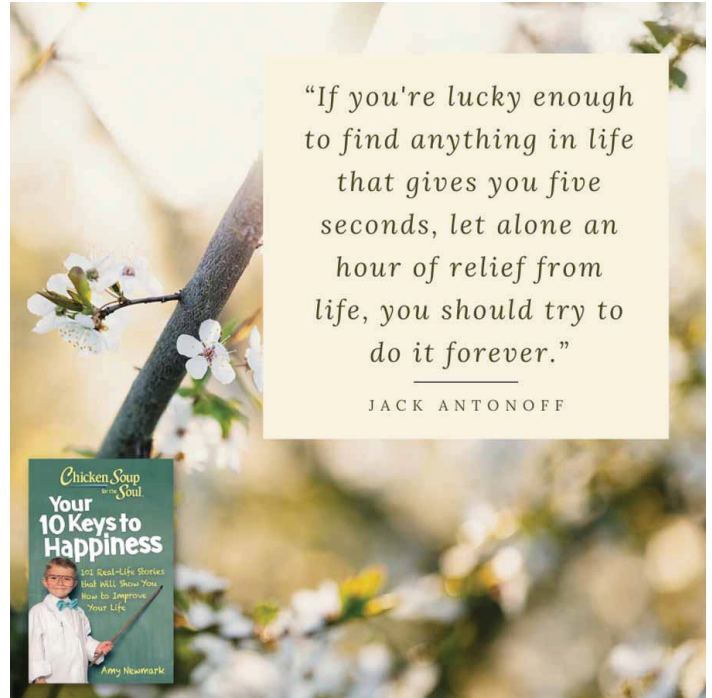


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Groton Community Calendar

Tuesday, May 30

- Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, winter blend vegetables, cookie, apricots.
- The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
- United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
- Legion Baseball: at Watertown (DH), 5 p.m.
- Jr. Teeners: Huron at Groton, DH, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, May 31

- Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin potatoes, cauliflower, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.
- Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
- St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.
- Jr. Legion Baseball: Mobridge at Groton (DH), 5 p.m.

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.
© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS 66TH ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, June 1st
Groton Area High School Arena
11:30am Registration & Lunch
12:30pm Meeting

- Membership Gift
- Lunch catered by Ken's SuperFair Foods
- Door Prizes, including a \$500 JVT credit
- Call 605-397-2323 to reserve a free bus ride to the meeting
- JVT's Office will be closed 11am-2pm



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The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

Kashmir plunged into a Himalayan gorge. Indian police claim the bus was overloaded.

More than 25 NATO-led peacekeepers were injured after violence escalated in northern Kosovo, where protestors clashed with law enforcement after ethnic Albanian mayors took office. The Serbian army has been put on the highest level of combat alert.

The Miami Heat reached the NBA finals after defeating the Boston Celtics 103-84, in the Eastern Conference. Miami will now face the Denver Nuggets, who are making their first-ever Finals appearance.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia has issued an arrest warrant for U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, after an edited video posted by Volodymyr Zelensky's office appeared to show him celebrating after claiming "the Russians are dying." In reality, the comments were made separately.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAYS AHEAD

Top officials of the Group of Seven (G7) nations are scheduled to meet to discuss problems posed by artificial intelligence and potential regulation strategies.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is expected to hold his 2024 presidential campaign kickoff event today in Iowa, which is the lead caucus state.

Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes has been ordered to report to authorities to begin her 11-year prison sentence. Holmes will be serving time at a minimum-security women's prison in Bryan, Texas.

At least 16 people have been killed across more than a dozen mass shootings in the U.S. over Memorial Day weekend. Nine people were also injured in a shooting in Hollywood Beach, Florida.

North Korea confirmed plans to launch its first military spy satellite in June to monitor "reckless" U.S. military activities with South Korea. The announcement has prompted Japan to put its ballistic missile defenses on alert.

At least ten people have been killed, and dozens more injured after a bus filled with Hindu pilgrims headed to

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That's Life by Tony Bender

The unforgotten

Editor's note: Tony took the Memorial Day weekend off. Here's one of our favorites from 2015.

The intoxicating smell of fresh cut spring grass permeates the senses. Hand shears trim close to the granite markers, wreaths are laid at the graves. American flags adorn other graves. A handkerchief polishes the stone and sweeps away time.

We pause. Reflect. Contemplate. Remember.

I worked as a groundskeeper at a cemetery one summer, read the names as I walked by, memorized the names of many children. Parents would arrive regularly to mark some sad anniversary. The slamming of car doors reverberated like unintentional thunder. I would become invisible, a wraith solemnly watching with all the other ghosts in prayerful silence. Empaths, we mourned the living and the dead.

They usually stood, looking small, slump-shouldered, looking down, not at each other. She might kneel and brush away some dust, and when she rose, his arm might circle her shoulder as she leaned into him.

In time, she would draw a deep breath, the signal that it was time to leave. No words spoken, just plastic flowers left behind in a vase. The rest of the story drives away in the front seat of an aging Buick with protesting springs.

I wonder some days if the earth, every atom and particle, locked in a cycle of life and death, has within it the capacity to feel, or is the universe indifferent to our losses?

Even the elephants weep. They hold the bones of the departed and show their respect. When drought takes the young, the mothers will try desperately to waken the baby for a long while and then finally give up. They will stand there, sometimes for hours, in memoriam. A dog waits at the corner each day or his master to return from work. The man isn't coming back, and the dog must know it by now—maybe this is simply a show of respect. Or hope.

Old soldiers gather at the Legion Hall on Memorial Day, fewer in number than last year, but they stand taller this day than any other. If the sun shines, they smoke Pall Malls and Marlboros, adjust their gear and suck in their paunches. The sunshine seems fitting. And if it rains, it seems appropriate, too.

They keep their thoughts to themselves, don't talk about the wars, the things they've seen, friends they lost. Some things are to be remembered, some things best forgotten. They remind us of the duality of the struggle, that from the contest, honor is born, that light pierces the darkness.

It's a mystery, a miracle, an enigma. It's hard to fathom that the imprint we leave behind, in ways we cannot predict, endures. Some footprints are deeper than others, but we all leave a mark. Walk through the halls of your school. You may not know the names on these fresh faces, but the features are recognizable. There's a Geiszler... a Dockter... an Ebel... a Delzer... a Heupel. It's in the nose. The angle of the face. The eyes. You can hear it in the laugh. See it in the posture. Look at tintype photographs in the museum and you may see yourself. Bloodlines run strong. There's comfort in this, a sense that things are as they are supposed to be. A continuum.

There were three of us that summer, watchmen of the dead, invisible servants to the living. We dug the graves. Poured cement for the vaults and painted them gold. We set up regal maroon tents and folding chairs, carefully smoothed the green plastic turf that hid the disturbed ground. It had to be perfect.

We waited in the shadows when the shiny black hearses led the somber parades through the cemetery. The arrhythmic beat of car doors, like drummers out of time. Prayers echoed off the statues of angels. Sometimes they were lost to the wind. Sometimes it rained.

In 20 minutes it was over. When they were gone, the tent came down, the sod was rolled back over the scar, and we watered it daily, respectfully, until it took root again. Each day, we plucked away rogue thistles and trimmed unruly branches, never having to be reminded of the sanctity of the task.

Every day was Memorial Day.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Prison workshops bleeding money despite requirement to break even

Managers explain improvement plans for troubled divisions to Corrections Commission

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 30, 2023 12:31 AM

The South Dakota Department of Corrections is required to operate its prison workshops without losing money, but the DOC has long failed to live up to that expectation.

Not only do some shops lose as much as \$400,000 a year, but inmates aren't spending enough of their work time filling customer orders. Inmates regularly tag just 15% of their work hours to the job orders they're meant to fill in the carpentry, metal fabrication or sign-making shops.

The industry standard is 70%, with the remaining work time used for things like setting up for the next task, maintenance or cleanup.

Four of the prison industries' divisions ended 2022 with negative cash flows on their balance sheets, according to the DOC's most recent annual report.

Last year, shortly after accepting the state's top corrections job, DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko decided it was time for a change.

On Wednesday morning, she told the state's Corrections Commission about plans to improve financial transparency and move operations closer to hitting the DOC's legal obligations to break even.

There's been a lot of work done over the past year to address issues at Pheasantland Industries, she said, referring to the umbrella term for the state's inmate work programs.

"Every shop has a business plan, we've assessed every business plan, and we're actually holding revenue profitability to the letter that the statute requires," Wasko said. "I don't think there has been a stronger time for us to have complete integrity and fidelity in our Pheasantland Industries program."

Changes in leadership, management

Pheasantland comprises an array of production facilities and products across the state's five prison campuses. A handful of shops, such as a knitting shop at the women's prison in Pierre and a custom cabinetry shop at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield, have community partners as customers and pay inmates who work there a wage of \$8 an hour or more. Most shops, however – including those that produce license plates and highway signs – pay inmates 30 cents an hour.

The head of Pheasantland Industries was ousted in July 2021, alongside former South Dakota State Penitentiary Warden Darin Young, in a housekeeping sweep of leadership, the necessity of which was never fully explained to the public. Former Corrections Secretary Mike Leidholt was placed on administrative leave shortly before the staff shakeup and never returned.

At the time, Gov. Kristi Noem's office offered only references to unspecified unprofessional behavior, citing an internal investigation that revealed "nepotism, sexual misconduct, poor wages and equipment and low morale."

On Wednesday, Wasko told commissioners that the DOC has rewritten policies because of "some of the shenanigans" at Pheasantland Industries in the past.

Wasko did not elaborate, but told the Corrections Commission those were among the reasons she chose to realign the shops' administrative operations when she arrived in the spring of 2022. The shift in management came alongside new policies requiring quarterly meetings between DOC finance staffers and shop managers, and requiring corrective action plans for any of the separate divisions at Pheasantland that lose

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money for six straight quarters.

"This was really just an opportunity to upright some of what was expected for revenue-generating operations," Wasko said.

DOC Finance Director Brittini Skipper and Pheasantland Industries Manager Justin Winters did not explain what may have caused some of the shops' pre-2022 troubles, but they did offer data points showing the DOC has regularly failed to live up to its fiduciary responsibilities.

The metal shop, for example, which fabricates lockers and bed frames for the DOC's prisons and does a host of other odd jobs for clients in and outside the DOC, has lost money for 10 straight years, Skipper said. The most recent annual loss in the metal shop was \$400,000. The custom cabinetry shop, which has a separate balance sheet from the metal shop, lost \$370,197 in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2022.

Between those figures and the charging of just 15% of inmate work time to billable work orders in some areas, Skipper said, it's clear that budget-minded management had not historically been a priority.

Not every area of Pheasantland lost money, Skipper said, which is part of the reason the DOC is working to bring each area into a more financially solvent position.

"It's not fair to the shops that are making money that they have to subsidize the shops that are consistently losing money," Skipper said. "Nobody would stay in business if you're losing \$400,000 a year."

Future change, accountability

The Corrections Commission reviewed a handful of adjustments being made to deal with the financial troubles. The group also saw several slides showing profits and losses and laying out the wide range of work produced by prisoners.

The shops on corrective action plans have yet to make dramatic turnarounds, but there have been positive signs, Skipper and Winters said. The license plate shops recently hit their third quarter goal of fulfilling printing 800,000 license plates for South Dakota counties more than a month ahead of schedule. The plates are updated every seven years, and the DOC will produce a total of 1.8 million.

On the signage side, Winters said, the DOC has maintained a strong relationship with the state Department of Transportation and county highway departments. Low costs and reliability have made the DOC a trusted partner in such work, he said.

"Every sign that you see driving down the expressway right now, those signs are made in our sign shop here in Sioux Falls," Winters said. "So the signage shop does have a fantastic ability to service our communities at a low cost, but highly effective way to make sure everyone has what they need."

At least one Corrections Commission member wondered aloud Wednesday if the DOC's goals are realistic. Moving from 15% of inmate work time charged to specific jobs to the 70% Skipper described as "industry standard," Commissioner David McGirr said, might be a lot to ask based on historical trends.

"To go from 15% to 70% would be pretty amazing, but it doesn't look like actually the numbers have changed much," McGirr said. "So what plan is in place to cause them to be successful?"

Skipper explained that the budget scrutiny placed on Pheasantland "made me realize" that some of the shops are set up more to serve state and internal DOC needs – metal shop repairs and replacements of DOC or government customer property, for example – than to make money. They're more like vocational training programs, Skipper said, so the DOC is pondering the possibility of moving those programs into that vocational model and focusing its money-making efforts on other areas.

Wasko told McGirr and the rest of the commission that they will continue to receive updates on Pheasantland's progress in the coming months. The group will help keep her staff accountable as the process of revamping its business model plays out, she said, and the DOC will continue to update, present and explain its plans.

"It does not get more transparent than this," Wasko said. "This is to the penny. So I would just hope that the commission kind of sees that, and knows that there will be plenty of room for asking questions as we move forward."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

How climate change threatens South Dakota's protected landscapes

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 30, 2023 12:30 AM

Swaths of South Dakota water, grasslands and forests are under federal protection, but climate change recognizes no boundaries.

Scientists say South Dakota's protected lands are vulnerable to pest infestation, wildfire, drought, flooding and more extreme weather in the decades to come.

That ranges from a wild stretch of the Missouri River to grasslands in central South Dakota to the Black Hills.

Those changes threaten not only the livelihood of the landscapes and their ecosystems, but South Dakota as a whole: its conservation efforts; its two largest industries, tourism and agriculture; and the natural resources residents rely upon.

Only a handful of local governments in the state are taking steps to adapt to climate change, such as the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's Climate Adaptation Plan, Spearfish and Black Hills State University's Climate Resiliency Plan, and Rapid City's acceptance of federal climate funding to reduce greenhouse gases and other air pollution.

South Dakota rejected such funds, and the state lacks climate policy in general. The state's Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources declined to answer South Dakota Searchlight's questions regarding climate policy and studies.

Kara Hoving, communications director for climate action advocacy group SoDak 350, said South Dakota has the capacity to provide solutions, such as wind and solar energy, which can reduce the greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. Some agricultural practices can also store carbon in the ground and provide other environmental benefits.

"We just need courageous leadership at the state level that will prevent the worst impacts from happening in our state," Hoving said.

Grasslands, ranching threatened by wildfire, drought & heat

The Fort Pierre National Grassland supports dozens of ranching families in central South Dakota, with over 52,000 animals grazing on leased portions of the 116,000 acres of protected, mixed grass prairie.

Scientists expect the region to experience an increase in weather volatility — wet springs with flooding paired with hot, dry summers; or heavy blizzards followed by high temperatures and fast snowmelt — like much of South Dakota.

Those implications threaten vegetation management programs and elements critical for native grass growth and production, said Dan Svingen, district manager at the Fort Pierre National Grassland. That could devastate diversity and produce a monoculture pasture of invasive grasses, forecasting similar challenges for ranchers and farmers across the state.

In the last 20 years, Svingen has seen a "dramatic increase" in invasive grasses such as smooth brome and Kentucky bluegrass. Hotter summers with less precipitation impair growth for native grasses and other plants throughout the state, possibly ushering in opportunities for invasive species to take root. As weather volatility increases, it'll be harder to design management methods, such as controlled burns, to target exotic plants.

"When you just have one type of grass, for example smooth brome, that has good protein quality early in the spring, but then that's not the case later in the year," Svingen said. "In a native prairie, you'd have different species of grasses growing throughout the season. Something is lost with the quality of forage when you are left with a monoculture."

Despite the uncertainty, the grasslands have partnered with a local grazing association, researchers and other organizations to identify grazing and management practices over the next decade that adapt to the changing climate and benefit native growth. The study began last year, and will test out the first of altered treatment methods this year.

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"The long term solution is intricately linked to building more ecological resilience," Svingen said. "The more diversity in a plant community, the more likely you'll be able to deal with whatever the world throws at you."

Wildfires, pests & flooding threaten Black Hills tourism

Climate change will extend the tourism season across South Dakota and the Black Hills, but shorter winters and hotter summers that come with it will hinder the industry, reports suggest.

Over the last century, the average temperature in the Black Hills rose by about 2 degrees. The intensity and frequency of heavy rains has increased, and winters have shortened with reduced snowpack.

Increased water temperatures will change fish populations and impact recreational angling across the state. An increase in forceful storms will threaten campgrounds, roads, trails and other park resources and infrastructure. Hotter summer days will increase energy demands and may lead to more heat related illnesses. Mosquitos and other insects will hatch earlier in the season as winter is cut short, and will take longer to die off.

Wildfires, drought and insect outbreaks exacerbated by climate change will threaten the ponderosa pine trees that dominate the Black Hills region. Wildfire smoke from not only the Black Hills but also Canada and the western United States will further impact air quality across the state, keeping people indoors.

That all comes from a climate assessment report for the Black Hills National Forest. The national forest doesn't have management plans in place regarding climate change, though, since it is still operating under forest assessments from nearly two decades ago, said Scott Jacobson, a spokesman for the forest.

The national forest will spend the next few years revising its management plan based on such assessments and public input, he added.

But Black Hills State University and Spearfish have been preparing for extreme weather and climate change for nearly a decade. The university created a sustainability plan in 2014 and partnered with the city of Spearfish, Lawrence County, and Black Hills businesses such as a fish hatchery, sawmill and health care representatives to create a climate resiliency plan.

The plan has allowed the city and university to prepare for extreme weather events and has created a unified vision for sustainability, said Debbie Liddick, assistant director for facilities and sustainability at BHSU.

"If you want to plan for the future and have strong economic health, infrastructure stability, and good health and wellness for people," Liddick said, "it's good to put down on paper what you value in your community and how you'll support that, and adapting to climate is part of that."

Drought impacts Missouri River

The Missouri National Recreational River is a free-flowing river segment, managed by the National Park Service, that runs nearly 100 miles between South Dakota and Nebraska. Tom Downs, program manager for interpretation, education and outreach, has observed the river and its banks change over the last few years due to climate change — and especially drought.

The river is shallower than normal with bursts of flooding, Downs said.

"We've had drought," he said. "The reservoirs don't need to release more water to get rid of excess water."

With hotter summer temperatures, that'll lead to more evapotranspiration, which is when moisture is evaporated from the ground and plants. This creates drought periods even with heavy spring rains.

That leaves plenty of sandbars for the piping plover and least terns, but it threatens other wildlife and vegetation that relies upon the river — and South Dakota residents who rely on it for water. Downs is concerned about the cottonwood tree population along the river, which is being overpowered by red cedars.

Cottonwood trees help stabilize stream banks and act as natural windbreaks and filtration systems to reduce sedimentation. The trees are sacred to many Native Americans and are habitat for many animals, including the endangered northern long-eared bat.

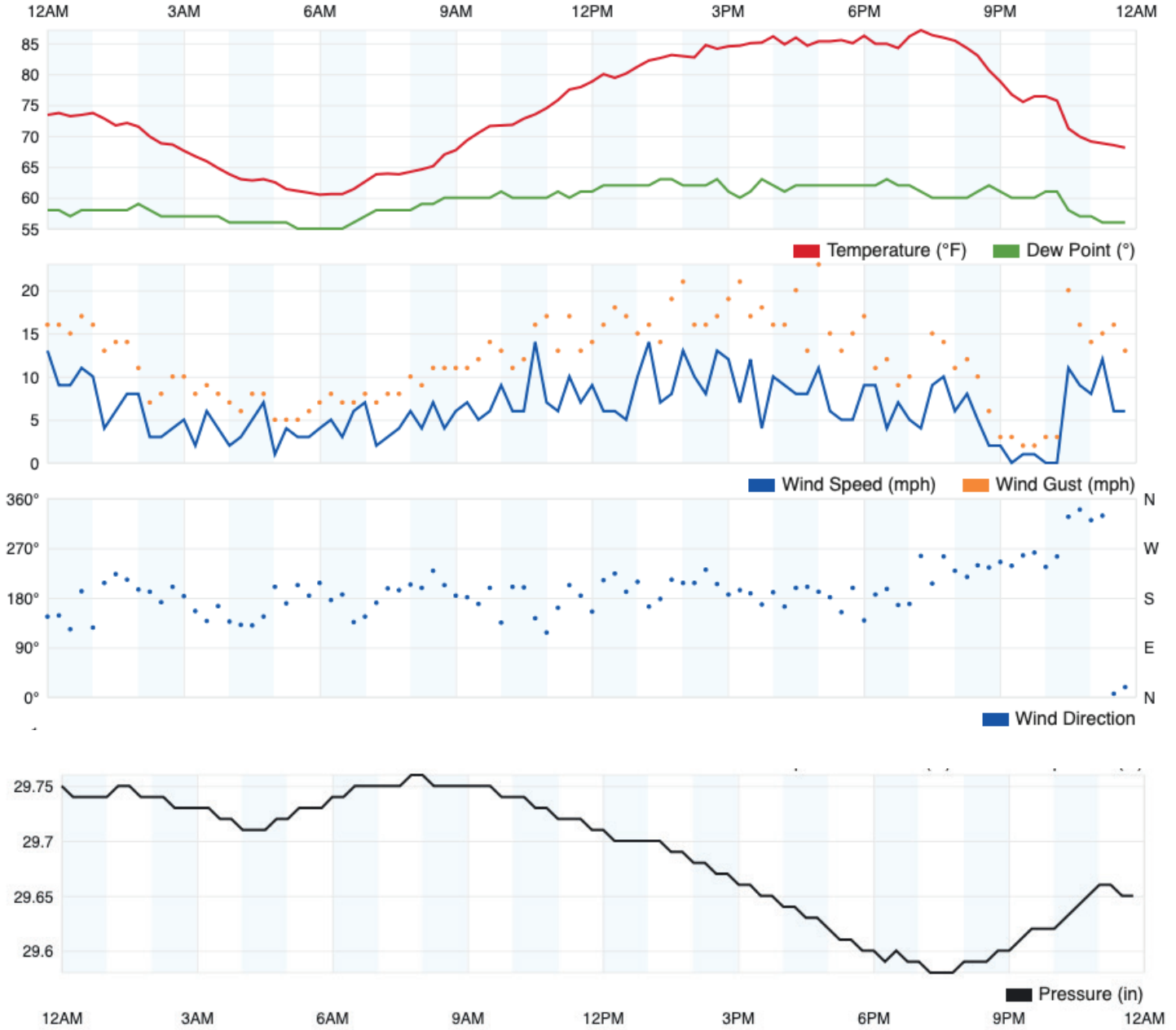
"Addressing climate change is a core responsibility of the National Park Service, and we want to protect our parks unimpaired for future generations," Downs said. "We'll do what we need to do to change along with those changes and protect what's in these parks."

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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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
		 20%	 50%	 40%	 20%	 20%
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms and Breezy	Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers
High: 89 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 89 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 87 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 88 °F



Continued Warm with Rain Chances

May 30, 2023
2:46 AM

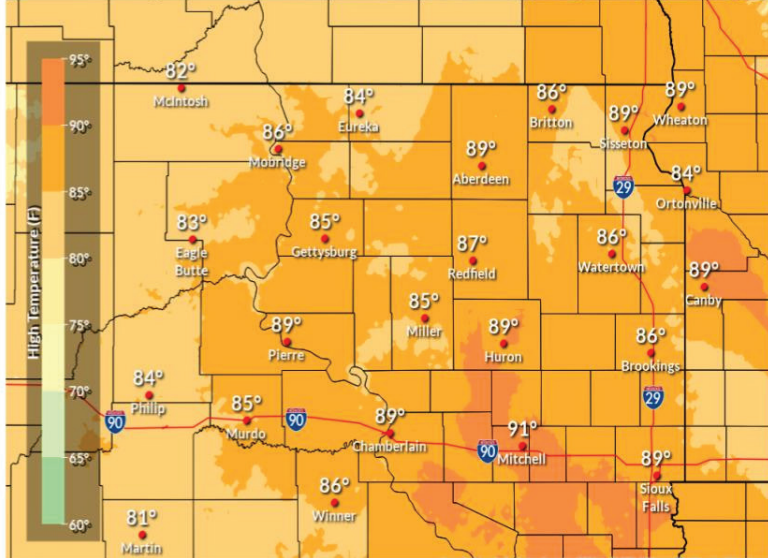
Today's High Temperature

Valid Tue 9:00AM through Tue 9:00PM CDT

Weather Forecast Office

Aberdeen, SD

Issued May 30, 2023 2:00 AM CDT



Occasional shower/storm chances through the work week.



Maximum Temperature Forecast

	5/31 Wed	6/1 Thu	6/2 Fri	6/3 Sat	6/4 Sun
Aberdeen	89	88	89	89	89
Britton	86	86	87	88	87
Brookings	87	88	89	87	88
Chamberlain	90	90	89	88	89
Clark	86	85	85	86	84
Eagle Butte	83	83	82	82	82
Ellendale	86	85	87	88	87
Eureka	85	86	87	87	87
Gettysburg	84	84	85	85	84
Huron	89	91	90	89	90
Kennebec	87	86	86	86	87
McIntosh	82	82	82	82	82
Milbank	88	89	90	91	89
Miller	86	85	86	86	86
Mobridge	88	88	89	89	88
Murdo	86	84	84	83	84
Pierre	91	89	89	88	88
Redfield	90	87	88	88	88
Sisseton	89	89	90	91	89
Watertown	86	86	87	88	87
Webster	85	84	85	86	84
Wheaton	88	89	90	91	88

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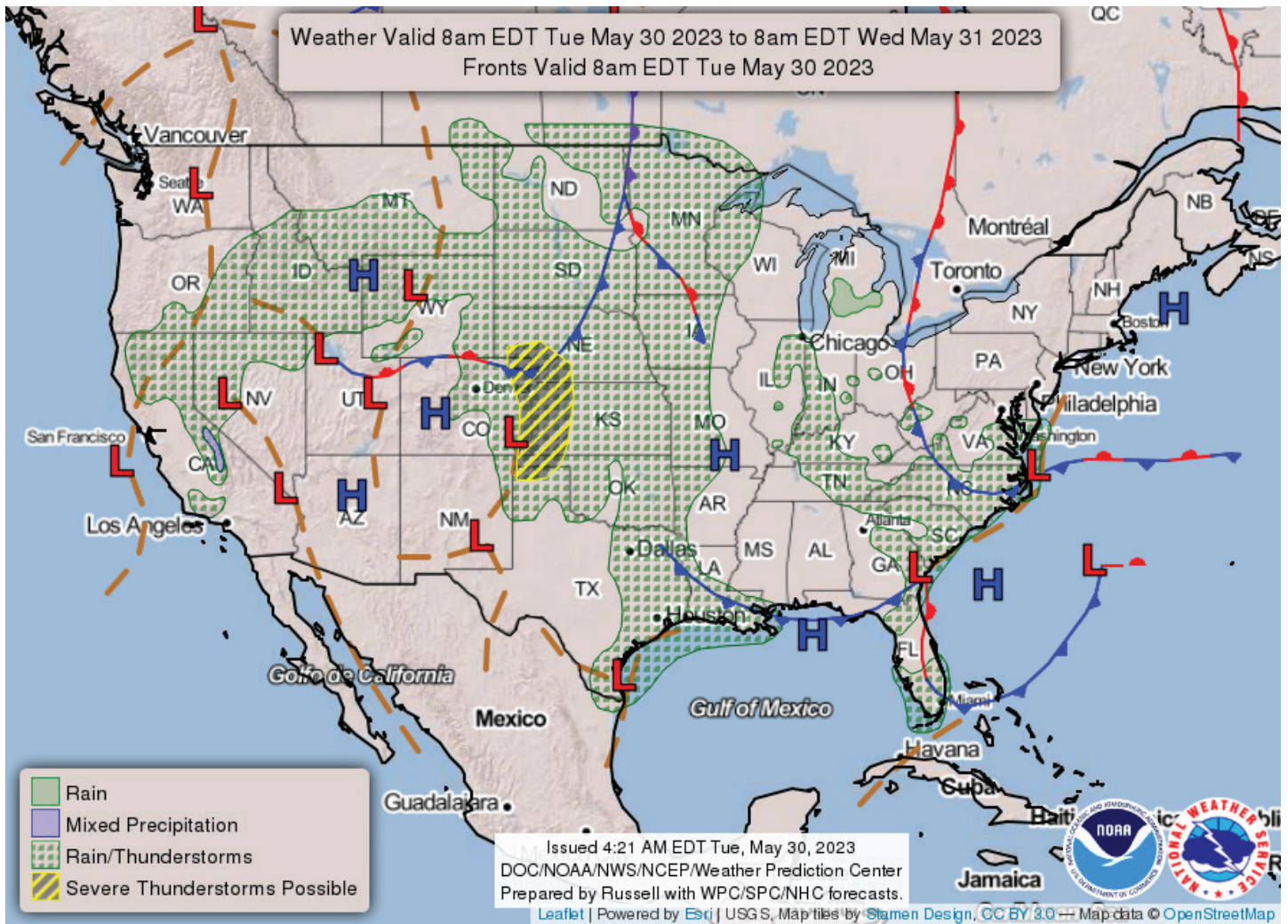
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 87 °F at 7:15 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 5:58 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 10:19 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 26 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 110 in 1934
Record Low: 27 in 1947
Average High: 76
Average Low: 50
Average Precip in May.: 3.17
Precip to date in May.: 2.19
Average Precip to date: 7.14
Precip Year to Date: 7.91
Sunset Tonight: 9:13:19 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45:58 AM



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Today in Weather History

May 30, 1998: An F4 tornado moved through southeast South Dakota, killing six people and injuring another 150. The tornado crossed into McCook County at approximately 7:38 pm, CST and moved through downtown Spencer at about 7:39 pm, CST. The total cost of damage was more than \$18 million with an additional half million in crop damage.

1879: A significant outbreak of severe weather occurred in Kansas and western Missouri. In Kansas, tornadoes killed eighteen persons at Delphos and thirty persons at Irving. Two tornadoes struck the town of Irving within a few minutes time virtually wiping the small Kansas community off the map. The second tornado was perhaps two miles wide and exhibited multiple vortices.

1927: The Kentucky River peaks during a massive flood that killed 89 people and left thousands homeless. Torrential rains caused this unprecedented flood.

1948 - A railroad bed acting as a dam gave way during a flood along the Columbia River destroying the town of Vanport, OR. The nearly 19,000 residents escaped with little more than the clothes on their backs. (David Ludlum)

1948 - Twenty carloads of glass were needed in Denver, CO, to replace that destroyed by a severe hailstorm. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the eastern U.S. Eighteen cities, from Virginia to Ohio and Michigan, reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 97 degrees at Baltimore, MD, and Washington, DC, and 98 degrees at Newark, NJ, were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Memorial Day heralded heavy snow in some of the mountains and higher passes of Wyoming, closing roads in Yellowstone Park. McDonald Pass, MT, was blanketed with eight inches of snow, while the temperature at Miles City, MT, soared to 94 degrees. A "supercell" thunderstorm in west Texas produced baseball size hail in Bailey and Lamb counties, and up to five inches of rain in less than an hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Upper Mississippi Valley to the Upper Ohio Valley during the day. A powerful (F-4) tornado injured three persons and caused a million dollars damage at New Providence, IA. Baseball size hail was reported at Blue Earth, MN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a warm front spawned fourteen tornadoes in northeastern Texas during the late afternoon and evening hours. The thunderstorms also produced baseball size hail near Marshall, wind gusts to 77 mph at Commerce, and up to five inches of rain. Thunderstorms over southwestern Kansas produced up to six inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING!

A poor widow had two sons. She was extremely consumed with their success and feared that they would fail. Both were self-employed. One sold umbrellas and the other one sold fans.

The first thing she would do each morning was to run to the window to check the weather. If it was raining, she would sigh and say, "Oh, me, no one will want to buy fans today. It's going to be cool." And, if it was sunny, she would fret and say, "Oh my, no one will need an umbrella because it's not raining."

One day a friend said to her, "Listen, if the sun is shining, someone will buy a fan and if it's raining, someone will buy an umbrella. The weather is always changing so someone will always buy one or the other."

Many of us allow the conditions around us to control the attitude that is in us. It's "what's out there" that controls "what's in here." How unfortunate! We have things backward. When we are "in Christ," we need to go to Him and ask Him to fill our hearts with thanksgiving and joy for all that we have "in Him." We have all of His promises available to us in His Word. And, if we accept them and act on them, rain or sun, come what may - God is in control and will give us what we need. "Greater is He who is within you than he who is in the world!"

Prayer: Lord, help us to see things through Your eyes, and believe that Your care for us exceeds every need we will ever have. May we accept Your promises. In Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture For Today: Always be joyful. Never stop praying. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17



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 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 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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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.26.23

12 20 37 41 64 1

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$187,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 16 Mins 17
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.29.23

19 34 42 50 52 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$3,270,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 16
DRAW: Mins 17 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.29.23

14 17 32 33 44 14

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 46 Mins 17
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.27.23

3 8 11 17 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$77,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 16
DRAW: Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.29.23

5 12 17 46 65 16

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 15
DRAW: Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.29.23

21 33 35 62 64 24

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$239,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 15
DRAW: Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

The day has arrived for Elizabeth Holmes to report to a Texas prison

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

Disgraced Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes is scheduled to move to her new home —a federal prison where she has been sentenced to spend the next 11 years for overseeing a blood-testing hoax that became a parable about greed and hubris in Silicon Valley.

The federal judge who sentenced Holmes, 39, in November recommended that she be incarcerated in a women's prison camp located in Bryan, Texas, located about 100 miles from Houston, where she grew up aspiring to become a technology visionary along the lines of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

Once she enters prison, Holmes will be leaving behind two young children — a son born in July 2021 a few weeks before the start of her trial and a 3-month old daughter who was conceived after a jury convicted her on four felony counts of fraud and conspiracy in January 2022.

Holmes has been free on bail since then, most recently living in the San Diego area with the children's father, William "Billy" Evans. The couple met in 2017 around the same time Holmes was under investigation for the collapse of Theranos, a startup she founded after dropping out of Stanford University when she was just 19.

While she was building up Theranos, Holmes grew closer to Ramesh, "Sunny" Balwani, who would become her romantic partner as well as an investor and fellow executive in the Palo Alto, California, company.

Together, Holmes and Balwani promised Theranos would revolutionize health care with a technology that could quickly scan for diseases and other problems with a few drops of blood taken with a finger prick.

The hype surrounding that purported breakthrough helped Theranos raise nearly \$1 billion from enthralled investors, assemble an influential board of directors that include former Presidential cabinet members George Shultz, Henry Kissinger and James Mattis and turned Holmes into a Silicon Valley sensation with a fortune valued at \$4.5 billion on paper in 2014.

But it all blew up after serious dangerous flaws in Theranos' technology were exposed in a series of explosive articles in The Wall Street Journal that Holmes and Balwani tried to thwart. Holmes and Balwani, who had been secretly living together while running Theranos, broke up after the Journal's revelations and the company collapsed. In 2018, the U.S. Justice Department charged both with a litany of white-collar crimes in a case aimed at putting a stop to the Silicon Valley practice of overselling the capabilities of a still-developing technology — a technique that became known as "fake it 'til you make it."

Holmes admitted making mistakes at Theranos, but steadfastly denied committing crimes during seven often-fascinating days of testimony on the witness stand during her trial. At one point, she told the jury about being sexually and emotionally abused by Balwani while he controlled her in ways that she said clouded her thinking. Balwani's attorney steadfastly denied Holmes allegations, which was one of the key reasons they were tried separately.

Balwani, 57, was convicted on 12 felony counts of fraud and conspiracy in a trial that began two months after Holmes' ended. He is currently serving a nearly 13-year sentence in a Southern California prison.

Maintaining she was treated unfairly during the trial, Holmes sought to remain free while she appeals her conviction. But that bid was rejected by U.S. District Judge Edward Davila, who presided over her trial, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, leaving her no other avenue left to follow but the one that will take her to prison nearly 20 years after she founded Theranos.

Russia says drones damage Moscow buildings in pre-dawn attack, blames Ukraine

By SUSIE BLANN and JOANNA KOZLOWSKA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A rare drone attack jolted Moscow Tuesday morning, lightly damaging some buildings and leading to the evacuation of others, while Russia pursued its relentless bombardment of Kyiv with a third assault on the city in 24 hours.

The Russian defense ministry said five drones were shot down and the systems of three others were jammed, causing them to veer off course. It called the incident a “terrorist attack” by the “Kyiv regime.”

The attack brought the war to civilians at home in Russia’s capital for the first time. It caused “insignificant damage” to several buildings, according to Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin. Two people received medical attention for unspecified injuries but did not need hospitalization, he said in a Telegram post. Residents of two high-rise buildings damaged in the attack were evacuated, Sobyenin said.

Andrei Vorobyov, governor of the wider Moscow region, said some of the drones were “shot down on the approach to Moscow.”

Ukraine made no direct comment on the attack, which would be one of its deepest and most daring strikes into Russia since the Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than 15 months ago.

Russian President Vladimir Putin started work early on Tuesday to receive information about the drone attack from various government agencies, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Putin isn’t planning to address the nation in the wake of the assault, he said.

Asked by the Associated Press whether there is concern in the Kremlin that the invasion of Ukraine is endangering Russian civilians, Peskov said only that attacks on Russia reinforce the need to prosecute the war.

Russian political analyst Tatiana Stanovaya, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, said the Kremlin’s policy is to downplay the attacks.

“You ask, why is Putin behaving like this, does he really not understand and fear the consequences?” she wrote in a Telegram post. “Apparently he isn’t afraid, and everything is built on the idea that has been voiced more than once about a patient people who will understand everything and endure everything.”

Still, the attacks have raised questions about the effectiveness of Russia’s air defense systems.

A senior Russian lawmaker, Andrei Kartapolov, told Russian business news site RBC that “we have a very big country and there will always be a loophole where the drone can fly around the areas where air defense systems are located.”

Kartapolov said the purpose of the attacks was to unnerve the Russian people. “It’s an intimidation act aimed at the civilian population,” RBC quoted him as saying. “It’s designed to create a wave of panic.”

Moscow residents reported hearing explosions before dawn. Police were seen working at one site of a crashed drone in southwest Moscow. An area near a residential building was fenced off, and police put the drone debris in a cardboard box before carrying it away.

At another site, apartment windows were shattered and there were scorch marks on the building’s front.

It was the second reported attack on Moscow. Russian authorities said two drones targeted the Kremlin earlier this month in what they portrayed as an attempt on President Vladimir Putin’s life.

Ukrainian drones have reportedly flown deep into Russia multiple times. In December, Russia claimed it had shot down drones at airfields in the Saratov and Ryazan regions in western Russia. Three soldiers were reported killed in the attack in Saratov, which targeted an important military airfield.

Before that, Russia reported shooting down a Ukrainian drone that targeted the headquarters of its Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol in Russia-annexed Crimea.

In Ukraine, Russia launched a pre-dawn air raid on Kyiv, killing at least one person and sending the capital’s residents again scrambling into shelters.

At least 20 Shahed explosive drones were destroyed by air defense forces in Kyiv’s airspace in Russia’s latest attack on the Ukrainian capital. Overall, Ukraine shot down 29 of 31 drones fired into the country, most of them in the Kyiv area, the air force said.

Before daylight, the buzzing of drones could be heard over the city, followed by loud explosions as they were taken down by air defense systems.

A woman who was killed in Kyiv's Holoiv district died after she had "come out onto her balcony to look at drones being shot down," Mayor Vitali Klitschko said in a Telegram post.

A high-rise building in the same district caught fire after being hit by debris either from from drones being hit or interceptor missiles. The building's upper two floors were destroyed, and people were feared to be lying under the rubble, the Kyiv Military Administration said. More than 20 people were evacuated.

Resident Valeriya Oreshko told The Associated Press in the aftermath that even though the immediate threat was over, the attacks had everyone on edge.

"You are happy that you are alive, but think about what will happen next," the 39-year-old said.

A resident who gave only her first name, Oksana, said the whole building shook when it was hit.

"Go to shelters, because you really do not know where (the drone) will fly," she advised others.

Elsewhere in the capital, falling debris caused a fire in a private house in Darnytskyi district and three cars were set alight in Pechersky district, according to the military administration.

The series of attacks that began Sunday included a rare daylight attack Monday that left puffs of white smoke in the blue skies.

Associated Press writer Vasilisa Stepanenko in Kyiv, Ukraine; David Rising in Bangkok; and Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia contributed to this report. Kozłowska reported from Tallinn, Estonia.

Follow the AP's coverage of the war at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

9 injured in shooting near beach in Hollywood, Florida

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. (AP) — Nine people were injured when gunfire erupted along a beachside promenade in Hollywood, Florida, sending people frantically running for cover along the crowded beach on Memorial Day.

The nine people hurt Monday evening included six adults and three children, according to Yanet Obarrio Sanchez, a spokesperson for Memorial Healthcare System. All of the victims were in stable condition, she said.

Police spokesperson Deanna Bettineschi said four children between the ages of 1 and 17 were hit, along with five adults between 25 and 65. One was in surgery late Monday while the others were stable, she said. It was not immediately clear if the hospital was counting a 17-year-old as an adult.

Several of the wounded were taken to a children's hospital, Bettineschi said.

The shooting happened shortly before 7 p.m., Bettineschi said. A fight broke out, at least one gun was pulled and shots were fired. At least one person was in custody, but police were looking for more suspects.

Police Chief Chris O'Brien said thousands of people were in the area and dozens of police officers responded, including some who were nearby.

"It's unfortunate we have law-abiding citizens who come to our beaches and that gets interrupted by a group of criminals," he said.

Hollywood Mayor Josh Levy said that he was "deeply saddened and angered" by the shooting. Dozens of officers are assigned to the beach on busy holiday weekends and that meant there was an immediate response and multiple people were detained, Levy said in a statement.

"People come to enjoy a holiday weekend on the beach with their families and to have people in complete reckless disregard of the safety of the public and to have an altercation with guns in a public setting with thousands of people around them is beyond reckless," he said. "The Hollywood Police Department will leave no stone unturned. We do not appreciate when people come into our city with guns and have an altercation in the midst of a public setting here."

The shooting happened on the Hollywood Oceanfront Boardwalk near a convenience store, a Ben & Jerry's ice cream store and a Subway sandwich shop.

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Alvie Carlton Scott III said he was on the beach when he suddenly heard numerous gunshots. He said he hid behind a tree and then fled the area after a police officer told people to run.

Jamie Ward, who was also on the promenade, said several young men were fighting in front of the stores when one pulled a gun and started shooting.

Videos posted on Twitter on Monday evening showed emergency medical crews responding and providing aid to multiple injured people.

Police said there would be a heavy presence of officers as the investigation continues. Officials also set up an area for family members to reunite.

Hollywood Beach is a popular beach destination about 11 miles (17 kilometers) south of Fort Lauderdale and 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of Miami. The beach was expected to see more visitors than usual because of the Memorial Day holiday.

Most in US say don't ban race in college admissions but its role should be small: AP-NORC poll

By COLLIN BINKLEY and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Supreme Court decides the fate of affirmative action, most U.S. adults say the court should allow colleges to consider race as part of the admissions process, yet few believe students' race should ultimately play a major role in decisions, according to a new poll.

The May poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 63% say the Supreme Court should not block colleges from considering race or ethnicity in their admission systems. The poll found little divide along political or racial lines.

But those polled were more likely to say factors including grades and standardized test scores should be important, while 68% of adults said race and ethnicity should not be a significant factor.

The poll reflects general support for affirmative action even as the future of the practice remains in doubt. The Supreme Court is expected to rule soon on lawsuits challenging admissions systems at Harvard University and the University of North Carolina. With a conservative majority on the court, many college leaders are bracing for a decision that could scale back or eliminate the use of race in admissions.

Americans' views on race in admissions — that it should be permitted but only be a small factor — generally line up with the way colleges say they use it.

Many colleges, especially selective ones, say race is one of many factors that officials can weigh when choosing which students get accepted. They say it is not a large influence but may sometimes give an edge to underrepresented students in close decisions. Colleges defend the practice as a way to bring a wide mix of students to campus, saying racial diversity benefits all students.

It's unknown how many colleges consider race in admissions, and the practice has been outlawed in nine states, including California, Michigan and Florida.

Layla Trombley sees it as a matter of fairness. White students have long had the upper hand in admissions because of institutional racism, said Trombley, 47, who is half Black. Affirmative action helps even the playing field, she said.

"It seems like it's hard to get in if you don't have that help, just because we're not traditionally thought of as industrious or smart or hardworking," she said.

She said she experienced that kind of bias growing up in a mostly white area. At school, it felt like she was always underestimated, she said.

"It's under the radar," said Trombley, of Cortland, New York, who calls herself politically moderate. "It's not said directly, but it's implied, like, 'You're really good at this, but why don't you try this?'"

In Roswell, Georgia, Andrew Holko also says colleges should be allowed to factor race in its admissions decisions. He sees it as a tool to offset imbalances in America's public schools, where those in wealthy, white areas tend to get more money from taxes and parent groups than those in Black neighborhoods.

He sees that happen in areas like nearby Cobb County in Georgia, where schools in the predominantly Black southern end of the county are poorer than those in whiter areas of the suburban Atlanta county

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"They don't have computers to study with," said Holko, 49, who is white and describes himself as politically independent. "They don't have tutoring services available. He added: "Affirmative action is necessary to overcome those disparities."

In Holko's view, race should be a factor of "high importance" to make sure college campuses reflect the racial makeup of their communities.

Among all Americans, 13% said they think race should be a very or extremely important part of the admission process, according to the poll, while 18% said it should be somewhat important. Black and Hispanic adults were the most likely to say it should be at least very important.

The poll found similar views when it comes to considering gender in admissions — 9% of adults said it should be very important, 14% somewhat important and 77% not very or not at all important. Men and women shared similar views on the role of gender.

By contrast, 62% of Americans think high school grades should be very important, 30% said they should be somewhat important. Nearly half said standardized test scores should be very important.

To Jana Winston, college admissions should be a matter of merit and nothing more. Students should be chosen based on their grades, test scores and extracurricular activities, she said.

"I don't think race should have anything in the world to do with it," said Winston, of Batesburg-Leesville, who is half white and half Cherokee.

Giving a preference to students of certain races is unfair to others who are just as academically qualified, she said.

"There's a lot of kids that work really, really hard, and I don't like the idea of them being pushed out of the way just because the college feels like they need to do something politically correct," said Winston, 50, who is politically moderate and works at Walmart.

The Supreme Court has upheld affirmative action in decisions reaching back to 1978. The lawsuits at Harvard and UNC accuse those schools of discriminating against white and Asian students. Lower courts upheld admissions systems at both schools.

Many colleges also consider athletics when reviewing applicants, but the poll found that most Americans say it should have little influence. Just 9% say athletic ability should be very important, 29% say it should be somewhat important.

Similarly, few think family ties should be much of a factor.

Just 9% said it should be very important that a family member attended the school, and 18% said it should be somewhat important. Views were similar when it came to students whose families had donated to the university, with just 10% saying donations should be highly important.

The practice of giving a boost to children of alumni, known as legacy preference, has come under criticism in recent years from critics who say it favors wealthy, white students. Some prominent schools have abandoned it, such as Amherst College and Johns Hopkins University.

If the Supreme Court strikes down affirmative action, some education experts believe more colleges will follow suit and drop legacy preferences to remove an obstacle for students of color.

Views on the Supreme Court overall have become more negative after last year's Dobbs decision that overturned Roe v. Wade and allowed states to ban or severely limit access to abortion. About 12% of Americans said they have a great deal of confidence in the court, while 48% have only some confidence, and 39% have hardly any, according to the poll.

The Associated Press education team receives support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

The poll of 1,680 adults was conducted May 11-15 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

Rolling thunder: Contestants chase cheese wheel down a hill in chaotic UK race

LONDON (AP) — The big cheese of extreme U.K. sports events is back.

Hundreds of spectators gathered Monday to watch dozens of reckless racers chase a 7-pound (3 kilogram) wheel of Double Gloucester cheese down the near-vertical Cooper's Hill, near Gloucester in southwest England.

The first racer to finish behind the fast-rolling cheese gets to keep it.

The cheese-rolling race has been held at Cooper's Hill, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) west of London, since at least 1826, and the sport of cheese-rolling is believed to be much older.

The rough-and-tumble event often comes with safety concerns. Few competitors manage to stay on their feet all the way down the 200-yard (180 meter) hill, and this year several had to be helped, limping, from the course.

Canadian contestant Delaney Irving, 19, won the women's race despite being briefly knocked unconscious.

"I just remember hitting my head, and now I have the cheese," said Irving, who comes from Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Matt Crolla, 28, from Manchester in northwestern England, won the first of several men's races. Asked how he had prepared, he told reporters: "I don't think you can train for it, can you? It's just being an idiot."

30 international peacekeepers injured in fierce clashes with ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo

By ZENEL ZHINIPOTOKU and LLAZAR SEMINI Associated Press

PRISTINA, Kosovo (AP) — The NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo, KFOR, on Tuesday raised the number of its troops injured in fierce clashes with ethnic Serbs to 30.

The Serbs had tried to take over the offices of one of the municipalities in northern Kosovo where ethnic Albanian mayors took up their posts last week.

A statement said that 11 Italian soldiers and 19 Hungarian ones "sustained multiple injuries, including fractures and burns from improvised explosive incendiary devices." It added that three Hungarian soldiers were "wounded by the use of firearms," but their injuries are not life-threatening.

The Serbs clashed with NATO troops in the municipality of Zvecan, 45 kilometers (28 miles) north of the capital, Pristina.

"Both parties need to take full responsibility for what happened and prevent any further escalation, rather than hide behind false narratives," said KFOR commander Maj.-Gen. Angelo Michele Ristuccia.

Ethnic Serbs plan to gather again on Tuesday.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic spent the night with his troops on the border with Kosovo. They were placed on the highest state of alert on his orders last week. Vucic said 52 Serbs were injured in the clashes, three seriously.

Kosovo police said four people were detained.

The violence was the latest incident as tensions soared over the past weekend when ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo tried to block recently elected ethnic Albanian officials from entering municipal buildings. Kosovo police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd and let the new officials into the offices. Serbia put the country's military on high alert and sent more troops to the border with Kosovo.

Kosovo and Serbia have been foes for decades, with Belgrade refusing to recognize Kosovo's 2008 sovereignty.

The United States and the European Union have stepped up efforts to help solve the Kosovo-Serbia dispute, fearing further instability in Europe as Russia's war rages in Ukraine. The EU has made it clear to both Serbia and Kosovo that they must normalize relations if they're to make any progress toward joining the bloc.

Western ambassadors of the so-called Quint — France, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and United

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States — met in Pristina with Prime Minister Albin Kurti, asking him to take steps to de-escalate and lower tensions, while strongly denouncing the Serbs' violence against KFOR troops and journalists.

"Ultra-nationalistic Serb graffiti on NATO vehicles is a dark reminder in Kosovo We stand for peace and security," said Kurti after the meeting.

Quint ambassadors are to meet with Vucic, and he is also meeting with Russian and Chinese ambassadors to show he has support for his policies.

Ethnic Serbs in Zvecan, Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Mitrovica, four municipalities in the north, held elections last month that were largely boycotted by ethnic Serbs. Only ethnic Albanian or other smaller minority representatives were elected to the mayoral posts and assemblies.

The conflict in Kosovo erupted in 1998 when separatist ethnic Albanians rebelled against Serbia's rule, and Serbia responded with a brutal crackdown. About 13,000 people, mostly ethnic Albanians, died. NATO's military intervention in 1999 eventually forced Serbia to pull out of the territory. Washington and most EU countries have recognized Kosovo as an independent state, but Serbia, Russia and China haven't.

— Semini reported from Tirana, Albania. Associated Press writer Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade contributed to this report.

Time machine: Rebuilding Notre Dame's fire-ravaged roof transports workers back to Middle Ages

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER Associated Press

SAINT-LAURENT-DE-LA-PLAINE, France (AP) — If time travel was possible, medieval carpenters would surely be amazed to see how woodworking techniques they pioneered in building Notre Dame Cathedral more than 800 years ago are being used again today to rebuild the world-famous monument's fire-ravaged roof.

Certainly the reverse is true for the modern-day carpenters using medieval-era skills. Working with hand axes to fashion hundreds of tons of oak beams for the framework of Notre Dame's new roof has, for them, been like rewinding time. It's given them a new appreciation of their predecessors' handiwork that pushed the architectural envelope back in the 13th century.

"It's a little mind-bending sometimes," says Peter Henrikson, one of the carpenters. He says there are times when he's whacking mallet on chisel that he finds himself thinking about medieval counterparts who were cutting "basically the same joint 900 years ago."

"It's fascinating," he says. "We probably are in some ways thinking the same things."

The use of hand tools to rebuild the roof that flames turned into ashes in 2019 is a deliberate, considered choice, especially since power tools would undoubtedly have done the work more quickly. The aim is to pay tribute to the astounding craftsmanship of the cathedral's original builders and to ensure that the centuries-old art of hand-fashioning wood lives on.

"We want to restore this cathedral as it was built in the Middle Ages," says Jean-Louis Georgelin, the retired French Army general who is overseeing the reconstruction.

"It is a way to be faithful to the (handiwork) of all the people who built all the extraordinary monuments in France."

Facing a tight deadline to reopen the cathedral by December 2024, carpenters and architects are also using computer design and other modern technologies to speed the reconstruction. Computers were used in the drawing of detailed plans for carpenters, to help ensure that their hand-chiseled beams fit together perfectly.

"Traditional carpenters had a lot of that in their head," Henrikson notes. It's "pretty amazing to think about how they did this with what they had, the tools and technology that they had at the time."

The 61-year-old American is from Grand Marais, Minnesota. The bulk of the other artisans working on the timber frame are French.

The roof reconstruction hit an important milestone in May, when large parts of the new timber frame

were assembled and erected at a workshop in the Loire Valley, in western France.

The dry run assured architects that the frame is fit for purpose. The next time it is put together will be atop the cathedral. Unlike in medieval times, it will be trucked into Paris and lifted by mechanical crane into position. Some 1,200 trees have been felled for the work.

"The objective we had was to restore to its original condition the wooden frame structure that disappeared during the fire of April 15, 2019," says architect Remi Fromont, who did detailed drawings of the original frame in 2012.

The rebuilt frame "is the same wooden frame structure of the 13th century," he says. "We have exactly the same material: oak. We have the same tools, with the same axes that were used, exactly the same tools. We have the same know-how. And soon, it will return to its same place."

"It is," he adds, "a real resurrection."

AP correspondent John Leicester in Paris contributed.

Teenagers from Islamic State families undergo rehabilitation in Syria, but future still uncertain

By HOGIR AL ABDO and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

QAMISHLI, Syria (AP) — For at least four years, thousands of children have been growing up in a camp in northeast Syria housing families of Islamic State group militants, raised in an atmosphere where the group's radical ideology still circulates and where they have almost no chance for an education.

Fearing that a new generation of militants will emerge from al-Hol Camp, the Kurdish officials who govern eastern and northern Syria are experimenting with a rehabilitation program aimed at pulling children out of extremist thought.

It means, however, removing them from their mothers and families for an unknown period of time, a practice that has raised concerns among rights groups. And even if they are deemed rehabilitated, the children's future remains in limbo with their home countries reluctant to take them back.

"If these children stay in the camp, this will lead to the rise of a new generation of extremists who could be more fanatic(al) than those who were before," said Khaled Remo, co-chair of the Kurdish-led administration's office of justice and reform affairs.

Recently, an Associated Press team was allowed to visit the Orkesh Center, a rehabilitation facility that opened late last year. It's home to dozens of young boys taken from al-Hol. Ranging in age between 11 and 18, they represent about 15 different nationalities, including France and Germany.

At Orkesh, boys are taught drawing and music, all with the theme of tolerance. They also learn skills for future jobs like a tailor or a barber. They wake up early and have breakfast at 7 a.m., then have classes until 3 p.m., after which they can play soccer and basketball. They live in dormitory-type rooms, where they are expected to keep order and their beds made. They are allowed contact with parents and siblings.

Authorities did not permit the AP to speak to the boys at the center, citing privacy concerns. During a separate visit to al-Hol, residents were hostile, and none agreed to be interviewed. The AP also approached families that were released from al-Hol, but none responded to requests for comment. The newness of the program makes it difficult to assess its effectiveness.

Still, the center underscores how U.S.-backed Kurdish authorities are wrestling with the legacy of Islamic State, years after the group was defeated in a brutal war in Syria and Iraq that ended in 2019.

Al-Hol Camp is an open wound left by that conflict. The camp holds about 51,000 people, the vast majority women and children, including the wives, widows and other family members of IS militants. Most are Syrians and Iraqis. But there are also around 8,000 women and children from 60 other nationalities who live in a part of the camp known as the Annex. They are generally considered the most die-hard IS supporters among the camp residents.

The camp population is down from its height of 73,000 people, mostly because of Syrians and Iraqis who were allowed to go home. But other countries have largely balked at taking back their nationals, who

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traveled to join IS after the radical group seized large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014.

Though Kurdish-led security forces run the camp, they have struggled to keep control. IS radicalism remains rife, with fervent followers intimidating others, particularly in the Annex, home to more than 5,000 children.

Children in al-Hol have little to do and little chance for education. Fewer than half the 25,000 children in the camp attend reading and writing classes at its teaching centers.

During a recent tour by the AP inside al-Hol, some young boys threw stones at the reporters. One drew a finger across his throat in a beheading motion as he looked at the journalists.

"Those kids once they reach the age of 12, they could become dangerous and could kill and beat up others," the camp's director Jihan Hanan told the AP.

"So we had a choice, which is to put them at rehabilitation centers and keep them away from the extreme ideology that their mothers carry," she said.

Sheikhmous Ahmad, a Kurdish official overseeing camps for displaced people, said that once the boys turn 13, IS loyalists make them get married to young girls — another reason for removing them.

So far, the number of children going through rehabilitation is small, around 300, all of them boys from the Annex. Ninety-seven are at the recently-launched Orkesh Center, near the border town of Qamishli about a two-hour drive from al-Hol. The rest are at al-Houri, another center that began taking in boys for rehabilitation in 2017, as U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led forces took back territory from IS in Syria.

Al-Houri underscores the long-term problem: Some of the boys have been at the center for years since there is nowhere else to go. The only alternative would be to send them back to al-Hol. Only four children have been repatriated from al-Houri, administrators said.

"While the transfer of these boys to separate detention centers may be well-intentioned, this is not rehabilitation. This is indefinite detention without charge of children, who are themselves victims of ISIS," said Letta Tayler, associate director of the Crisis and Conflict Division at Human Rights Watch.

She said removal from the family may be appropriate if the mother or another relative is victimizing the child. Otherwise, separation could cause further trauma.

"For many of these children, who have survived unimaginable horrors under ISIS and in the camps where they have been held since the fall of ISIS, the mother and other family members are their only source of stability," she said.

Kathryn Achilles, media director of the Syria Response Office at Save the Children International, said separation from the mother "should only ever be as a last resort, addressed by individual countries after families return, in line with their laws."

Hanan, the administrator of al-Hol, said they had few other options. One proposal is to set up rehabilitation centers in or near the camp, she said.

"Maybe in the future we can agree on something with international organizations regarding such centers as they are the best solution for these children," Hanan said.

But Kurdish officials and humanitarian agencies agree that the only real solution is for home countries to take back their citizens.

"Once home, children and other victims of ISIS can be offered rehabilitation and reintegration. Adults can be monitored or prosecuted as appropriate," said Tayler of Human Rights Watch.

The U.N.-backed Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria called in March for repatriation to be sped up. It added that the suffering inflicted on the camp's residents "may amount to the war crime of committing outrages on personal dignity."

Until a solution is found, the centers create "an environment that is suitable to pave the way for mental change for these children," said Remo, the Kurdish official.

Mroue reported from Beirut. Associated Press writer Qassim Abdul-Zahra contributed to this report from Baghdad.

Staff at Ukraine's experimental nuclear site pick up pieces from Russian strikes

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — There is activity at the Kharkiv Institute of Physics and Technology, but it's not what scientists at its cutting-edge nuclear laboratory trained for.

Staff at the U.S.-funded atomic research lab in northeastern Ukraine spend their days patching up the facility, which has been badly damaged by repeated Russian strikes.

More than a year after missiles first hit, the wind batters boarded-up windows and exposed insulation flaps. When the Associated Press visited this month, debris had been heaped in piles, and rocket parts sat near craters up to 2.5 meters (8 feet) deep. Staff say the site was struck some 100 times with rockets and bombs during the first months of the war, and attack remains a constant threat. Kharkiv, near the war's front line and the Russian border, is shelled almost daily from the neighboring Belgorod region of Russia.

Before Russia's invasion, the institute was a jewel in the crown of Ukraine's highly developed nuclear research sector. Its experimental reactor had opened only six months earlier, designed to offer training and research facilities and to make medical isotopes used in cancer treatment.

While those fearing a nuclear accident have focused their attention on Ukraine's huge Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is under Russian control, the Kharkiv lab's small reactor also poses a risk, though so far there have been no leaks.

Mykola Shulga, general director of the institute's National Science Center, said the damage is "significant — but we are doing repairs on our own."

"The strikes on this installation were intentional," Shulga said, in front of a modern gray building whose panels have been ripped off or are pocked with shrapnel holes. "This wall here was hit with seven missiles."

The International Atomic Energy Agency has also accused Russia of "sustained targeting" of the research lab. A delegation from the agency visited in November and found nearly all buildings on the site were damaged, "many of them probably beyond repair." IAEA chief Rafael Mariano Grossi called the extent of the damage "shocking" and worse than expected.

The one positive note, IAEA inspectors said, was that there had been no release of radiation from the lab's small experimental reactor.

Ukraine's nuclear inspectorate said shelling last year damaged the facility's heating, cooling and ventilation systems. An electrical substation and diesel generators were destroyed, leaving the site without electricity for a time.

The Prosecutor's Office and the Security Service of Ukraine have opened criminal cases for alleged war crimes and "ecocide" — one of several proceedings accusing Russia of environmental destruction.

"Have a look," said Galyna Tolstolutska, head of the department of radiation damage and radiation materials science.

"Here, you see. It used to be control panel. Most certainly it's of no use anymore," she said, looking around a room of equipment wrecked when the ceiling was shattered by a bomb. "This entire place was exposed to rain, snow, anything."

In communist times, the Kharkiv facility's research helped develop nuclear weapons, making it a Soviet equivalent of Los Alamos in the United States. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the U.S. agreed to fund Ukrainian nuclear research in exchange for Ukraine getting rid of its stockpiles of nuclear bomb-making material.

The U.S. government says the Kharkiv nuclear facility, built in collaboration with the Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago, is the first of its kind in the world, "designed to produce medical isotopes, train nuclear professionals, support the Ukrainian nuclear industry and provide experimental capabilities for performing reactor physics, materials, and basic science research." It started operation in August 2021.

Mark Hibbs, a senior fellow in the nuclear policy program of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said the lab was "a unique facility" whose damage in the war is a loss to world science.

"It was on the threshold of being able to be operated as a research tool, and then the war came," he said.

Russia's invasion reawakened Europe's fear of nuclear war, and nuclear accident. Fighting has erupted

intermittently around Zaporizhzhia, Europe's largest nuclear power plant, sparking fears of a catastrophic radiation leak like the disaster at Chernobyl in northern Ukraine, where a reactor exploded in 1986, sending radiation over a vast area.

Kharkiv does not pose the same level of risk. The Kharkiv reactor was put into a "deep subcritical state" — essentially sent into hibernation — on the first day of the war, and it contains far less nuclear fuel than a power plant anyway. Paddy Regan, professor of nuclear physics at the University of Surrey, said research reactors are typically 100 times smaller than civilian nuclear power reactors.

"These accelerator-driven systems are nothing like civilian nuclear reactors," Regan said. "They're futuristic design ideas" aimed at creating "an inherently safe reactor system" without the potential for meltdowns of existing power reactors.

"There's much more danger from the bombs than from any radiation material," Regan said.

Still, the State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate of Ukraine has warned of potential "severe radiation consequences and contamination of the surrounding territories," should the reactor be damaged. Institute staff say radiation could spread for 6 miles (10 kilometers), covering an area home to 640,000 people.

Depending on weather conditions, the pollution could also reach Belgorod, across the border in Russia, said the center's deputy director, Ivan Karnaukhov.

"They can blow it all up, but it will also affect their Belgorod region, the radioactivity," he said. "It won't be Chernobyl, but there will be significant pollution."

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Uganda's president signs into law anti-gay legislation with death penalty in some cases

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Uganda's president has signed into law anti-gay legislation supported by many in this East African country but widely condemned by rights activists and others abroad.

The version of the bill signed by President Yoweri Museveni doesn't criminalize those who identify as LGBTQ+, a key concern for some rights campaigners who condemned an earlier draft of the legislation as an egregious attack on human rights.

But the new law still prescribes the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality," which is defined as cases of sexual relations involving people infected with HIV, as well as with minors and other categories of vulnerable people.

A suspect convicted of "attempted aggravated homosexuality" can be imprisoned for up to 14 years, according to the legislation.

Parliamentary Speaker Anita Among said in a statement that the president had "answered the cries of our people" in signing the bill.

"With a lot of humility, I thank my colleagues the Members of Parliament for withstanding all the pressure from bullies and doomsday conspiracy theorists in the interest of our country," the statement said.

Museveni had returned the bill to the national assembly in April, asking for changes that would differentiate between identifying as LGBTQ+ and actually engaging in homosexual acts. That angered some lawmakers, including some who feared the president would proceed to veto the bill amid international pressure. Lawmakers passed an amended version of the bill earlier in May.

LGBTQ+ rights campaigners say the new legislation is unnecessary in a country where homosexuality has long been illegal under a colonial-era law criminalizing sexual activity "against the order of nature." The punishment for that offense is life imprisonment.

The United States had warned of economic consequences over legislation described by Amnesty International as "draconian and overly broad." In a statement from the White House later Monday, U.S. President Joe Biden called the new law "a tragic violation of universal human rights — one that is not worthy of the Ugandan people, and one that jeopardizes the prospects of critical economic growth for the entire country."

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sentences and allows a pathway for non-violent offenders to reduce prison time “a jailbreak bill.” As a member of Congress, DeSantis voted for an early version of the measure but had left Congress after he was elected governor and before the final, less strict bill passed.

DeSantis also said Trump wrongly “turned the country over to Fauci,” referring to Anthony Fauci, the former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases who helped lead the country’s COVID-19 pandemic response.

DeSantis announced his campaign Wednesday night during an online conversation with Twitter CEO Elon Musk. The audio stream crashed repeatedly, making it difficult for most users to hear the announcement in real time, a stumble campaign officials and others quickly dismissed as a minor setback.

DeSantis was undeterred in laying out his message, that conservative legislative victories this year in Florida, chiefly on cultural topics such as restricting sexual orientation discussion in schools, are the antidote for what he calls a nation controlled increasingly by the extreme left.

“American decline is not inevitable — it is a choice,” DeSantis said during the glitchy audio stream. “And we should choose a new direction — a path that will lead to American revitalization.”

DeSantis has a running start in Iowa and other early voting states, thanks to Never Back Down, a super political action committee that is using money the group can receive in unlimited sums from wealthy contributors to begin organizing support for him. Campaign finance law requires the group to do its work without coordinating with DeSantis.

Iowans should see staff and volunteers for the group working the perimeter of DeSantis’ church event in Clive on Tuesday, as well as events Wednesday in conservative western Iowa’s Sioux City and Council Bluffs and the manufacturing and college city of Pella in east-central Iowa before the finale in Cedar Rapids. By making his bid official, DeSantis gives the group a rallying figure whose events it can attend, even if cannot coordinate with DeSantis’ official campaign group.

The tack, untested and not without risks, is aimed at maximizing super PAC dollars. It’s also a way of helping DeSantis race in Iowa to catch Trump, whose campaign says it has banked thousands of supporters thanks to a more disciplined, data-driven outreach effort than Trump’s seat-of-the-pants 2016 campaign. That operation landed him in second place but with thousands of potential supporters left uncontacted by the campaign.

And Trump, besides his regular social media broadsides attacking DeSantis, has attempted to shadow him in Iowa to demonstrate his own popularity. In March, Trump headlined an event at a Davenport theater three days after DeSantis spoke to an audience and took questions from Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds during the Florida governor’s tour promoting his memoir.

Two weeks ago, Trump scheduled a rally in Des Moines to take place the same day DeSantis was headlining Iowa Republican events in western and eastern Iowa as the guest of Rep. Randy Feenstra and the state GOP. However, Trump scrubbed the outdoor event the day he was to arrive due to threats of severe weather.

Turning the tables on Trump, DeSantis swooped into Des Moines that evening for an impromptu appearance that helped his campaign create the desired impression of him dancing in the ring with the heavyweight.

Trump is scheduled to return to Iowa on Thursday, the day after DeSantis’ tour, and is expected to hold events in the Des Moines area, meet influential conservatives and sit for an interview that evening with Fox News Channel host Sean Hannity.

LGBTQ+ activists call for new strategies to promote equality after Target backlash

By DENISE LAVOIE and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press
RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Following Target’s announcement last week that it removed products and re-located Pride displays to the back of certain stores in the South, activists in the LGBTQ+ community are

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calling for new campaigns to convince corporate leaders not to cave to anti-LGBTQ+ groups.

"We need a strategy on how to deal with corporations that are experiencing enormous pressure to throw LGBTQ people under the bus," said California state Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, a member of the LGBTQ legislative caucus.

"We need to send a clear message to corporate America that if you're our ally — if you are truly our ally — you need to be our ally, not just when it's easy but also when it's hard," he said.

While the retailer said its actions were aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of its employees after protesters knocked over Pride signs and confronted workers in stores, the controversy comes at a time when conflict over LGBTQ+ rights is simmering.

Nearly 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in state legislatures around the country this year. At least 18 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors.

The hostile environment has prompted some groups to hire security consultants to advise them on activities planned for Pride Month, which begins on Thursday.

"We are forced to think differently about how we handle security at our events and whether or not we can post our staff's names and emails on our website," said Janson Wu, executive director of GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, a nonprofit legal rights organization based in Boston.

Debra Porta, executive director of Pride Northwest, in Portland, Oregon, said there have been discussions about a possible boycott, a letter-writing campaign and other actions directed at Target, but plans for an organized protest haven't yet materialized.

"Because the news is fairly new, more actions may be announced, especially as Pride Month gets here," said Porta.

Target isn't the only company grappling with public criticism.

Bud Light is still dealing with fallout from its partnership with transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney, who in April posted a picture on Instagram of a beer can with her face on it. In response to the hate-filled and transphobic backlash that followed, the company said it "never intended to be part of a discussion that divides people," but didn't directly address the rhetoric or signal clear support for Mulvaney. Bud Light's parent company, Anheuser-Busch, is tripling its U.S. marketing spending this summer as it tries to restore lost sales.

In early May, several gay bars in Chicago stopped selling Anheuser-Busch products to protest the company's response.

Chicago's 2Bears Tavern said the company's response "shows how little Anheuser-Busch cares about the LGBTQIA+ community, and in particular transgender people, who have been under unrelenting attack in this country."

"Since Anheuser-Busch does not support us, we will not support it," said the company.

Sidetrack, the largest gay bar in the Midwest, did the same, saying Anheuser-Busch "wrongfully validates the position that it is acceptable to acquiesce to the demands of those who do not support the trans community and wish to erase LGBTQ+ visibility."

In Florida, Disney has been engaged in a legal battle with Gov. Ron DeSantis since the company expressed its opposition to the state's classroom limits on discussing gender identity and sexual orientation.

And the Los Angeles Dodgers announced last week that a satirical LGBTQ+ group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence will again be welcome at the team's annual Pride Night — nearly a week after the team rescinded its original invitation, citing backlash from conservative Roman Catholics and politicians who accused the group of mocking the Christian faith.

"Now's not the time to back down," said Brian K. Bond, executive director of PFLAG, an organization founded in 1973 to advocate for LGBTQ+ people and their families.

"I think both business and us as citizens need to look within ourselves into new strategies. The old models aren't necessarily working," he said.

Some people remain concerned about the impact of Target's Pride displays on children, said Victoria Cobb, president of The Family Foundation of Virginia, a conservative, faith-based organization in Richmond.

"Target is paying the price for telling kids to be discontent with their bodies, putting ideology ahead of

the interests of investors, and creating a hostile store environment for parents with children," Cobb said in a statement.

In a Richmond Target store on Sunday, Pride merchandise was prominently displayed at the front of the store.

Brenda Alston, a 75-year-old retiree, said she bought a pair of rainbow sandals to show support for the LGBTQ+ community and for Target.

"If you come in the store and this is not what you support, keep on walking and get what you need in another part of the store," Alston said. "Who are you to tell me what to buy and what Target should offer their customers?"

Still, some see the hostility toward Target and other retailers as just the latest obstacle in a decades-long struggle for equality.

"To me, this is a sign that we're winning," said Derek Mize, a gay attorney who lives in an Atlanta suburb with his husband and two children.

"I think that these people moaning about our visibility are the last breaths of a dying prejudice," he said. "Society is changing, and most people are not concerned about Target selling an LGBTQ shirt."

Selsky reported from Salem, Oregon.

Trial for accused gunman in Pittsburgh synagogue massacre slated to start

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The federal jury trial of the suspect in the nation's deadliest antisemitic attack is scheduled to get underway Tuesday morning, four and a half years after the shooting deaths of 11 worshippers at a Pittsburgh synagogue.

Twelve jurors and six alternates — chosen Thursday after a month of questioning of more than 200 jury candidates — will hear the case against Robert Bowers. The jurors include 11 women and seven men.

Bowers, 50, could face the death penalty if convicted of some of the 63 counts he faces in the Oct. 27, 2018, attack at the Tree of Life synagogue building. The attack claimed the lives of 11 worshippers from three congregations sharing the building, Dor Hadash, New Light and Tree of Life. Charges include 11 counts each of obstruction of free exercise of religion resulting in death and hate crimes resulting in death.

Prosecutors have said Bowers made antisemitic comments at the scene of the attack and online.

In proceedings before and during juror questioning, the defense has done little to cast doubt on whether Bowers was the gunman, instead focusing on preventing his execution.

Bowers, a truck driver from the Pittsburgh suburb of Baldwin, had offered to plead guilty in return for a life sentence, but federal prosecutors turned him down. Bowers' defense attorneys also recently said he has schizophrenia and brain impairments.

As an indication that the guilt-or-innocence phase of the trial seems almost a foregone conclusion, Bowers' defense team spent little time in the jury selection process asking how potential jurors would come to a verdict.

Instead the team focused on the penalty phase and how jurors would decide whether to impose the death penalty in a case of a man charged with hate-motivated killings in a house of worship. The defense probed whether potential jurors could consider factors such as mental illness or a difficult childhood.

The families of those killed are divided over whether the government should pursue the death penalty, but most have voiced support for it.

The trial is taking place in the downtown Pittsburgh courthouse of the U.S. District Court for Western Pennsylvania, presided over by Judge Robert Colville, an appointee of former President Donald Trump.

Prosecutors are expected to tell jurors about incriminatory statements Bowers allegedly made to investigators, an online trail of antisemitic statements that they say shows the attack was motivated by

religious hatred, and the guns recovered from him at the crime scene where police shot Bowers three times before he surrendered.

Prosecutors indicated in court filings that they might introduce autopsy records and 911 recordings during the trial, including recordings of two calls from victims who were subsequently shot to death. They have said their evidence includes a Colt AR-15 rifle, three Glock .357 handguns and hundreds of cartridge cases, bullets and bullet fragments.

Bowers also injured seven people, including five police officers who responded to the scene, investigators said.

In a filing earlier this year, prosecutors said Bowers "harbored deep, murderous animosity towards all Jewish people." They said he also expressed hatred for HIAS, founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, a nonprofit humanitarian group that helps refugees and asylum seekers.

Prosecutors wrote in a court filing that Bowers had nearly 400 followers on his Gab social media account "to whom he promoted his antisemitic views and calls to violence against Jews."

The three congregations have spoken out against antisemitism and other forms of bigotry since the shootings. The Tree of Life Congregation also is working with partners on plans to overhaul its current structure, which still stands but has been closed since the shootings, by creating a complex to house a sanctuary, museum, memorial and center for fighting antisemitism.

The death penalty trial is proceeding three years after now-President Joe Biden said during his 2020 campaign that he would work to end capital punishment at the federal level and in states that still use it. His attorney general, Merrick Garland, has temporarily paused executions to review policies and procedures, but federal prosecutors continue to vigorously work to uphold death sentences that have been issued and, in some cases, to pursue new death sentences at trial.

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Police fire tear gas and protesters burn vehicles near home of Senegal's main opposition leader

By BABACAR DIONE Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Police fired tear gas and demonstrators burned cars Monday near the home of Senegal's main opposition leader, as tensions rise in the capital days before a court verdict is expected on charges against the politician.

Ousmane Sonko is being tried for rape and death threats against a woman working at a massage parlor, and could face up to 10 years in prison. If convicted, he would be barred from running in next year's presidential elections. Sonko and his supporters maintain his legal troubles are part of an effort by President Macky Sall's government to derail his candidacy.

The clashes came a day after police stopped Sonko's "freedom caravan," traveling from his hometown of Ziguinchor, in the south and where he is the mayor, to the capital, Dakar, where he was forced into a home he has in the city.

The interior minister, Antoine Felix Diome, said Sonko had not been arrested but was caught breaking the law — partaking in an unauthorized caravan — and taken home.

Sonko supporters were denied access to his house Monday and threw stones against police blockading the roads. At least eight vehicles were burned with pockets of clashes throughout the city.

Demonstrations have already turned violent in the lead-up to the trial. Last week one person was killed and others injured when clashes erupted between police and Sonko supporters in the city of Kolda in the south.

Senegal's government says it will stand firm against any attempt to disrupt public order.

25 NATO-led peacekeepers injured in Kosovo in clashes with Serbs outside municipal building

By RADUL RADOVANOVIC and LLAZAR SEMINI Associated Press

ZVECAN, Kosovo (AP) — The NATO-led peacekeeping force said on Monday that 25 of its troops were injured in clashes with ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo after they tried to take over the offices of one of the municipalities where ethnic Albanian mayors took up their posts last week.

The Serbs clashed with NATO troops and Kosovo police in the municipality of Zvecan, 45 kilometers (28 miles) north of the capital. The soldiers fired tear gas and stun grenades to protect the Kosovar officers and disperse protesters, according to witnesses. The assembled Serbs responded by throwing rocks and other hard objects at them.

"Several soldiers of the Italian and Hungarian KFOR contingent were the subject of unprovoked attacks and sustained trauma wounds with fractures and burns due to the explosion of incendiary devices," said the NATO peacekeepers in a statement.

Some Kosovo police vehicles and one belonging to journalists were damaged and sprayed with Serb nationalist symbols.

Addressing the nation late Monday, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said he would spend the night with his troops on the border with Kosovo who were placed on the highest state of alert on his orders last week. He said 52 Serbs were injured in the clashes, three seriously, and four were detained.

"The consequences (of the clashes) are big and grave and the sole culprit is (Kosovo Prime Minister) Albin Kurti," said Vucic. He referred to the Albanian forces in the north Kosovo as "occupiers."

"I repeat for the last time and I beg the international community to make sure Albin Kurti sees reason," Vucic said. "If they don't, I am afraid it will be too late for all of us."

The violence was the latest incident as tensions soared over the past weekend, with Serbia putting the country's military on high alert and sending more troops to the border with Kosovo, which declared independence from Belgrade in 2008.

Kosovo and Serbia have been foes for decades, with Belgrade refusing to recognize Kosovo's sovereignty.

The United States and the European Union have stepped up efforts to help solve the Kosovo-Serbia dispute, fearing further instability in Europe as Russia's war rages in Ukraine. The EU has made it clear to both Serbia and Kosovo they must normalize relations if they're to make any progress toward joining the bloc.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov described the situation in Kosovo as "worrisome," blaming the U.S. and NATO for claiming dominance in that part of the world.

"A big 'explosion' is brewing in the center of Europe, in the very place where, in 1999, NATO carried out aggression against Yugoslavia," he said from Nairobi, Kenya, referring to the NATO-led intervention in 1999 that stopped a bloody Serb crackdown against ethnic Albanian separatists.

On Monday, Kosovar police and the NATO-led Kosovo Force, or KFOR, were seen protecting the municipal buildings in Zvecan, Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Mitrovica, four municipalities in the north that held early elections last month.

The votes were largely boycotted by ethnic Serbs, who form the majority in those areas. Only ethnic Albanian or other smaller minority representatives were elected to the mayoral posts and assemblies.

Serbia's prime minister, Ana Brnabic, criticized the international handling of events in Kosovo, saying that KFOR was "not protecting the people ... they are protecting the usurpers," apparently referring to the new mayors.

"But we must protect the peace. Peace is all we have," she said.

KFOR has increased its presence in the four northern municipalities. It called on all sides to refrain from actions that could cause escalation and urged both "Belgrade and Pristina to engage in the EU-led dialogue."

U.S. Ambassador Jeff Hovenier met with President Vjosa Osmani and then together with other western powers' ambassadors — the U.S., France, Italy, Germany and the U.K. known as the Quint — with Prime Minister Albin Kurti, urging him to take steps to de-escalate the situation and reduce tensions.

Last Friday, ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo tried to block recently elected ethnic Albanian officials from

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"I join with people around the world — including many in Uganda — in calling for its immediate repeal. No one should have to live in constant fear for their life or being subjected to violence and discrimination. It is wrong," Biden said.

The United Nations Human Rights Office said it was "appalled that the draconian and discriminatory anti-gay bill is now law," describing the legislation as "a recipe for systematic violations of the rights" of LGBTQ+ people and others.

In a joint statement the leaders of the U.N. AIDS program, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund said they were "deeply concerned about the harmful impact" of the legislation on public health and the HIV response.

"Uganda's progress on its HIV response is now in grave jeopardy," the statement said. "The Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 will obstruct health education and the outreach that can help end AIDS as a public health threat."

That statement noted that "stigma and discrimination associated with the passage of the Act has already led to reduced access to prevention as well as treatment services" for LGBTQ+ people.

Rights activists have the option of appealing the legislation before the courts. Later Monday, one group of activists and academics petitioned the constitutional court seeking an injunction against enforcement of the law.

An anti-gay bill enacted in 2014 was later nullified by a panel of judges who cited a lack of quorum in the plenary session that had passed that particular bill. Any legal challenge this time is likely to be heard on the merits, rather than on technical questions.

Anti-gay sentiment in Uganda has grown in recent weeks amid news coverage alleging sodomy in boarding schools, including a prestigious school for boys where a parent accused a teacher of abusing her son.

The February decision of the Church of England's national assembly to continue banning church weddings for same-sex couples while allowing priests to bless same-sex marriages and civil partnerships outraged many in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa.

Homosexuality is criminalized in more than 30 of Africa's 54 countries. Some Africans see it as behavior imported from abroad and not a sexual orientation.

DeSantis kicks off presidential campaign in Iowa as he steps up criticism of Trump

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ron DeSantis plans to kick off his presidential campaign in Iowa on Tuesday, the start of a busy week that will take him to 12 cities in three states as he tests his pitch as the most formidable Republican challenger to former President Donald Trump.

The Florida governor's two-day trip to the leadoff caucus state — starting at a suburban Des Moines megachurch and ending at a Cedar Rapids racetrack — comes after a stumbling online announcement last week that formalized his long-anticipated entry into the growing Republican field. It will be followed by stops in early primary states New Hampshire and South Carolina.

DeSantis' scheduled Tuesday evening stop at Eternity Church in Clive is a conspicuous nod to the evangelical Christians who wield outside influence in Iowa's Republican presidential caucuses. His visit will give voters an opportunity to meet the new candidate just as he has been stepping up his criticism of Trump.

"He's got a big hill to climb — and I think everybody would agree with that — to be able to convince people that he can overcome Trump, that he can do a job as good as, if not better than, Trump," said Bernie Hayes, the Republican chair in Linn County where DeSantis plans to wrap up his Iowa jaunt Wednesday.

DeSantis, assailed by Trump for months, pivoted from oblique swipes to direct questioning of the former president's conservative credentials during a round of interviews with friendly media last week, notably his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and record on criminal justice.

DeSantis called a bipartisan bill Trump signed in 2018 that reduced mandatory minimum federal prison

entering municipal buildings. Kosovo police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd and let the new officials into the offices.

The U.S. and the EU condemned Kosovo's government for using police to forcibly enter the municipal buildings.

The conflict in Kosovo erupted in 1998 when separatist ethnic Albanians rebelled against Serbia's rule, and Serbia responded with a brutal crackdown. About 13,000 people, mostly ethnic Albanians, died. NATO's military intervention in 1999 eventually forced Serbia to pull out of the territory. Washington and most EU countries have recognized Kosovo as an independent state, but Serbia, Russia and China haven't.

Llazar Semini reported from Tirana, Albania. Jovana Gec contributed to this report from Belgrade, Serbia; Jim Heintz from Tallinn, Estonia.

Impeachment trial of Texas' Ken Paxton to begin no later than August 28

By PAUL J. WEBER and ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A historic impeachment trial in Texas to determine whether Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton should be permanently removed from office will begin no later than August in the state Senate, where the jury that would determine his future could include his wife, Sen. Angela Paxton.

Setting a schedule was one of the last orders of business lawmakers took Monday during an acrimonious end to this year's legislative session in Texas, where the impeachment laid bare fractures in America's biggest red state beyond whether Republicans will oust one of the GOP's conservative legal stars.

It drags Republicans — who for years have pushed fast-changing Texas farther to the right — into a summer of unfinished business and soured feelings that are likely to spill into 2024's elections.

The stakes are also raised for Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who couldn't get his full agenda through the GOP-controlled legislature on time. He almost immediately called lawmakers back to work for the first of "several" special sessions in the coming months.

His announcement made no mention of Paxton, who Abbott has remained silent on since the impeachment proceedings began last week.

At the center of the conflict in the Texas Capitol is Paxton, who the GOP-controlled House overwhelmingly impeached this weekend on charges that include bribery and misuse of office following nearly a decade of scandal and criminal accusations that have dogged the state's top lawyer. He is suspended from office pending trial in the state Senate, which set a start date of no later than Aug. 28.

Underlining the fallout of Paxton's impeachment, the session ended with a dozen House lawmakers walking across the building and delivering the articles of impeachment to the Senate, where there are 31 senators who could act as jurors.

In a complicating twist, one of them is Sen. Paxton, who has not spoken publicly since her husband's impeachment or said whether she will recuse herself from the proceedings. She declined comment Monday when approached by The Associated Press outside the Senate chamber.

The chairman of the House investigation, Republican state Rep. Andrew Murr, also declined to comment on whether it would be appropriate for Sen. Paxton to participate.

"We will manage this process with the weight and reverence it deserves and requires," Murr said.

The impeachment made for a dramatic finale to the 140-day legislative session in Texas, where Republicans started the year with large GOP majorities following a dominant midterm election, a historic \$33 billion surplus and a governor seen as a possible 2024 presidential contender.

But instead of a smooth victory lap this spring, Republicans spent months clashing with each other over promises to cut property taxes and provide vouchers to public school students, and in the end delivered neither before time was up.

Both were priorities of Abbott, who was silent as the session ended. He could also appoint an interim attorney general but has made no public comment about Paxton since impeachment proceedings began

last week.

Among those who have rushed to Paxton's defense are activists on the GOP's hard right and former President Donald Trump, the leading contender for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, who over the weekend posted on his social media platform that the governor was "MISSING IN ACTION!"

In a state where Republicans have controlled every lever of power for decades — and have used that dominance to put Texas out front nationally over contentious measures to restrict abortion and immigration — the failure of several promises in the state Capitol underscored how they do not always move in lockstep.

"There are certainly battle lines that exist within the Republican Party," said Brandon Rottinghaus, a professor of political science at the University of Houston. "I don't think they're ideological. I think you could read into this that the House is tired of being pressured by far-right Republicans, and this is their way of putting in some barriers."

The rifts are not new in Texas, and more broadly, Republicans succeeded in passing a slew of measures they held up as victories for conservatives, including bans on gender-affirming care and banning offices of diversity, equity and inclusion at the state's universities.

They also put Harris County, the third-largest county in the nation and the largest in Texas that is controlled by Democrats, under new laws that forced them to fire their elections administrator and opens a path for state officials to take greater control over their elections.

Paxton is only the third sitting official in Texas' nearly 200-year history to be impeached. He called the House investigation that led up to his impeachment "corrupt" and has broadly denied wrongdoing. The raft of accusations against him include an indictment on securities fraud charges and allegations that he misused his office to try to thwart an FBI investigation into one of his donors.

"What happened this week is nothing I take pride in," Phelan told the chamber. "It is not anything I was proud of. But it was necessary. It was just."

China launches new crew for space station, with eye to putting astronauts on moon before 2030

BEIJING (AP) — China launched a new three-person crew for its orbiting space station on Tuesday, with an eye to putting astronauts on the moon before the end of the decade.

The Shenzhou 16 spacecraft lifted off from the Jiuquan launch center on the edge of the Gobi Desert in northwestern China atop a Long March 2-F rocket just after 9:30 a.m. (0130 GMT) Tuesday.

The crew, including China's first civilian astronaut, will overlap briefly with three now aboard the Tiangong station, who will then return to Earth after completing their six-month mission.

A third module was added to the station in November, and space program officials on Monday said they have plans to expand it, along with launching a crewed mission to the moon before 2030.

China built its own space station after it was excluded from the International Space Station, largely due to U.S. concerns over the Chinese space programs' intimate ties with the People's Liberation Army, the military branch of the ruling Communist Party.

China's first manned space mission in 2003 made it the third country after the former Soviet Union and the U.S. to put a person into space under its own resources.

On the this latest mission, payload expert Gui Haichao, a professor at Beijing's top aerospace research institute, will join mission commander Maj. Gen. Jing Haipeng, who is making his fourth flight to space, and spacecraft engineer Zhu Yangzhu.

The crew will stay aboard the station for around five months, during which they will conduct scientific experiments and regular maintenance.

The mission comes against the background of a rivalry with the U.S. for reaching new milestones in space. That has been largely friendly, but also reflects their sharpening competition for leadership and influence in the technology, military and diplomatic fields.

American spending, supply chains and capabilities are believed to give it a significant edge over China, at least for now. China has broken out in some areas, however, bringing samples back from the lunar surface for the first time in decades and landing a rover on the less explored far side of the moon.

The U.S., meanwhile, aims to put astronauts back on the lunar surface by the end of 2025 as part of a renewed commitment to crewed missions, aided by private sector players such as SpaceX and Blue Origin.

In addition to their lunar programs, the two countries have also separately landed rovers on Mars, and China plans to follow the U.S. in landing a spacecraft on an asteroid.

Why Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's impeachment fight isn't finished yet

By JIM VERTUNO and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Texas Legislature already made one historic move with its impeachment of Republican state Attorney General Ken Paxton. Another one is coming.

The GOP-led House of Representatives on Saturday approved 20 articles of impeachment on sweeping allegations of wrongdoing that have trailed the state's top lawyer for years, including abuse of office and bribery. The vote immediately suspended Paxton from office.

But the intraparty brawl in the nation's largest conservative state, one that even drew political punches Saturday from former President Donald Trump, is far from over. The Republican-controlled Senate will hold a trial of Paxton next, and he and his allies hope conservatives there will save him.

One member of that chamber is his wife, state Sen. Angela Paxton, and she could cast a vote on her husband's political future, which is now in jeopardy in part because of bribery allegations linked to his extramarital affair.

THE SENATE

Impeachment in Texas is similar to the process on the federal level: After the House action, the Senate holds its trial.

The Senate announced Monday the trial will start no later than Aug. 28.

The House needed just a simple majority of its 149 members to impeach Paxton, and the final 121-23 vote was a landslide. But the threshold for conviction in the Senate trial is higher, requiring a two-thirds majority of its 31 members.

If that happens, Ken Paxton would be permanently barred from holding office in Texas. Anything less means Paxton is acquitted and can resume his third term as attorney general.

Paxton bitterly criticized the chamber's investigation as "corrupt," secret and conducted so quickly that he and his lawyers were not allowed to mount a defense. He also called Republican House Speaker Dade a "liberal."

The Senate is led by Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Like Paxton, he is a Republican who has closely allied himself with Trump, and he has driven Texas' right-wing political and policy push for the last decade. Patrick has yet to comment on the impeachment or the House's allegations.

The Senate will set its own trial rules, including whether to take witness testimony and what reports and documents to consider. It could also consider whether to excuse Angela Paxton from voting due to conflict of interest, although Patrick suggested before the House impeachment vote that all 31 senators will be allowed to vote in the Senate trial.

Angela Paxton declined Monday comment on the impeachment or the upcoming trial.

The impeachment charges include bribery related to one of Paxton's donors, Austin real estate developer Nate Paul, allegedly employing the woman with whom he had the affair in exchange for legal help.

Another Republican senator with a potential conflict is Sen. Bryan Hughes. The House impeachment articles accuse Paxton of using Hughes as a "straw requestor" for a legal opinion used to protect Paul from foreclosure on several properties.

State law requires all senators to be present for an impeachment trial.

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REPUBLICAN ON REPUBLICAN

Paxton's impeachment has been led from the start by his fellow Republicans, in contrast to America's most prominent recent examples of impeachment.

Trump's impeachments in 2020 and 2021 were driven by Democrats who had majority control of the U.S. House. In both cases, the charges they approved failed in the Senate, where Republicans had enough votes to block conviction.

In Texas, Republicans have large majorities in both chambers, and the state's GOP leaders hold all levers of influence.

Paxton called for Republicans to rally to his defense during Saturday's vote in a peaceful protest at the Capitol. That echoed Trump's call for protests of his electoral defeat on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob violently stormed the U.S. Capitol in Washington. Paxton spoke at the rally in Washington that day before the insurrection.

Trump joined the fray in Texas on Saturday, posting on social media a warning to House members that "I will fight you" if they voted to impeach. A few hundred Paxton supporters came to watch from the gallery.

House Republicans didn't seem to care. Sixty of them, 71% of the chamber's GOP caucus, voted to impeach.

Republican Party Chairman Matt Rinaldi, a Paxton ally, said the party would have to rely on the "principled leadership of the Texas Senate to restore sanity and reason."

The move to the Senate could give Paxton's grass-roots supporters and national figures like Trump time to apply more pressure.

YEARS IN THE MAKING

The impeachment reaches back to 2015, when Paxton was indicted on securities fraud charges for which he still has not stood trial. The lawmakers charged Paxton with making false statements to state securities regulators.

But most of the articles of impeachment stem from his connections to Paul and a remarkable revolt by Paxton's top deputies in 2020.

That fall, eight senior aides reported their boss to the FBI, accusing him of bribery and abusing his office to help Paul. Four of them later brought a whistleblower lawsuit. The report prompted a federal criminal investigation that in February was taken over by the U.S. Justice Department's Washington-based Public Integrity Section.

The impeachment charges cover myriad accusations related to Paxton's dealings with Paul. The allegations include attempts to interfere in foreclosure lawsuits and improperly issuing legal opinions to benefit Paul, as well as firing, harassing and interfering with staff who reported what was going on. The bribery charges stem from the affair, as well as Paul allegedly paying for expensive renovations to Paxton's Austin home.

The fracas took a toll on the Texas attorney general's office, long one of the primary legal challengers to Democratic administrations in the White House.

In the years since Paxton's staff went to the FBI, the state attorney general's office has become unmoored by the disarray. Seasoned lawyers have quit over practices they say aim to slant legal work, reward loyalists and drum out dissent.

In February, Paxton agreed to settle the whistleblower lawsuit brought by the former aides. The \$3.3 million payout must be approved by the Legislature, and Phelan has said he doesn't think taxpayers should foot the bill.

Shortly after the settlement was reached, the House investigation began.

TEXAS HISTORY

Paxton was already likely to be noted in history books for his unprecedented request that the U.S. Supreme Court overturn Biden's defeat of Trump in 2020. He now is one of just three sitting officials to have been impeached in Texas.

Gov. James "Pa" Ferguson was removed in 1917 for misapplication of public funds, embezzlement and the diversion of a special fund. State Judge O.P. Carrillo was forced from office in 1975 for personal use of public money and equipment and filing false financial statements.

Bleiberg reported from Dallas.

Teenager walks at brain injury event weeks after getting shot in head for knocking on wrong door

Ralph Yarl — a Black teenager who was shot in the head and arm last month after mistakenly ringing the wrong doorbell — walked at a brain injury awareness event Monday in his first major public appearance since the shooting.

The 17-year-old suffered a traumatic brain injury when he was shot while trying to pick up his younger brothers in April, the Kansas City Star reported.

Yarl walked with family, friends and other brain injury survivors Monday at Going the Distance for Brain Injury, a yearly Memorial Day race at Loose Park in Kansas City, Missouri.

"It takes a community. It takes a family. It takes a support group, all of that," Yarl's mother, Cleo Nagbe, said ahead of the race, adding: "Let's raise more awareness to stop the things that cause brain injuries and should not be causing them, especially gun violence."

As many as 1,000 people raced through the park, including many in neon green T-shirts who registered to be part of "Team Ralph," said Robin Abramowitz, executive director of the Brain Injury Association of Kansas and Greater Kansas City.

"It's important for Ralph to see that he is not alone," Yarl's aunt, Faith Spoonmore, said. She added that Yarl has debilitating migraines and issues with balance. He is also struggling with his emotions, mood changes and the trauma of the shooting.

Andrew Lester, an 84-year-old white man, is accused of shooting Yarl. The teen had confused Lester's address with a home about a block away where he was supposed to pick up his siblings.

The shooting drew worldwide attention and prompted rallies and protests in the Kansas City area, with critics saying Lester was given preferential treatment when police released him just two hours after he was arrested.

Japan PM's son to resign after public outrage over private party at official residence

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Monday his son is resigning as his executive policy secretary to take responsibility for using the prime minister's residence for a private party at which the merrymaking was exposed in magazine photos that triggered public outrage.

Shotaro Kishida, his father's executive secretary for political affairs and eldest son, invited a group of people including relatives to a year-end party on Dec. 30 at the Prime Minister's Official Residence.

Photos published by the weekly Shukan Bunshun magazine showing Kishida's son and his relatives posing on red-carpeted stairs in an imitation of the group photos taken of newly appointed Cabinets, with his son at the center — the position reserved for the prime minister. Other photos showed guests standing at a podium as if holding a news conference.

"As secretary for (the prime minister's) political affairs, a public position, his actions were inappropriate and I decided to replace him to have him take responsibility," Kishida told reporters Monday night. He said his son will be replaced with another secretary, Takayoshi Yamamoto, on Thursday.

Kishida acknowledged that he had briefly greeted the guests but said he didn't stay at the dinner party. He said he severely reprimanded his son for the party, but that failed to quell ongoing criticism from opposition lawmakers and public outrage which have pushed down his support ratings.

Kishida appointed his son as policy secretary, one of eight secretary posts for the prime minister, in October. The appointment, seen as a step in grooming him as his heir, was criticized as nepotism, which is common in Japanese politics, long dominated by hereditary lawmakers. His son was previously his fa-

ther's private secretary.

It was not the first time Kishida's son has come under fire for making use of his official position for private activities. He was reprimanded for using embassy cars for private sightseeing in Britain and Paris and for buying souvenirs for Cabinet members at a luxury department store in London when he accompanied his father on trips.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno earlier called the son's party at the official residence "inappropriate" and promised to ensure proper management of the facility to prevent future misuse.

The nearly 100-year-old building previously was the prime minister's office and became the living quarters in 2005 when a new office was built.

'He's home': Missing 73 years, Medal of Honor recipient's remains return to Georgia

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Soldiers of the 9th Infantry Regiment made a desperate retreat as North Korean troops closed in around them. A wounded, 18-year-old Army Pfc. Luther Herschel Story feared his injuries would slow down his company, so he stayed behind to cover their withdrawal.

Story's actions in the Korean War on Sept. 1, 1950, would ensure he was remembered. He was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor, which is now displayed alongside his portrait at the National Infantry Museum, an hour's drive from his hometown of Americus, Georgia.

But Story was never seen alive again, and his resting place long remained a mystery.

"In my family, we always believed that he would never be found," said Judy Wade, Story's niece and closest surviving relative.

That changed in April when the U.S. military revealed lab tests had matched DNA from Wade and her late mother to bones of an unidentified American soldier recovered from Korea in October 1950. The remains belonged to Story, a case agent told Wade over the phone. After nearly 73 years, he was coming home.

A Memorial Day burial with military honors took place Monday at the Andersonville National Cemetery. A police escort with flashing lights escorted Story's casket through the streets of nearby Americus on Wednesday after it arrived in Georgia. Then, on Monday, residents lined the streets as the funeral procession drove by, WALB-TV reported.

"I don't have to worry about him anymore," said Wade, who was born four years after her uncle went missing overseas. "I'm just glad he's home."

Among those celebrating Story's return was former President Jimmy Carter. When Story was a young boy, according to Wade, his family lived and worked in Plains on land owned by Carter's father, James Earl Carter Sr.

Jimmy Carter, 98, has been under hospice care at his home in Plains since February. Jill Stuckey, superintendent of the Jimmy Carter National Historical Park, said she shared the news about Story with Carter as soon as she heard it.

"Oh, there was a big smile on his face," Stuckey said. "He was very excited to know that a hero was coming home."

Story grew up about 150 miles (241 kilometers) south of Atlanta in Sumter County, where his father was a sharecropper. As a young boy, Story, who had a keen sense of humor and liked baseball, joined his parents and older siblings in the fields to help harvest cotton. The work was hard, and it didn't pay much.

"Momma talked about eating sweet potatoes three times a day," said Wade, whose mother, Gwendolyn Story Chambliss, was Luther Story's older sister. "She used to talk about how at night her fingers would be bleeding from picking cotton out of the bolls. Everybody in the family had to do it for them to exist."

The family eventually moved to Americus, the county's largest city, where Story's parents found better work. He enrolled in high school, but soon set his sights on joining the military in the years following World War II.

In 1948, his mother agreed to sign papers allowing Story to enlist in the Army. She listed his birthdate

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as July 20, 1931. But Wade said she later obtained a copy of her uncle's birth certificate that showed he was born in 1932 — which would have made him just 16 when he joined.

Story left school during his sophomore year. In the summer of 1950 he deployed with Company A of the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment to Korea around the time the war began.

On Sept. 1, 1950, near the village of Agok on the Naktong River, Story's unit came under attack by three divisions of North Korean troops that moved to surround the Americans and cut off their escape.

Story seized a machine gun and fired on enemy soldiers crossing the river, killing or wounding about 100, according to his Medal of Honor citation. As his company commander ordered a retreat, Story rushed into a road and threw grenades into an approaching truck carrying North Korean troops and ammunition. Despite being wounded, he continued fighting.

"Realizing that his wounds would hamper his comrades, he refused to retire to the next position but remained to cover the company's withdrawal," Story's award citation said. "When last seen he was firing every weapon available and fighting off another hostile assault."

Story was presumed dead. He would have been 18 years old, according to the birth certificate Wade obtained.

In 1951, his father received Story's Medal of Honor at a Pentagon ceremony. Story was also posthumously promoted to corporal.

About a month after Story went missing in Korea, the U.S. military recovered a body in the area where he was last seen fighting. The unidentified remains were buried with other unknown service members at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, more than 7,500 Americans who served in the Korean War remain missing or their remains have not been identified. That's roughly 20% of the nearly 37,000 U.S. service members who died in the war.

Remains of the unknown soldier recovered near Agok were disinterred in 2021 as part of a broader military effort to determine the identities of several hundred Americans who died in the war. Eventually scientists compared DNA from the bones with samples submitted by Wade and her mother before she died in 2017. They made a successful match.

President Joe Biden announced the breakthrough April 26 in Washington, joined by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol.

"Today, we can return him to his family," Biden said of Story, "and to his rest."

Russia issues arrest warrant for Lindsey Graham over Ukraine comments

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's Interior Ministry on Monday issued an arrest warrant for U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham following his comments related to the fighting in Ukraine.

In an edited video of his meeting on Friday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that was released by Zelenskyy's office, Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, noted that "the Russians are dying" and described the U.S. military assistance to the country as "the best money we've ever spent."

While Graham appeared to have made the remarks in different parts of the conversation, the short video by Ukraine's presidential office put them next to each other, causing outrage in Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov commented Sunday by saying that "it's hard to imagine a greater shame for the country than having such senators."

The Investigative Committee, the country's top criminal investigation agency, has moved to open a criminal inquiry against Graham, and the Interior Ministry followed up by issuing a warrant for his arrest as indicated Monday by its official record of wanted criminal suspects.

Graham is among more than 200 U.S. members of Congress whom Moscow banned last year from entering Russia.

Graham commented on Twitter, saying that "to know that my commitment to Ukraine has drawn the ire of Putin's regime brings me immense joy."

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"I will continue to stand with and for Ukraine's freedom until every Russian soldier is expelled from Ukrainian territory," he tweeted. "I will wear the arrest warrant issued by Putin's corrupt and immoral government as a Badge of Honor."

Alcaraz, Djokovic 'not otherworldly' in French Open wins over foes making Slam debuts

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

PARIS (AP) — You might assume that the opponents for Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic in the French Open's first round would come away from their straight-set losses Monday feeling too overwhelmed by the play of the two tournament favorites.

You would be wrong.

Forget the scores and the point-by-point particulars on a windy day at Roland Garros for a moment. Of course it turned out that No. 1-seeded Alcaraz, the reigning U.S. Open champion, beat 159th-ranked qualifier Flavio Cobolli, a 21-year-old from Florence, Italy. And of course it turned out that No. 3 Djokovic, a 22-time major winner, got past 114th-ranked Aleksandar Kovacevic, a 24-year-old who grew up in New York City and is now based in Florida.

And naturally, both Cobolli and Kovacevic acknowledged feeling a bit jittery at the outset of what were their Grand Slam debuts in huge arenas against a couple of elite players.

"I started in a bit of a daze," Cobolli said after his 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 loss, "because of the emotions."

"A couple of times there, I did look up and take it all in. I made sure of that, because this is the kind of experience I'll definitely hold onto forever," Kovacevic said after his 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (1) loss. "It's not the best thing in the world to get lost in the crowd. You start to really look at everyone that's there — and that's when the nerves hit."

But what both of them wanted to make clear afterward was that, yes, Alcaraz and Djokovic are exceptionally talented, but, no, it did not seem to be impossible to find openings to exploit.

"It's definitely intimidating. Watching him on TV growing up, it's hard not to look past that and knowing what he's accomplished. But from a tennis standpoint, it's not otherworldly," said Kovacevic, who was 7 when he first met Djokovic and later practiced with him during the 2021 U.S. Open after playing college tennis at the University of Illinois. "The things he does well, he does unbelievably well, but the ball that he hits — it's not blowing me completely off the court, which was honestly somewhat surprising."

Other seeded men advancing on Day 2 in Paris included No. 8 Jannik Sinner, No. 12 Frances Tiafoe, No. 14 Cam Norrie and No. 15 Borna Coric. Among the seeded women moving into the second round: No. 5 Caroline Garcia, No. 14 Beatriz Haddad Maia, No. 20 Madison Keys and No. 22 Donna Vekic. Seeds on the way out included No. 10 Petra Kvitova, No. 12 Belinda Bencic and No. 16 Karolina Pliskova in the women's bracket, along with No. 10 Felix Auger-Aliassime and No. 25 Botik Van de Zandschulp in the men's.

With 14-time champion Rafael Nadal sidelined by a hip injury, Alcaraz and Djokovic are considered the favorites for the men's title and could meet in the semifinals. If Djokovic wins the trophy, he would earn his 23rd at a Slam and break the tie for the men's record he and Nadal currently share.

Cobolli's first career match on the lower-level ATP Challenger Tour was a loss in qualifying against Alcaraz in Italy in August 2000. Cobolli chuckled Monday while recalling that encounter and pointing out that, while both have grown as players since then, "He's grown more."

"It's impressive how he handles himself on important points. That's one of his best qualities. His ball speed is faster than most players in this tournament. It's so difficult to get him in trouble," Cobolli said. "But like all of us human beings, he does have his weaker aspects."

Which, perhaps, was why both of these contests were lopsided at the beginning — "At the start of the match," Alcaraz said, "I felt invincible — and included a bit of intrigue down the stretch." Alcaraz held three match points to close things at 5-3 in the third set but couldn't convert, then found himself at 5-all minutes later. Djokovic served to end his match at 5-4 in the third but got broken there to also sit at 5-all.

"Made me work for my victory," Djokovic said.

In both instances, to the surprise of no one, the higher-rated player steadied himself and sealed the deal. Before coming to Paris, the last tournament entered by both Cobolli and Kovacevic was an ATP Challenger Tour event in Turin. Cobolli made the case that the talent there was not all that different from what his first foray in a Grand Slam bracket presented.

"I don't think there's a ton of distance between us and them. They have something extra, so in the end, they do take home the win," he said. "But we can play with them."

AP Tennis: <https://apnews.com/hub/tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Biden on Memorial Day lauds generations of fallen US troops who 'dared all and gave all'

By AAMER MADHANI and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden lauded the sacrifice of generations of U.S. troops who "dared all and gave all" fighting for their country and called on Americans to ensure their "sacrifice was not in vain" in Memorial Day observances at Arlington National Cemetery.

Biden was joined at the traditional wreath-laying ceremony by first lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Harris' husband, Douglas Emhoff, for the 155th National Memorial Day Observance. He had a moment of contemplation in front of the wreath, which was adorned with flowers and a red, white and blue bow, and then bowed his head in prayer.

"We must never forget the price that was paid to protect our democracy," Biden said later in an address at the Memorial Amphitheater. "We must never forget the lives these flags, flowers and marble markers represent."

"Every year we remember," he said. "And every year it never gets easier."

Monday's federal holiday honoring America's fallen service members came a day after Biden and Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy reached final agreement on a deal that would raise America's debt limit and that now awaits approval by Congress.

As it stands, the agreement would keep nondefense spending roughly flat in the 2024 fiscal year and increase it by 1% the following year. The measure would allow for 3% defense growth that year, to \$886 billion, and then 1% the next year, to \$895 billion.

Biden has taken pride that his Democratic administration has overseen a time of relative peace for the U.S. military after two decades of war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It's been nearly 21 months since Biden ended the United States' longest war, in Afghanistan, making good on a campaign promise to end a 20-year-old "forever war" that cost the lives of more than 2,400 U.S. service members.

The war in Afghanistan, however, ended in chaotic and deadly fashion on Biden's watch in August 2021 with critics assailing the administration's handling of the evacuation of some 120,000 American citizens, Afghans and others as poorly planned and badly executed.

The Biden administration last month released a review of the last days of the war, largely blaming his Republican predecessor, President Donald Trump, and asserting that Biden was "severely constrained" by Trump's decisions.

The U.S. now finds itself leading a coalition of allies pouring tens of billions of dollars in military and economic aid into Ukraine as it tries to repel the Russian invasion, which appears to have no end in sight.

While making clear that he has no desire for U.S. troops to enter the conflict, Biden has maintained that he sees the Russian effort to grab territory as an affront to international norms and has vowed to help Kyiv win, sending artillery, tanks and drones and recently agreeing to allow allies to train Ukrainian military on American F-16 jets.

Biden connected the sacrifices of some 400,000 Americans buried at Arlington to the work of U.S. troops deployed around the world today, saying the impact of the fallen men and women "goes far beyond those

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silent stones” of the solemn burial ground.

“We see the strength of our NATO alliance built from the bonds that were forged in the fires of two World Wars,” Biden said. “We see it in the troops still standing sentinel on the Korean Peninsula, preserving the peace side by side with allies. We see it in every base, every barrack, every vessel around the globe where our military proudly serves and stands as a force for good in the world.”

During the Arlington ceremony, Biden also spoke of the need to care for U.S. service members on and off the battlefield.

“We have only one truly sacred obligation: to prepare those we send into harm’s way and care for them and their families when they come home and when they don’t,” Biden said.

The president noted legislation he had signed expanding federal health care services for millions of veterans who served at military bases where toxic smoke billowed from huge burn pits, commonly used by the military until several years ago to dispose of chemicals, tires, plastics and medical and human waste.

Before Monday’s ceremony at the Arlington, Virginia, cemetery, the Bidens hosted a breakfast at the White House for members of veterans organizations, military service and military family organizations, surviving families of fallen U.S. troops, senior Defense Department and other administration officials.

The president and the first lady returned to their home near Wilmington, Delaware, later Monday.

Exclusive secrets of the National Spelling Bee: Picking the words to identify a champion

By BEN NUCKOLS Associated Press

OXON HILL, Md. (AP) — As the final pre-competition meeting of the Scripps National Spelling Bee’s word selection panel stretches into its seventh hour, the pronouncers no longer seem to care.

Before panelists can debate the words picked for the bee, they need to hear each word and its language of origin, part of speech, definition and exemplary sentence read aloud. Late in the meeting, lead pronouncer Jacques Bailly and his colleagues — so measured in their pacing and meticulous in their enunciation during the bee — rip through that chore as quickly as possible. No pauses. No apologies for flubs.

By the time of this gathering, two days before the bee, the word list is all but complete. Each word has been vetted by the panel and slotted into the appropriate round of the nearly century-old annual competition to identify the English language’s best speller.

For decades, the word panel’s work has been a closely guarded secret. This year, Scripps — a Cincinnati-based media company — granted The Associated Press exclusive access to the panelists and their pre-bee meeting, with the stipulation that The AP would not reveal words unless they were cut from the list.

THEY’RE TOUGH ON WORDS

The 21 panelists sit around a makeshift, rectangular conference table in a windowless room tucked inside the convention center outside Washington where the bee is staged every year. They are given printouts including words Nos. 770-1,110 — those used in the semifinal rounds and beyond — with instructions that those sheets of paper cannot leave the room.

Hearing the words aloud with the entire panel present — laptops open to Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged dictionary — sometimes illuminates problems. That’s what happened late in Sunday’s meeting. Kavya Shivashankar, the 2009 champion, an obstetrician/gynecologist and a recent addition to the panel, chimed in with an objection.

The word gleyde (pronounced “glide”), which means a decrepit old horse and is only used in Britain, has a near-homonym — glyde — with a similar but not identical pronunciation and the same meaning. Shivashankar says the variant spelling makes the word too confusing, and the rest of the panel quickly agrees to spike gleyde altogether. It won’t be used.

“Nice word, but bye-bye,” pronouncer Kevin Moch says.

For the panelists, the meeting is the culmination of a yearlong process to assemble a word list that will challenge but not embarrass the 230 middle- and elementary-school-aged competitors — and preferably produce a champion within the two-hour broadcast window for Thursday night’s finals.

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The panel's work has changed over the decades. From 1961 to 1984, according to James Maguire's book "American Bee," creating the list was a one-man operation overseen by Jim Wagner, a Scripps Howard editorial promotions director, and then by Harvey Elentuck, a then-MIT student who approached Wagner about helping with the list in the mid-1970s.

The panel was created in 1985. The current collaborative approach didn't take shape until the early '90s. Bailly, the 1980 champion, joined in 1991.

"Harvey ... made the whole list," Bailly says. "I never met him. I was just told, 'You're the new Harvey.'"

IT'S NOT JUST PICKING WORDS

This year's meeting includes five full-time bee staffers and 16 contract panelists. The positions are filled via word of mouth within the spelling community or recommendations from panelists. The group includes five former champions: Barrie Trinkle (1973), Bailly, George Thampy (2000), Sameer Mishra (2008) and Shivashankar.

Trinkle, who joined the panel in 1997, used to produce the majority of her submissions by reading periodicals like The New Yorker or The Economist.

"Our raison d'être was to teach spellers a rich vocabulary that they could use in their daily lives. And as they got smarter and smarter, they got more in contact with each other and were studying off the same lists, it became harder to hold a bee with those same types of words," Trinkle says.

Now, more often than not she goes directly to the source — Merriam-Webster's Unabridged. That's easier than it used to be.

"The dictionary is on the computer and is highly searchable in all kinds of ways — which the spellers know as well. If they want to find all the words that entered the language in the 1650s, they can do that, which is sometimes what I do," Trinkle says. "The best words kind of happen to you as you're scrolling around through the dictionary."

Not everyone on the panel submits words. Some work to ensure that the definitions, parts of speech and other accompanying information are correct; others are tasked with ensuring that words of similar difficulty are asked at the right times in the competition; others focus on crafting the bee's new multiple-choice vocabulary questions. Those who submit words, like Trinkle and Mishra, are given assignments throughout the year to come up with a certain number at a certain level of difficulty.

Mishra pulls his submissions from his own list, which he started when he was a 13-year-old speller. He gravitates toward "the harder end of the spectrum."

"They are fun and challenging for me and they make me smile, and I know if I was a speller I would be intimidated by that word," says the 28-year-old Mishra, who just finished his MBA at Harvard. "I have no fear about running out (of words), and I feel good about that."

HOW THE BEE HAS EVOLVED

The panel meets a few times a year, often virtually, to go over words, edit definitions and sentences, and weed out problems. The process seemed to go smoothly through the 2010s, even amid a proliferation of so-called "minor league" bees, many catering to offspring of highly educated, first-generation Indian immigrants — a group that has come to dominate the competition.

In 2019, a confluence of factors — among them, a wild-card program that allowed multiple spellers from competitive regions to reach nationals — produced an unusually deep field of spellers. Scripps had to use the toughest words on its list just to cull to a dozen finalists. The bee ended in an eight-way tie, and there was no shortage of critics.

Scripps, however, didn't fundamentally change the way the word panel operates. It brought in younger panelists more attuned to the ways contemporary spellers study and prepare. And it made format changes designed to identify a sole champion. The wild-card program was scrapped, and Scripps added onstage vocabulary questions and a lightning-round tiebreaker.

The panel also began pulling words avoided in the past. Place names, trademarks, words with no language of origin: As long as a word isn't archaic or obsolete, it's fair game.

"They've started to understand they have to push further into the dictionary," says Shourav Dasari, a

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20-year-old former speller and a co-founder with his older sister Shobha of SpellPundit, which sells study guides and hosts a popular online bee. "Last year, we started seeing stuff like tribal names that are some of the hardest words in the dictionary."

THERE'S A METICULOUSNESS TO IT ALL

Members of the panel insist they worry little about other bees or the proliferation of study materials and private coaches. But those coaches and entrepreneurs spend a lot of time thinking about the words Scripps is likely to use — often quite successfully.

Dasari says there are roughly 100,000 words in the dictionary that are appropriate for spelling bees. He pledges that 99% of the words on Scripps' list are included in SpellPundit's materials. Anyone who learns all those words is all but guaranteed to win, Dasari says — but no one has shown they can do it.

"I just don't know when anybody would be able to completely master the unabridged dictionary," Dasari says.

Since the bee resumed after its 2020 pandemic cancellation, the panel has been scrutinized largely for the vocabulary questions, which have added a capricious element, knocking out some of the most gifted spellers even if they don't misspell a word. Last year's champion, Harini Logan, was briefly ousted on a vocabulary word, "pullulation" — only to be reinstated minutes later after arguing that her answer could be construed as correct.

"That gave us a sense of how very, very careful we need to be in terms of crafting these questions," says Ben Zimmer, the language columnist for The Wall Street Journal and a chief contributor of words for the vocabulary rounds.

Zimmer is also sensitive to the criticism that some vocabulary questions are evaluating the spellers' cultural sophistication rather than their mastery of roots and language patterns. This year's vocabulary questions contain more clues that will guide gifted spellers to the answers, he says.

There will always be complaints about the word list, but making the competition as fair as possible is the panel's chief goal. Missing hyphens or incorrect capitalization, ambiguities about singular and plural nouns or transitive and intransitive verbs — no question is too insignificant.

"This is really problematic," Trinkle says, pointing out a word that has a homonym with a similar definition. Scripps editorial manager Maggie Lorenz agrees: "We're going to bump that word entirely."

Ben Nuckols has covered the Scripps National Spelling Bee since 2012. Follow him at <https://twitter.com/APBenNuckols>

What 5 more years of Erdogan's rule means for Turkey

By ZEYNEP BILGINSOY Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan won reelection in a runoff Sunday, following a nail-biter first round two weeks earlier. Having secured another five years, Erdogan now faces a host of domestic challenges in a deeply divided country, from a battered economy to pressure for the repatriation of Syrian refugees to the need to rebuild after a devastating earthquake.

Here's a look at the challenges ahead.

ECONOMY: HOW MUCH LONGER CAN ERDOGAN'S UNORTHODOX POLICIES BE SUSTAINED?

Inflation in Turkey hit a staggering 85% in October before easing to 44% last month — although independent experts think the latest figure still masks how severe the cost-of-living crisis is in a country where people are having trouble paying skyrocketing rents and buying basic goods.

Critics blame the crisis on Erdogan's policy of keeping interest rates low to promote growth. Economists generally recommend raising rates to combat inflation.

Despite a faltering economy, Erdogan won the election, in part by softening the effects of inflation with public spending that experts say is unsustainable, including minimum wage and pension increases.

"The Turkish economy has been partying for a long time and well beyond its means. And I think in the period after the election, this is when we are going to pay for the feast that we consumed," said Selva

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Demiralp, professor of economics at Istanbul's Koc University.

Moving forward, the government will need to decide whether to stick to low rates, as Erdogan has promised, make gradual hikes, or combine small increases with other measures. All will be bring an "unavoidable slowdown" in the Turkish economy and higher unemployment rates, according to Demiralp, but the question is whether it's a controlled slowdown or a sudden stop.

The Turkish lira plunged against the dollar Monday, though stocks rallied.

EARTHQUAKE: ERDOGAN HAS VOWED TO REBUILD — BUT AT WHAT COST?

Erdogan's overwhelming victory in the provinces hit hardest by the Feb. 6 earthquake that killed some 50,000 people came despite criticism that the government's response was slow and ineffective.

Voters in nine of the 11 provinces affected by the quake backed the president, including in especially hard-hit Hatay. In his victory speech, Erdogan said rebuilding efforts would be a top priority for his government.

The World Bank estimates that the earthquake caused \$34.2 billion in "direct damages" — an amount equivalent to 4% of Turkey's 2021 gross domestic product. The recovery and reconstruction costs could add up to twice that much, it said.

Erdogan's two-decades in power have been marked by a huge boom in construction. Despite criticism that the lax enforcement of building codes contributed to the deadliness of the quake, many of his supporters believe he has shown that he can rebuild. But geologists and engineers have warned that a speedy construction campaign could also pose risks.

SYRIANS: ERDOGAN UNDER PRESSURE TO SEND REFUGEES HOME

Erdogan is deeply aware that sentiment has soured on the 3.4 million Syrians who fled violence at home for Turkey, especially as the country grapples with an economic downturn.

In his victory speech, Erdogan said some 600,000 refugees had already voluntarily returned to Syria, where his government is creating so-called "safe zones" in northern areas that it controls. An additional million would follow thanks to a joint resettlement program with Qatar, Erdogan said, without providing details.

But Emma Sinclair-Webb from Human Rights Watch said Syria is still not safe for many refugees — while the polarizing discourse in Turkey is also creating a dangerous situation for them.

RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS: ERDOGAN SIGNALS CRACKDOWN TO CONTINUE

Erdogan's presidency has been marked by a crackdown on freedom of expression and increasing hostility toward minority groups: Mainstream media is pro-government, internet censorship is widespread, new social media laws could limit expression online, and he has frequently targeted members of the LGBTQ community and ethnic Kurds.

In the aftermath of the 2016 failed coup attempt that Turkey blames on a U.S.-based Muslim cleric, the government used broad terror laws to imprison those with links to the cleric, pro-Kurdish politicians and members of civil society.

Sinclair-Webb, the human rights campaigner, said Erdogan's victory speech was a "taste of what's to come" when he targeted the imprisoned pro-Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtas, as crowds chanted slogans for capital punishment.

He similarly used another victory speech to stir up anti-LGBTQ sentiment.

Erdogan once called the mistreatment of gay people "inhumane" but now refers to members of LGBTQ community as "deviants." Since 2015, his government has banned pride parades, as officials have increased the use of discriminatory language while trying to strengthen their conservative base.

Erdogan's government has also withdrawn Turkey from a landmark European treaty protecting women from domestic violence, bowing to conservative groups that claimed the treaty promoted homosexuality.

Anti-gay rhetoric only escalated during Erdogan's campaign.

"Mentioning it again at the first opportunity in the balcony speech on victory is a chilling reminder of how he's really putting LGBT people at great risk," said Sinclair-Webb, the human rights campaigner.

Turkey's oldest LGBTQ association, Kaos GL, said that Erdogan's win would not silence them.

"Even though they promise to shut us down, we came out once and we are not going back in," the

organization and others said in a statement.

Associated Press writer Suzan Fraser contributed from Ankara, Turkey.

Third nuclear reactor reaches 100% power output at Georgia's Plant Vogtle

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A new reactor at a nuclear power plant in Georgia has reached its full power output for the first time and is scheduled to enter commercial operation within the next month.

Georgia Power Co. announced Monday that Unit 3 at Plant Vogtle, southeast of Augusta, has reached its full output of 1,100 megawatts of electricity. That's enough to power an estimated 500,000 homes and businesses. The power will be sent to Georgia and other states.

Operators are conducting further testing to prove they can run the reactor in ways required for regular operations, Georgia Power CEO Kim Greene in a statement, calling the achievement "an exciting milestone."

"It tells us we're close to finishing the unit safely and bringing it online to power Georgia homes and businesses with reliable, emissions-free energy for decades to come," she said.

The fourth reactor has finished a key testing phase and operators expect to start loading radioactive fuel between July and October, aiming for the reactor to reach commercial operation between December and March 2024.

Units 3 and 4 at Plant Vogtle are the first new reactors built from scratch in decades in the United States.

The first two reactors have been generating electricity at Vogtle for decades. A third and a fourth reactor were approved for construction at Vogtle by the Georgia Public Service Commission in 2009, and the third reactor was supposed to start generating power in 2016.

The cost of the third and fourth reactors was originally supposed to be \$14 billion, but are now on track to cost the owners \$31 billion. That doesn't include \$3.7 billion that original contractor Westinghouse paid to the owners after going bankrupt, which brings total spending to almost \$35 billion.

In Georgia, almost every electric customer will pay for Vogtle. Georgia Power, the largest unit of Atlanta-based Southern Co., currently owns 45.7% of the reactors. Smaller shares are owned by Oglethorpe Power Corp., which provides electricity to member-owned cooperatives, the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia and the city of Dalton. Oglethorpe and MEAG plan to sell power to cooperatives and municipal utilities across Georgia, as well in Jacksonville, Florida, and parts of Alabama and the Florida Panhandle.

Georgia Power's 2.7 million customers are already paying part of the financing cost and elected public service commissioners have approved a monthly rate increase of \$3.78 a month for residential customers as soon as the third unit begins generating power. That could hit bills in July, a month after residential customers see a \$16-a-month increase to pay for higher fuel costs. Georgia Power also raised rates by 2.5% in January after commissioners approved a separate three-year rate plan. Increases of 4.5% will follow in 2024 and 2025 under that plan.

Commissioners will decide later who pays for the remainder of the costs of Vogtle, including the fourth reactor.

China plans to land astronauts on moon before 2030, expand space station, bring on foreign partners

BEIJING (AP) — China's burgeoning space program plans to place astronauts on the moon before 2030 and expand the country's orbiting space station, officials said Monday.

Monday's announcement comes amid against the background of a rivalry with the U.S. for reaching new milestones in outer space, reflecting their competition for influence on global events.

That has conjured up memories of the space race between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, although American spending, supply chains and capabilities are believed to give it a

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significant edge over China, at least for the present.

The U.S. aims to put astronauts back on the lunar surface by the end of 2025 as part of a renewed commitment to crewed missions, aided by private sector players such as SpaceX and Blue Origin.

The deputy director of China's space agency confirmed the twin objectives at a news conference but gave no specific dates.

The agency also introduced three astronauts who will head to the country's space station in a launch scheduled for Tuesday morning. They'll replace a crew that's been on the orbiting station for six months.

China is first preparing for a "short stay on the lunar surface and human-robotic joint exploration," Deputy Director of the Chinese Manned Space Agency Lin Xiqiang told reporters at the rare briefing by the military-run program.

"We have a complete near-Earth human space station and human round-trip transportation system," complemented by a process for selecting, training and supporting new astronauts, he said. A schedule of two crewed missions a year is "sufficient for carrying out our objectives," Lin said.

The Tiangong space station was said to have been finished in November when the third section was added.

A fourth module will be launched "at an appropriate time to advance support for scientific experiments and provide the crew with improved working and living conditions," Lin said.

The trio being launched aboard the Shenzhou 16 craft will overlap briefly with the three astronauts who have lived on the station for the previous six months conducting experiments and assembling equipment inside and outside the vehicle.

The fresh crew includes a civilian for the first time. All previous crew members have been in the People's Liberation Army, the military wing of the country's ruling Communist Party.

Gui Haichao, a professor at Beijing's top aerospace research institute, will join mission commander Jing Haipeng and spacecraft engineer Zhu Yangzhu as the payload expert.

Speaking to media at the launch site outside the northwestern city of Jiuquan, Jing said the mission marked "a new stage of application and development," in China's space program.

"We firmly believe that the spring of China's space science has arrived, and we have the determination, confidence, and ability to resolutely complete the mission," said Jing, a major general who has made three previous space flights.

China's first manned space mission in 2003 made it the third country after the USSR and the U.S. to put a person into space.

China built its own space station after it was excluded from the International Space Station, largely due to U.S. objections over the Chinese space programs' intimate ties to the PLA.

Space is increasingly seen as a new area of competition between China and the United States — the world's two largest economies and rivals for diplomatic and military influence — one a highly centralized, one party state, the other a democracy where the partisan divide largely evaporates over the issues of relations with China and space exploration.

The astronauts NASA sends to the moon by the end of 2025 will aim for the south pole where permanently shadowed craters are believed to be packed with frozen water.

Plans for permanent crewed bases on the moon are also being considered by both countries, raising questions about rights and interests on the lunar surface. U.S. law tightly restricts cooperation between the two countries' space programs and while China says it welcomes foreign collaborations, those have thus far been limited to scientific research.

Speaking Monday afternoon in Jiuquan, the technology director of the Chinese crewed space flight agency, Li Yingliang, said China hoped for more international collaboration, including with the U.S.

"Our country's consistent stance is that as long as the goal is to utilize space for peaceful purposes, we are willing to cooperate and communicate with any country or aerospace organization," Li said.

"Personally, I regret that the U.S. Congress has relevant motions banning cooperation in aerospace between the U.S. and China. I very much regret that personally," he said.

In addition to their lunar programs, the U.S. and China have also landed rovers on Mars and Beijing plans to follow the U.S. in landing a spacecraft on an asteroid.

Other countries and organizations ranging from the India and the United Arab Emirates to Israel and the European Union are also planning lunar missions.

The U.S. sent six crewed missions to the moon between 1969 and 1972, three of which involved the use of a drivable lunar rover that China says it is now developing with tenders in the private sector.

While America currently operates more spaceports and has a far wider network of international and commercial partners than China, the Chinese program has proceeded in a steady and cautious manner reflecting the country's vast increase in economic power and global influence since the 1980s.

Casteless utopia: California religious group backs bill to ban caste discrimination

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

FRESNO, California (AP) — For decades, worshipping in temples, Ram Asra has sung spiritual songs known as kirtans.

He did so on a recent Sunday at the Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha in Fresno, California, seated cross-legged on a dais in the temple's prayer hall playing a harmonium. Devotees closed their eyes and swayed to the calming melody.

But not all of Asra's experiences in sacred spaces have been so sublime. He is a member of the former untouchable caste in India, and recounted a time when he was pulled aside at another U.S. temple and told not to enter the kitchen.

"I felt so disrespected," he said.

Asra feels much more secure at the Fresno Ravidassia temple. Congregants follow Guru Ravidass, a 14th century Indian teacher who also belonged to the former untouchable caste whose members are also known as Dalit, which means "broken" in Hindi.

Several congregants, who say equality is at the heart of their faith, are now championing a bill which aims to outlaw caste discrimination in California. Caste is a division of people based on birth and descent.

If the legislation passes, California will become the first state to add caste to its nondiscrimination laws. In February, Seattle became the first U.S. city to pass a similar law.

There are about 20,000 members of the Ravidassia community in California's Central Valley — a vast majority of them with roots in Punjab in northwestern India. There are five Ravidassia temples in California alone — in Fresno, Pittsburg, Rio Linda, Selma and Yuba City — with a sixth under construction in Union City.

Signs supporting the bill grace the walls of the Fresno temple. Annihilating caste is intrinsic to the Ravidassia ethos, said Amar Daroch, president of the Fresno temple. He said Guru Ravidass envisioned a classless, casteless utopia he called "Begampura," which means "a land without sorrow" in Hindi.

"Our goal is to create Begampura right here," he said.

The legislation has been met with strong opposition from groups who say it will lead to discrimination against Hindu Americans and those of Indian descent. Several Dalits have also spoken against it, saying they do not wish to be burdened with a caste identity that they feel is irrelevant in this country.

But many in the Ravidassia community believe this law would bring attention to a problem they say does affect their lives.

In California, members of the Ravidassia community come from Hindu, Indigenous and Sikh backgrounds. Their temples have the appearance and feel of a Sikh gurdwara, with the sacred text, the Guru Granth Sahib, installed as the focal point in the main prayer hall. The text includes 40 verses of Guru Ravidass, in addition to other spiritual leaders.

Ravidassia religious practices vary from Sikhism. However, many in the community do identify themselves as Sikh and have much in common with the Sikh community including dress, food, language and other customs.

The principle of equality also forms the basis of Sikh theology, said Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, associate

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professor of Sikh Studies at the University of Wolverhampton in the United Kingdom, a city that has a sizeable Punjabi population including a large Ravidassia community. Takhar said the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India, the most significant shrine in Sikhism, was designed with four doors, sending the message that "everyone from all walks of life, all corners of the world and all castes are welcome to come in and be together."

She mentioned the importance of a post-worship community meal known as langar, saying its purpose "is to sit down as equals and share food with everyone regardless of caste, which used to be taboo."

Vinod Kumar Chumber, chairman of the Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha in Union City, California, said those teachings on equality have not translated into reality in the U.S. and beyond. In Punjab, Chumber said each village has gurdwaras led by dominant-caste members and those run by Dalits.

"Things are improving, but people are still not being treated equally," he said, adding that members of his community are rarely found in leadership positions at mainstream U.S. Sikh temples. "We figured it was best for us to have our own places of worship where we can freely practice our customs and celebrate our festivals."

Members of the Fresno Ravidassia community say fighting for equality is part of their history and their spiritual DNA, which has motivated them to come forward with their stories despite the potential repercussions of being exposed to the larger community as "lower-caste." Community members say they still experience discriminatory treatment from people who share otherwise share everything from culture and food to language and national origin.

Harbhans Singh said his friend opened a grocery store in a largely South Asian neighborhood in Central California that did well in the beginning, but "his business flopped" once customers learned his caste.

"He had to shut down his business," he said. "How can this still happen in the United States?"

Harblas Singh, who worked at a poultry plant near Fresno, said his Punjabi colleagues refused to sit with him at lunch after learning he was Dalit.

"I came to this country hoping that I can break away from the chains of caste," he said. "But it seems as if we cannot accomplish that as human beings. We need the law to do that for us."

Rajinder Ganger, who used to run a trucking company in Selma, said one of his upper-caste drivers quit after learning Ganger's caste identity.

"He said his relatives were berating him for working with me," he said.

Rajinder Kumar, whose family operates a business in Bakersfield, said the answer to caste bias is education and an enforceable anti-discrimination law that names caste as a protected category. He says categories such as "ethnicity" or "national origin" will still not cover the type of discrimination he and the others in the Ravidassia community frequently face.

"Whether you are a cashier, a business owner, a professor, or a doctor — in 2023 — you are still an un-touchable," he said. "When does that stop? How much money do you have to make? How many degrees do you have to get to make it stop?"

After the recent Sunday worship at the Fresno temple, Kumar took the microphone in the prayer hall, urging members to speak up for the caste bill. Footage of community members testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee looped on a screen behind him.

During the April hearing, elderly community members who couldn't speak English showed up, and made their views known to the committee with a simple "vote yes." Kumar said such courage is no longer an option but an imperative for the community.

"There is no need to hide," Kumar said. "We have hundreds of stories to share. We all need to come forward and make our voices heard."

The caste bill has given members of the larger Sikh community an opportunity to show solidarity with the Ravidassia community and to uphold the tenets of their faith, said Kashmir Singh Shahi with the Gurdwara Sahib in Fremont, a Sikh congregation. He said his temple is diverse and free from discrimination and stereotyping.

"That's the way it should be," he said, adding that while caste discrimination may be "less prevalent" in the United States, some still suffer because of it and that alone justifies the need for such a law.

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Gurbachan Singh, a community elder in Fresno who has founded several Ravidass temples, said he would like to see people start having those conversations, challenging as they may be.

"If we don't go to the other gurdwaras, talk to them and speak the truth, that's on us," he said. "I hope to see a day when all our temples stand together on the foundation of truth."

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Today in History: May 30, Joan of Arc burned at the stake

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, May 30, the 150th day of 2023. There are 215 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 30, 1989, student protesters in Beijing erected a "Goddess of Democracy" statue in Tiananmen Square (the statue was destroyed in the Chinese government's crackdown).

On this date:

In 1431, Joan of Arc, condemned as a heretic, was burned at the stake in Rouen (roo-AHN'), France.

In 1922, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in a ceremony attended by President Warren G. Harding, Chief Justice William Howard Taft and Robert Todd Lincoln.

In 1935, Babe Ruth played in his last major league baseball game for the Boston Braves, leaving after the first inning of the first of a double-header against the Philadelphia Phillies, who won both games (Ruth announced his retirement three days later).

In 1937, ten people were killed when police fired on steelworkers demonstrating near the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago.

In 1958, unidentified American service members killed in World War II and the Korean War were interred in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1968, the Beatles began recording their "White Album" at EMI Recording Studios in London, starting with the original version of "Revolution 1."

In 1971, the American space probe Mariner 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a journey to Mars.

In 1972, three members of the Japanese Red Army opened fire at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, killing 26 people. Two attackers died; the third was captured.

In 1994, Mormon Church president Ezra Taft Benson died in Salt Lake City at age 94.

In 2002, a solemn, wordless ceremony marked the end of the agonizing cleanup at ground zero in New York, 8 1/2 months after 9/11.

In 2015, Vice President Joe Biden's son, former Delaware attorney general Beau Biden, died at age 46 of brain cancer.

In 2020, tense protests over the death of George Floyd and other police killings of Black people grew across the country; racially diverse crowds held mostly peaceful demonstrations in dozens of cities, though many later descended into violence, with police cars set ablaze.

Ten years ago: Syria's President Bashar Assad said in an interview with Lebanese television that he was "confident of victory" in his country's civil war, and he warned Damascus would retaliate for any future Israeli airstrike on his territory. Arvind Mahankali (AHR'-vihnd MAH'-hahn-KAHL'-ee), a 13-year-old from Bayside Hills, New York, won the Scripps National Spelling Bee by correctly spelling "knaidel," a small mass of leavened dough, to win the 86th version of the competition.

Five years ago: Harvey Weinstein was indicted in New York on rape and criminal sex act charges, furthering the first criminal case stemming from sexual misconduct allegations against the former movie mogul. Russian journalist Arkady Babchenko stunned colleagues by appearing at a news conference in Kiev less than a day after police in the Ukrainian capital said he'd been assassinated; authorities said his death was staged to foil a plot on his life by Moscow's security services. A senior House Republican, Trey Gowdy,

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said there was no evidence that the FBI planted a "spy" on Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, as Trump had alleged. Reality TV star Kim Kardashian West visited the White House to appeal to Trump on behalf of a woman serving a life sentence for drug offenses. (Days later, Trump granted clemency for Alice Marie Johnson, freeing her from prison.) Gaza's Hamas rulers said they had agreed to a cease-fire with Israel to end the largest flare-up of violence between the two sides since a 2014 war.

One year ago: After the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas that killed 19 elementary school students and two teachers, President Joe Biden said the "Second Amendment was never absolute" and that there may be some bipartisan support to tighten restrictions on the kind of high-powered weapons used by the gunman. Russian troops pushed farther into the eastern Ukrainian city of Sievierodonetsk and fought street by street with Kyiv's forces. French journalist Frederic Leclerc-Imhoff was killed by shell shrapnel while covering the conflict. Jeff Gladney, a defensive back for the NFL's Arizona Cardinals, died in a car crash in Dallas at age 25.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ruta Lee is 88. Actor Keir Dullea is 87. Rock musician Lenny Davidson (The Dave Clark Five) is 79. Actor Stephen Tobolowsky is 72. Actor Colm Meaney is 70. Actor Ted McGinley is 65. Actor Ralph Carter is 62. Actor Tonya Pinkins is 61. Country singer Wynonna Judd is 59. Rock musician Tom Morello (Audioslave; Rage Against The Machine) is 59. Actor Mark Sheppard is 59. Movie director Antoine Fuqua is 58. Actor John Ross Bowie is 52. Rock musician Patrick Dahlheimer (Live) is 52. Actor Idina Menzel is 52. Rapper Cee Lo Green is 48. Rapper Remy Ma is 43. Actor Blake Bashoff is 42. Christian rock musician James Smith (Underoath) is 41. Actor Javicia Leslie is 36. Actor Jake Short is 26. Actor Sean Giambrone is 24. Actor Jared Gilmore is 23.