underprivileged children.

"We are much smaller than a lot of the other charities and foundations of the other families," said Joseph Chiarella, the fund's treasurer. "But we plan to expand as needed and requested."

AARON FEIS

Aaron Feis, a security guard and assistant football coach, hurried to the building after being told a gunman was inside, but he was shot just as he got to the door. The 37-year-old, who had graduated from Stoneman Douglas, received the National Football Foundation's gold medal for his actions.

His parents started a foundation in his name that assisted needy students with supplies and other essentials. But the family said it became too much for them to handle alone during the pandemic and went inactive. Feis, Scott Beigel and Chris Hixon, the school's athletic director and wrestling coach who was also killed in the attack, were honored at the 2018 ESPY Awards as the national coaches of the year.

In a statement read at the shooter's trial, his widow, Melissa Feis, said they met when she was 16 at a

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church service, and over the next two decades he “knew he could make a difference in the lives of others.”

“Aaron had a knack for putting others at ease. His presence, jovial smile and humor made him a person others sought to be around,” she wrote. ____

JAIME GUTTENBERG

Fred and Jennifer Guttenberg started Orange Ribbons for Jaime in honor of their 14-year-old daughter who loved dance and dogs and planned to become a pediatric physical therapist. The name comes from the thousands of orange ribbons her dance troupe made after Jaime’s murder — orange was her color. They were worn by dance companies nationwide, including by the Broadway cast of “Hamilton.”

The charity provides college scholarships to dancers, special needs children and students who want to go into helping fields, like physical therapy.

The foundation is also starting “Paws of Love,” which will give puppies and a free year of dog supplies and vet care to families affected by gun violence. Fred Guttenberg said his youngest dog, which was 4 months old when Jaime was killed, “saved my family” by giving the couple and their son something to care for.

“I can’t see myself doing the political activist thing indefinitely,” said Guttenberg, who has become a national spokesman for stronger gun laws. “But honoring my daughter and ensuring that this country remembers who she was and why she mattered is something I’ll never stop doing.”

CHRIS HIXON

Athletic director and wrestling coach Chris Hixon died a hero — the first person who tried to stop the shooter. The 49-year-old Navy veteran charged directly at him, but he was hit by gunfire and fell to the floor. He took cover in an alcove, but he was shot again. He tried to get to his feet for several minutes before law enforcement came to his aid.

To honor him, his family started the Chris Hixon Foundation, which gives scholarships annually to five Broward County athletes. His son, Tom, said the charity soon hopes to offer sports camps, likely for students with special needs, and wrestling tournaments that offer small scholarships to the winners.

Tom Hixon said the family focused on scholarships for athletes to honor the thousands his father inspired over his 27-year career to continue their educations.

“He knew it wasn’t just about sports — he stressed academics, too,” Hixon said.

LUKE HOYER

Luke Hoyer, 15, loved sports, and his mother, Gena, works with foster children. So she and her husband, Tom, combined those two interests for the Luke Hoyer Athletic Fund, which pays for foster children to participate in travel league sports and martial arts and dance lessons. Those can cost more than \$1,000 for each child, something foster parents usually can’t afford and don’t get reimbursed for.

Luke was known for his dry humor and was jokingly called “the king of the one-word answer.”

“I’ve always liked sports as a way to help kids as a mini life lesson,” Tom Hoyer said. “The fact that Luke played sports and (his mother) knew that these kids couldn’t go into these programs, it seemed like a good fit and the right thing to do.”

CARA LOUGHRAN

Cara Loughran adored all things Irish. The 14-year-old, who performed Irish dance, was set to appear in a St. Patrick’s Day festival the month after her death. Her family was also planning a trip that summer to the island nation, where some of her relatives live.

The family established Cara Dances On, which provides college scholarships for students at the dance studio where she took lessons. Her mother declined comment.

“She loved the beach, she loved to surf and, most of all, she loved spending time with her family,” a statement read by a family friend at the shooter’s trial said. “Losing Cara has left a crushing absence in their lives.”

GINA MONTALTO

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Gina Montalto spent much of her time reading, studying and drawing. And she was an enthusiastic Girl Scout, posthumously receiving the group's highest rank, the Gold Award.

Sometimes the 14-year-old with straight A's and bright personality wanted to be a veterinarian; other times she wanted to design attractions for Walt Disney World. Her parents, Tony and Jennifer Montalto, through the Gina Rose Montalto Memorial Foundation, are covering all those interests by helping dozens of college students and others.

The foundation provides scholarships to Girl Scouts, nursing students and students in science, technology, math and the arts. There have also been scholarships for Stoneman Douglas grads, even to some who simply demonstrated kindness. The foundation also hosts a ceremony for South Florida Girl Scouts who have received their Silver Award — the highest rank a middle schooler can achieve — and supports projects where Gina volunteered, including groups that help children with special needs.

As part of the process, the scholarship recipients learn about Gina and what she stood for, her father said. That helps the family cope.

"We ask that they keep in touch with us at least once a year to let us know how they are progressing," he said. "This is a way to keep Gina's light shining."

JOAQUIN OLIVER

Manuel and Patricia Oliver's goal with their foundation, Change the Ref, is to challenge the political influence of the National Rifle Association and gun manufacturers. They say the firearms industry has bought and intimidated politicians, leading to the death of their 17-year-old son, Joaquin, who was known for his writing and his ability to make friends. The foundation's name comes from something Joaquin would say after bad calls cost his basketball team a game — that nothing would change without new refs.

"Once we started looking at what the root cause of this issue (was), we saw that these 'referees' that we elect are not making the right calls, so we don't have a fair game," Manuel Oliver said.

The couple travels the country in a modified school bus emblazoned with "Stop Gun Violence" to directly confront politicians. For example, last year the foundation rented 52 school buses and drove them to the Houston office of Republican Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, the empty seats representing children fatally shot.

They also go after Democrats, including President Joe Biden. Invited to a gun bill signing at the White House last year, Manuel Oliver shouted "You have to do more!" at Biden before being escorted out.

Patricia Oliver said because their son died in a school shooting, they have a platform that parents whose children died in everyday gun violence don't have.

"It is not only school shootings we need to pay attention to — that is a very selfish way to see it. This is beyond school shootings," she said.

ALAINA PETTY

After Ryan Petty's 14-year-old daughter Alaina was murdered, he was appointed to the state commission that investigated why the shooting happened and how it could have been prevented.

As he learned what led up to it, he became convinced the answer isn't tighter gun laws, which he says don't work, but more effective intervention and communication by school administrators, mental health providers and law enforcement. Many people reported the Parkland shooter's threats, but no authorities acted or shared information.

In response, Petty and his wife, Kelly, started The WalkUp Foundation, which has worked with government, law enforcement and school officials to improve communication so potential shooters are identified. He points to Secret Service findings that almost all school shooters showed "disturbing behaviors" well before acting.

He said the idea isn't to arrest more students, but to get them help.

"If those were reported and acted on by authorities, you could divert that person off the pathway to violence, and we think that is the best outcome for everyone," Petty said.

Alaina did volunteer work through her church, including cleanup after 2017's Hurricane Irma, and took part in the ROTC. She loved watching crime shows on TV, Spanish music and her dogs, and she wanted

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to be a mom.

"I couldn't let (Alaina's) death just pass by and not try to prevent that from happening to another family," her father said.

MEADOW POLLACK

Andrew Pollack believes firmly his 18-year-old daughter Meadow and the five others who died on the third floor of the attacked classroom building would have lived if the school's sheriff's deputy had charged inside to confront the shooter on the first floor instead of staying outside.

His foundation, Meadow's Movement, recently began giving backpacks to school police and security officers that convert almost instantly into bullet-resistant vests, unfolding in one motion over the head. That also pulls onto the officers' chest a rifle with a stock that unfolds — they won't have to confront a well-armed shooter with just a handgun. When not in use, the backpack keeps the rifle hidden from students it might scare.

"It gives (officers) within a second something ... that could even the playing field," said Pollack, who spoke at the 2020 Republican National Convention. Still, he doesn't think Parkland's deputy, who is facing criminal charges for his inaction, would have gone in with a vest and rifle, calling him an obscenity.

His daughter, who wanted to be a lawyer, was known for her outgoing personality and her love of working out. To honor her love of exercise and fun, the foundation also builds playgrounds, including one costing \$1 million not far from Stoneman Douglas.

"It helps with the healing, seeing the kids playing and smiling," he said.

HELENA RAMSAY

When Helena Ramsay was a little girl, she would go with her mother to the community garden in the park near their home to help plant vegetables, build the beds and paint signs. That made the 17-year-old, who had come to the United States as a toddler from Great Britain, a champion of environmental causes, said her mother, Anne Ramsay, who helped manage the garden.

She said when the shooting happened, there was still one section of the garden that wasn't being used. Ramsay said one day she was sitting there, reading and trying to find comfort, when a cardinal sat on the fence and began singing to her.

"I said, 'OK God, that's my Helena communicating with me,'" she said.

That was when she decided to make that section a memorial garden for her daughter, a clarinet player who was tall, graceful and athletic, and a participant in Model United Nations.

Visitors to Helena's section are greeted by a monument featuring a smiling portrait of her and a dedication to those who died in the shooting. Their names are engraved on the back. The garden features benches for meditating, a small stone labyrinth, or maze, various flowers and 17 bamboo trees. People use the area to do yoga, exercise, read or relax.

Ramsay said while some families have been more vocal and public over the years, planting the garden was more her style. Helena's death was just one of a string of tragedies to hit the family in recent years, including the deaths of Anne Ramsay's parents and the loss of a nephew in another shooting.

"I needed peace and quiet, I needed healing, and I found that in this niche," she said.

ALEX SCHACHTER

After his 14-year-old son Alex died, Max Schachter ended his insurance practice and made promoting school safety his full-time mission. He joined the state commission with Ryan Petty and started Safe Schools for Alex, traveling the country learning the best security practices and presenting those to school districts, law enforcement and government officials. The foundation's website also has a dashboard where parents in several states can examine safety data for their child's school.

It lets them see if there is a problem — or if their school's administrators are obviously hiding problems, as Stoneman Douglas' did. On annual safety reports between 2014 and 2017, Stoneman Douglas administrators claimed their 3,200 students committed zero acts of bullying and three acts of vandalism, for example.

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"Alex was murdered in an unsafe school," Schachter said. "I thought this is the area where I could have the biggest impact. It is not partisan. It is not controversial. School safety is something everyone should be able to rally behind."

The foundation also provides online one-on-one lessons for underprivileged middle school band members. Alex, who loved cars and planned to attend the University of Connecticut, played trombone in the Stoneman Douglas band, which had won the state halftime show competition shortly before his murder.

"It is one of my happiest memories," Schachter said.

CARMEN SCHENTRUP

Carmen Schentrup had a laser focus on her future — a straight-A student and National Merit Scholarship finalist, she planned to become a doctor who researched amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly called Lou Gehrig's Disease. The devastating disease, which slowly destroys a person's bodily functions, had taken two people close to her: a great aunt and a choir director. Carmen, 16, wanted to find its cure.

That's why her parents, Philip and April, started the Carmen Schentrup ALS Research Fund, also known as "Carmen's Dream," through the ALS Foundation. Seeded with the money their daughter left in her savings account, it has now raised more than \$250,000 for the ALS Foundation.

"It is a very positive outcome to see people supporting Carmen's Dream and trying to make the world a better place," her father said.

PETER WANG

Peter Wang, an ROTC member, dreamed of attending the United States Military Academy and becoming a pilot. After the 15-year-old's death, the academy accepted his admission, having an Army officer deliver the letter to his parents.

The family has started the Peter Wang Foundation, which offers a scholarship to help disadvantaged students from the local Chinese-American community and makes charitable donations to organizations Peter supported. A foundation spokesman said Wang's mother, Linda Wang, is currently in China and unavailable for comment.

"I don't know how to use language to express the pain of losing my oldest son, Peter," his mother said in a statement read at the shooter's trial. "He had always made me so proud. I have four tattoos of Peter on my body. I get one every year on Feb. 14 to symbolize that he is still with me."

New this week: Pink, J-Hope, 'Woman King,' 'Hello Tomorrow!'

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music and video game platforms this week.

MOVIES

— Just a week after hitting theaters the neo-noir thriller "Sharper," anchored by Julianne Moore, arrives on Apple TV+ on Friday. No one is quite who they seem in the film, directed by Benjamin Caron, whose credits include "Andor" and "The Crown," as we delve into myriad cons among New York's well-heeled set. In his review, AP Film Writer Jake Coyle wrote that the "slinky, slick caper that finds ways to distort expectations while unfolding a puzzle-box narrative. Before its lesser third act, 'Sharper' — propelled especially by the performances of newcomer Briana Middleton and the more veteran Sebastian Stan — manages to juggle its plot twists with panache."

— Gina Prince-Bythewood's action epic "The Woman King" arrives on Netflix on Thursday, perfect for a rewatch or to finally get those holdouts on board with one of last year's most exciting mainstream blockbusters. The film starring Viola Davis as an African warrior was widely expected to get some Oscar nominations but was wholly shut out from every category. Prince-Bythewood wrote a moving essay in The Hollywood Reporter recently reflecting on the state of the industry, in which her film was a critical and audience hit, but still missed out on awards recognition. "It's not a snub," she wrote. "It's a reflection of

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where the Academy stands and the consistent chasm between Black excellence and recognition.”

— If you’ve already made it through last week’s streaming rom-com options, “Somebody I Used to Know” on Prime Video, and “Your Place or Mine” on Netflix, another starry offering is coming to video on demand in time for Valentine’s Day viewing. “Maybe I Do,” available to rent on Tuesday, brings together Diane Keaton, Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon, Emma Roberts, Luke Bracey and William H. Macy for a classic meet-the-parents set up.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

MUSIC

— You can take away Pink’s dinner, fun, liquor, soul, dog, birthday cake and everything she loves but don’t take away her dancing shoes. That’s the message from “Never Gonna Not Dance Again,” an explosion of pop she wrote with hitmakers Max Martin and Shellback, with a video of Pink roller-dancing through a supermarket. The single is on “Trustfall,” her ninth studio album set for release on Friday, which features appearances from The Lumineers, Chris Stapleton and First Aid Kit. It’s “an exploration of the highs and lows of uncertainty, freedom and letting go.”

— BTS star J-Hope has a documentary dropping Friday that chronicles three milestones: the making of the singer’s first solo album, “Jack In the Box,” his 2022 Lollapalooza performance as the first South Korean artist to headline the festival and the album’s listening party. “J-Hope in the Box” will release globally on Disney+. J-Hope — born Jeong Hoseok — is on hiatus from BTS while the rest of the band — RM, Jin, Suga, Jimin, V, and Jung Kook — fulfill their mandatory military duties in South Korea.

— Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

TELEVISION

— Billy Crudup stars in a new Apple TV+ series called “Hello Tomorrow!” Set in the future — which looks like a mashup of “The Jetsons” and “Pleasantville,” Crudup plays Jack, a traveling salesman of lunar timeshares. He is a leader among his colleagues (including Hank Azaria) for his unwavering optimism and sales numbers, but beneath the surface, life isn’t so perfect and there’s a darker side to Jack who has secrets he doesn’t want revealed. “Hello Tomorrow!” debuts Friday.

— Roseanne Barr has been relatively quiet since she was fired from ABC in 2018. At the time, the comedian was riding high from the success of a “Roseanne” revival in 2018. Things turned when Barr posted a racist tweet, (which she apologized for), prompting ABC to quickly cut ties and cancel the sitcom. Now, Barr has taped her first comedy special in almost 20 years and has taken it to the streaming service Fox Nation. The one-hour set called “Roseanne Barr: Cancel This” was filmed in front of an audience in Houston. Fox Nation will also debut a documentary about Barr called “Who is Roseanne Barr?” Both debut Monday.

— Alicia Rancilio

VIDEO GAMES

— Hunting games have come a long way since 1984’s Duck Hunt, with the prey getting ever more ferocious while the weaponry gets ever more elaborate. Capcom’s Monster Hunter series has dominated the genre lately, but Electronic Arts is getting in on the action with Wild Hearts, from the Japanese studio best known for the hack-and-slash franchise Dynasty Warriors. You start off with a simple katana, but Wild Hearts’ “Karakuri” feature lets you build defensive structures, traps and vehicles on the fly. You’ll need all the firepower you can muster to take down these magic-fueled behemoths — but, fortunately, you can invite friends to help out. The hunt begins Friday on PlayStation 5, Xbox X/S and PC.

— Then again, maybe you like wild animals. Blanc, from the French studio Casus Ludi, would be more up your alley. It’s the tale of a fawn and a wolf cub who get lost in a snowstorm and help each other find their way back to their families. The critters are adorable, and the hand-drawn, black-and-white landscapes are elegantly gorgeous. Blanc is a quiet, nonviolent, cooperative journey — maybe ideal for teaming up with a young child on the couch or online. It will be available Tuesday on Nintendo Switch and PC.

AP Interview: Moltzan catching up to US teammate Shiffrin

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

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MERIBEL, France (AP) — When Paula Moltzan finished second behind Mikaela Shiffrin for the U.S. ski team's first 1-2 finish in a women's World Cup slalom in more than half a century, it was easy to assume that her more successful teammate was her main inspiration.

Actually, it's another American skier who Moltzan still looks up to the most: Lindsey Vonn.

It's nothing against Shiffrin, it's just that Moltzan grew up skiing on the same hill in Minnesota where Vonn learned to race.

Both of her parents were ski instructors at Buck Hill and Moltzan moved into the elite program led by Vonn's former coach, Erich Sailer, when she was 12.

"Lindsey has been an idol of mine my entire career. She's so jaw droppingly inspiring," Moltzan said. "Obviously, Mikaela is as well, but first and foremost for me Lindsey is an icon in my life."

Moltzan still remembers the first time she met Vonn.

"She signed a poster for me when I was at Buck Hill. I was probably like 13 or 14," Moltzan said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It was pretty awesome."

A year or two earlier, Moltzan first met Shiffrin, who is 11 months younger than her.

"I've been Mikaela's teammate for a really long time. I got sent a picture of us on the podium when we were at Whistler Cup when we were 12 or 13 so we've been skiing together for our whole life," Moltzan said, referring to a big junior race in Canada.

"We've had ebbs and flows of our relationship," Moltzan said, adding that Shiffrin is now "a great friend to me."

But while Shiffrin is two wins away from eclipsing Ingemar Stenmark as the most successful World Cup skier of all time, Moltzan has only established herself among the world's elite in recent seasons despite becoming a world junior champion in slalom eight years ago.

With that second-place finish behind Shiffrin in Semmering, Austria, in December, combined with three fifth-place results this season, Moltzan has just joined Shiffrin in the top seven of the slalom start-list rankings — which gives her a big advantage by being able to ski on a cleaner course at the start of races.

"That's been a dream of mine since I was a little kid, so it's a big box to check for me," Moltzan said.

Moltzan's first race with that top-seven status will be her biggest event of the season, at the world championships, where the women's slalom will be held on Saturday.

First, though, Moltzan has three other races she wants to excel in at worlds: team parallel on Tuesday, individual parallel on Wednesday and giant slalom on Thursday. It's a run of four races in five days.

While Shiffrin won't compete because it's an event that's hard on her back and she wants to focus on her individual events, the United States still has a strong squad in the team event with Moltzan joined by Nina O'Brien, River Radamus and Tommy Ford.

Moltzan, especially, excels at parallel racing. In her three career individual races in the discipline, she has one second-place result and a fourth-place finish at the last worlds.

So why is she such a beast in parallel?

"I'm super hyper competitive. You can ask my teammates: I hate to lose training. I hate to lose anything," she said. "So it's just having that competitor right next to you in your peripherals. It just pushes me harder to ski fast, ski hard."

"And it's kind of the perfect combination between slalom and GS. I started off as a slalom (skier), have now built into a GS skier and I think parallel is that perfect in-between ground."

Moltzan competed strongly in the parallel team event at the Olympics and was the top American in both slalom (eighth) and giant slalom (12th) in Beijing — all despite skiing with a broken left hand. But nobody seemed to notice because Shiffrin surprisingly didn't finish either the slalom or the GS.

Moltzan broke her hand in mid-December last season but didn't get it repaired until May.

"It was really painful for that whole time," she said. "(But) you just learn to build a lot of resilience. As a ski racer, little parts of your body are always hurting and sometimes it's mind over matter. We have 1 minute to 1:30 runs and I think you can teach yourself to endure a little bit of pain for that long."

Earlier in her career, Moltzan wasn't willing to push herself that hard, and consequently lost her spot on

the U.S. team in 2016 because of poor results.

So she enrolled at the University of Vermont and won the NCAA slalom title a year later. While still at UVM in 2018, she finished 17th in the World Cup slalom down the road at Killington, giving her enough World Cup points to head back over to Europe and resume World Cup racing.

Only she still wasn't part of the U.S. team, meaning she and then-boyfriend Ryan Mooney — who is still her ski technician and unofficial coach, as well as her husband after getting married in September — had to raise \$50,000 on their own to travel and compete across the Alps.

"It's a performance driven sport," explained U.S. Alpine director Patrick Riml. "At some point you got to ask the question, 'Does the athlete want it? Do they have the potential?'"

Moltzan acknowledges that she was immature during her first stint with the team.

"I grew up a lot when I went to university," she said. "So I don't hold any grudge or resentment toward the U.S. team. They did what they had to do and I did what I had to do."

During her three years of college, Moltzan majored in biology with a chemistry minor. But that's on hold now.

"You only get to be a professional athlete once," she said. "So when I'm done skiing, I'll go back to school and do my last year."

Then maybe medical school.

"It's a lot of school and a lot of work," she said. "But I put in a lot of work into a lot of things in my life. ... Step by step."

After their genitals were cut, some women search for healing

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — She remembers it all: How female relatives held her down when she was 11, legs spread and genitals exposed. The fear that stiffened her body. The stranger in black holding the scissors. And the pain.

Like so many others, the 34-year-old Egyptian woman has lived with the psychological and physical repercussions of that day, when she was subjected to a practice many activists call "mutilation."

For N.S., who asked to be identified only by her initials to discuss the sensitive topic, the trauma continuing into adulthood was accompanied by a desire to reclaim control over her health and body.

"I had a feeling of being incomplete and that I will never feel happy because of this," she said. "It's a horrible feeling."

A global target aims to eradicate the deeply entrenched practice by 2030, and protect the next generations of girls, though campaigners acknowledge the difficulties in achieving that. The United Nations has designated an International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, or FGM, observed every Feb. 6.

Meanwhile, some women living with the consequences have embarked on deeply personal journeys to heal. They search for answers, sometimes scouring the Internet, amid treatment gaps in many countries, or shame and possible related sexual complications.

Prevalent in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, cutting has been performed in communities of different cultures and faiths. It can be viewed as a rite of passage or linked to beliefs about chastity or femininity and cleanliness, and be fueled from generation-to-generation by social pressure.

"It's an entrenched social norm and really deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and sometimes in religious beliefs," said Nafissatou Diop, an official with the United Nations Population Fund. "So to be able to make any change, people need to be convinced that this is not threatening their culture."

It's estimated that at least 200 million women and girls are living with the aftermath of the practice, which can include partial or total removal of their external female genitalia and can cause excessive bleeding and even death. Long term, it can lead to urinary tract infections, menstrual problems, pain, decreased sexual satisfaction and childbirth complications, as well as depression, low self-esteem and post-traumatic stress disorder.

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Some faith leaders have worked to eliminate the practice, while others condone it. In Egypt, where genital cutting has been widespread but illegal since 2008, top Islamic authorities condemn the practice. In online edicts or television appearances, they cite medical evidence of its harms and say it's a custom with no sound religious basis. Still, there's opposition to the bans in Egypt and elsewhere.

Besides resistance from some religious leaders and other "traditional gatekeepers," Diop said the campaign to change minds is hindered by limited funding, lack of political will from some governments and a perception that ending cutting reflects a "Western-led agenda."

Meanwhile, some women suffering the aftereffects post anonymously online in the quest for healing. They express feelings of distress, discomfort in their own skin, embarrassment or fears that being cut could stop them from getting married or condemn their marriages to failure. Some want information on medical procedures.

Some considering medical interventions have found specialized treatment, including in the United States and Europe, where opposition to the practice is longstanding. But in many countries, options can be scarce or too costly.

"There are so many treatment gaps in a lot of countries where FGM is really widely practiced," said Christina Pallitto, a scientist leading the work on FGM at the World Health Organization. "A lot of health care providers receive no training at all."

N.S. turned to a private clinic in Egypt, Restore FGM, that opened in 2020 and has promoted treatments on Instagram and other social media.

Dr. Reham Awwad, a plastic surgeon and clinic co-founder, said many patients' initial visits are emotional. "One of the first things they'll say is, 'I've never spoken about this to anybody,'" she said.

The clinic, which also attracts clients from Sudan and elsewhere, offers surgical and non-surgical therapies. Psychological therapy is recommended, but many don't pursue it, Awwad said.

N.S. has struggled with anger at her parents and low self-confidence. She's wrestled with sensitive questions: Will sex hurt? Will cutting lead to sexual problems in a marriage? What about pregnancy and childbirth? She struggled with pain and difficulty reaching orgasm.

At Restore FGM, she opted for "reconstruction" surgery to remove scar tissue, expose uncut parts of the clitoris and make that more accessible. But some experts view the procedure with caution.

Surgeons who back it say it can improve function and appearance, and reduce pain. Others, including the WHO, call for more research and say there isn't adequate evidence to assess benefits, possible complications or long-term outcomes.

"We don't have a recommendation in favor of that at this moment because of the lack of evidence on the safety and the efficacy," said WHO's Pallitto. "Any woman who has clitoral reconstruction should be offered sexual health counseling in conjunction with it." Neither the procedure nor such counseling is widely available in high prevalence countries, she added.

It's been more than a year since N.S. underwent the surgery. After treatment for post-surgery bruising, she's feeling better. "I no longer feel pain," she said. "Sensation has also improved a lot."

But her journey isn't over. "I still need to work on accepting myself, accepting that this has happened to me and that it has been treated," she said. "The operation on its own is not enough. ... I don't feel like I am completely over the trauma and I still struggle with the idea of physical touch."

She wants to pursue psychological therapy but says she can't afford it and worries about finding someone she can trust with such intimate details.

Basma Kamel recalled bleeding badly days after getting cut — at the hands of a doctor — when she was 9. For a long time, the 30-year-old Egyptian couldn't trust her mother. Eventually, she concluded her mother didn't know better and didn't mean to hurt her. But feelings of being "different" lingered.

After moving from Egypt to England, she started looking for answers and turned to an FGM clinic and charity group for talk therapy. She's made progress, but her self-acceptance work is ongoing.

"The goal is to find peace with myself and accept my body and accept that I am a normal person," she said. "Even if I have, like, a missing part from my body, I'm still a normal woman."

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Dr. Jasmine Abdulcadir, a gynecologist at Geneva University Hospitals, treats women, mostly from East and West Africa, who underwent genital cutting.

The women have options for medical intervention, including a procedure to re-open a narrowed vaginal opening to help with everything from urination and menstruation to natural childbirth.

Clitoral reconstruction surgery also is an option. Abdulcadir said the procedure for that includes meeting with a psychologist, who is also a trauma-trained sex therapist, and making sure patients are prepared if the surgery ends up being mentally triggering.

She said some patients said they felt "born again" post-surgery, which she attributes to her practice's holistic approach.

"What is very important is that you are not just focusing on the clitoris," Abdulcadir said. "It's really the health of the person."

N.S. has yet to tell her family about her surgery. One day she might; she especially wants to tell her sister who was cut the same day she was.

But she does speak up when she can.

She threatened to call the police on learning some relatives were considering genital cutting for their daughters even though the practice is outlawed in Egypt.

"I didn't want anyone else to be tormented like I was," she said. "Someone must put their foot down and say: 'Enough.'"

Train derailment prompts water utility to take precautions

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (AP) — A West Virginia water utility is enhancing its water treatment process as a precaution following the derailment of a train hauling chemicals that later sent up a toxic plume in Ohio.

West Virginia American Water said Sunday that it's also going to install a secondary intake on the Guyandotte River in case there's a need to switch to an alternate water source. The utility noted that there hasn't been any change in raw water at its Ohio River intake.

"The health and safety of our customers is a priority, and there are currently no drinking water advisories in place for customers," the company said in a statement.

About 50 cars, including 10 carrying hazardous materials, derailed in a fiery crash Feb. 3 in East Palestine, Ohio. Vinyl chloride was later released into the air from five of those cars before crews ignited it to get rid of the highly flammable, toxic chemicals in a controlled environment, creating a dark plume of smoke.

Residents from nearby neighborhoods in Ohio and Pennsylvania were evacuated because of health risks from the fumes, but have since been allowed to return.

Today in History: FEB 14, Arizona becomes 48th US state

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 14, the 45th day of 2023. There are 320 days left in the year. This is Valentine's Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

In 1989, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini called on Muslims to kill Salman Rushdie, author of "The Satanic Verses," a novel condemned as blasphemous.

On this date:

In 1876, inventors Alexander Graham Bell and Elisha Gray applied separately for patents related to the telephone. (The U.S. Supreme Court eventually ruled Bell the rightful inventor.)

In 1912, Arizona became the 48th state of the Union as President William Howard Taft signed a proclamation.

In 1913, labor leader Jimmy Hoffa was born in Brazil, Ind.; college football coach Woody Hayes was born in Clifton, Ohio; sports broadcaster Mel Allen was born in Birmingham, Ala.

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In 1924, the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co. of New York was formally renamed International Business Machines Corp., or IBM.

In 1929, the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre" took place in a Chicago garage as seven rivals of Al Capone's gang were gunned down.

In 1945, during World War II, British and Canadian forces reached the Rhine River in Germany.

In 1967, Aretha Franklin recorded her cover of Otis Redding's "Respect" at Atlantic Records in New York.

In 1984, 6-year-old Stormie Jones became the world's first heart-liver transplant recipient when the surgery was performed at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

Ten years ago: Double-amputee Olympic sprinter Oscar Pistorius shot and killed his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, at his home in Pretoria, South Africa; he was later convicted of murder and is serving a 13-year prison term.

Five years ago: A gunman identified as a former student opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School near Fort Lauderdale, Fla., killing 17 people in the nation's deadliest school shooting since the attack in Newtown, Conn., more than five years earlier. (Nikolas Cruz pleaded guilty to murder in October 2021 and was sentenced in November 2022 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

One year ago: The Kremlin signaled it was ready to keep talking with the West about security grievances that led to the Ukraine crisis, offering hope that Russia might not invade its neighbor within days. (Russia would invade Ukraine less than a week later.) Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency powers to try to quell the protests by truck drivers and others who paralyzed Ottawa and blocked border crossings in anger over the country's COVID-19 restrictions.

Today's birthdays: Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is 81. Jazz musician Maceo Parker is 80. Journalist Carl Bernstein is 79. Former Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., is 76. TV personality Pat O'Brien is 75. Magician Teller (Penn and Teller) is 75. Cajun singer-musician Michael Doucet (doo-SAY') (Beausoleil) is 72. Actor Ken Wahl is 66. Opera singer Renee Fleming is 64. Actor Meg Tilly is 63. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Kelly is 63. Singer-producer Dwayne Wiggins is 62. Actor Sakina Jaffrey is 61. Actor Enrico Colantoni is 60. Actor Zach Galligan is 59. Former tennis player Manuela Maleeva is 56. Actor Simon Pegg is 53. Rock musician Kevin Baldes (Lit) is 51. Rock singer Rob Thomas (Matchbox Twenty) is 51. Former NFL quarterback Drew Bledsoe is 51. Actor Danai Gurira is 45. Actor Matt Barr is 39. Actor Stephanie Leonidas is 39. Actor Jake Lacy is 37. Actor Tiffany Thornton is 37. Actor Brett Dier is 33. Actor Freddie Highmore is 31.