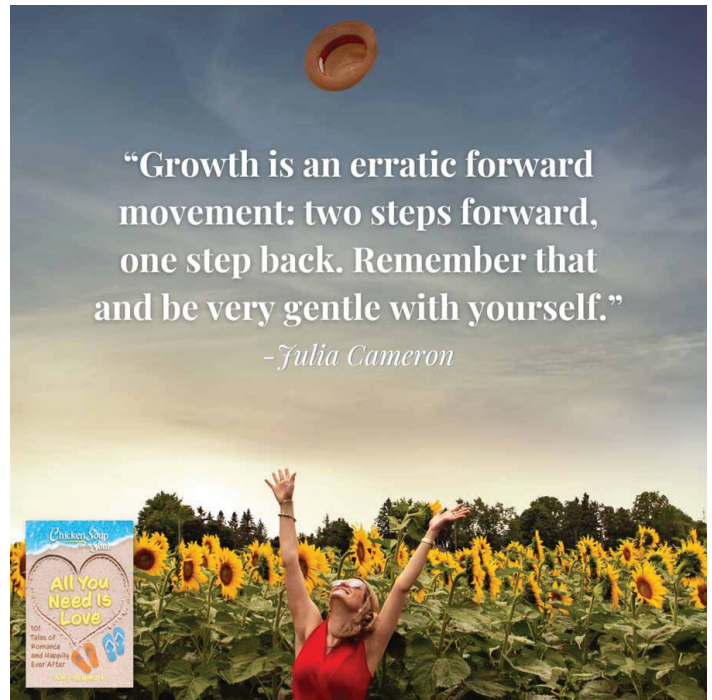


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Groton Community Calendar

Monday, June 5

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, boiled potatoes, mixed vegetables, pineapple tidbits, whole wheat bread.

The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., community center
Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Jr. Teener hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10BB R/W hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U8BB Blue hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10SB at Doland, 7 p.m. (1)

State Golf at Rapid City

Tuesday, June 6

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff, noodles, squash, cookie, apple sauce.

Olive Grove: Ladies League, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

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

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., community center
Legion hosts W.I.N., 5 p.m. (1)

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

Jr. Legion hosts W.I.N., 7 p.m. (1)

U12BB at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)

U10BB R/B at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)

U8BB R/B hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (2)

State Golf at Rapid City

Wednesday, June 7

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, scalloped potatoes, creamed peas, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Olive Grove: Men's League

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Campfire Night, 7 p.m.

Groton Chamber Meeting, noon, at city hall

Jr. Teener hosts Clark, 6 p.m. (2)

U12BB hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

U10BB B/W vs. Borge at Aberdeen North Complex, 5:30 p.m. (2)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton City



RED ALERT

**Odd/Even watering restrictions begin June 8th.
No Outdoor watering whatsoever from noon to 6 p.m. daily**

Water restrictions are still in place until June 8th. The city is currently attempting to fill the reservoir, but WEB water can barely keep up keeping the tower full with the city-wide usage. Fines will be imposed for those violating the water restrictions that have been in place since the middle of May. Filling of the reservoir started at 5:30 Saturday morning. Please conserve water for the next few days and absolutely no outdoor watering with sprinklers or irrigation systems. Watering your garden or flowers with a watering can or garden hose is acceptable.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

City Ordinance on Water Restrictions

8-4-12 Water - Restrictions. The city may limit or prohibit temporarily the use of water from the city distribution system for any purpose, except domestic purposes within the dwellings of consumers or in business establishments, during emergencies, in the event of plant breakdown, prolonged drought or shortage of water supply for any reason in order to maintain maximum fire protection efficiency. The Mayor shall authorize the imposition of these restrictions. The city will attempt to notify affected utility customers if time permits of any such limitation. Any person violating the terms of such prohibition or restriction after such notice shall upon conviction thereof be subject to the penalties provided in this ordinance (11- 1-1). Water service to the premises involved may be discontinued entirely during emergency.

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The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

ruled out a presidential run for 2024, telling CBS' Face the Nation that "everything's on the table and nothing off the table."

Chuck Todd announced Sunday he was stepping down as host of NBC's Meet the Press. He joined the program as moderator in 2014. Kristen Welker will replace him as moderator.

The body of a man that had been missing since the partial collapse of a building in Davenport, Iowa, has been recovered, a city official confirmed on Sunday. Two others remain missing.

A French Open doubles match ended in controversy after No.16 seeds Miyu Kato and Aldila Sutjiadi were disqualified after a ball girl was hit by a ball.

Joran van der Sloot, the prime suspect in the unsolved 2005 disappearance of Natalee Holloway, will likely be extradited to the United States Tuesday, a source told ABC News.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia has claimed it has defeated a major Ukrainian offensive at five points within the Donetsk region, killing 250 troops and denting Kyiv's counteroffensive plans. Ukraine has not commented on the claims citing security reasons, but accused Russia of "spreading lies."

TALKING POINTS

"Woke is an existential threat to our society. To say it's not a big deal, that just shows you don't understand what a lot of these issues are right now." Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis hitting back at Donald Trump after the former president said he doesn't like the term 'woke.'

"I have been very heartened as I have been doing this trip around the world, getting to meet world leaders, in seeing the thoughtfulness, the focus, and the urgency on figuring out how we mitigate these very huge risks. The energy on making use of the technology and its positive benefits is fantastic to see, and I am sure Israel will play a huge role," Open AI CEO Sam Altman on Israel's role in reducing risks from AI.

"Make or miss shots, we're going to be who we are because we're not worried about anybody else. That's how it's been all year long, and that's not going to change. So that's what I think it is. I think it's the 'I don't give a damn' factor," Miami Heat Forward Jimmy Butler said after his team won Game 2 of the NBA Finals against the Denver Nuggets.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference kicks off today at its Cupertino, California, campus. The tech giant is widely expected to introduce a "mixed reality" headset that offers both virtual reality and augmented reality, which will be its biggest hardware launch since the Apple Watch in 2015.

Fighter jets caused a deafening sonic boom over Washington, D.C., on Sunday as they raced to intercept an unresponsive light aircraft that violated airspace regulations. The plane later crashed in Virginia, leaving no survivors.

Footage has emerged showing a Chinese warship almost colliding with a U.S. Navy destroyer in the Taiwan Straits as tensions continue to strain between Washington and Beijing.

Democratic West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, known for frequently voting along Republican party lines, has not

Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser Nearly Erases 5-Run Deficit in Loss to Groton Legion Post 39

Groton Post #39 won the Milbank Tournament on Sunday with a 5-4 win over Redfield in the championship game. Despite seeing its five-run lead whittled down by the end, Groton Legion Post 39 still held off Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser for a 5-4 victory on Sunday. Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser scored four runs in the failed comeback on a single by Keaton Rohfls in the fifth, a single by Rohfls in the sixth, a single by Kevin Weller in the seventh, and a sacrifice fly by Camden Osborn in the seventh.

Groton Legion Post 39 got things moving in the first inning. Tate Larson drew a walk, scoring one run. Korbin Kucker got the win for Groton Legion Post 39. The pitcher allowed three hits and one run over four innings, striking out three. Ryan Groeblinghoff threw three innings in relief out of the bullpen. Groeblinghoff recorded the last nine outs to earn the save for Groton Legion Post 39.

Rohfls took the loss for Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser. The righty.

Cole Simon led Groton Legion Post 39 with three hits in four at bats. Groton Legion Post 39 was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Cade Larson made the most plays with seven.

Rohfls went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser in hits. Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser didn't commit a single error in the field. Eli Morrissette had seven chances in the field, the most on the team.

Morris Throws Shutout as Groton Locke Electric Defeats Redfield DQ

Alex Morris shut down Redfield DQ, throwing a complete game shutout and leading Groton Locke Electric to a 10-0 victory on Monday

Groton Locke Electric fired up the offense in the first inning, when Dalton Locke's sac fly scored one run for Groton Locke Electric.

Groton Locke Electric put up four runs in the sixth inning. Morris, Locke, Chandler Larson, and Conner Thaler all contributed in the big inning with RBIs.

A single by Simon Bower in the third inning was a positive for Redfield DQ.

Morris earned the victory on the mound for Groton Locke Electric. The pitcher allowed four hits and zero runs over eight innings, striking out nine.

Kole DeSpieglee took the loss for Redfield DQ. DeSpieglee went five innings, allowing six runs on seven hits and striking out one.

Groton Locke Electric scattered ten hits in the game. Morris, Dylan Frey, and Spencer Knecht each collected multiple hits for Groton Locke Electric. Morris went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Locke Electric in hits. Groton Locke Electric didn't commit a single error in the field. Wyatt Locke had nine chances in the field, the most on the team.

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Groton Legion Post 39 **5 - 4** Redfield Post 92, Clay Kiser

📍 Away 📅 Sunday June 04, 2023

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	5	6	0
RDFL	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	8	0

BATTING

Groton Legion Post	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (RF)	3	1	0	0	1	1
C Simon (CF)	4	2	3	0	0	1
B Althoff (1B)	2	1	1	0	1	0
T Larson (3B)	3	1	1	1	1	2
R Groeblichhoff (...)	2	0	0	2	0	0
C Larson (C)	2	0	0	1	0	0
C Dunker (LF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
K Kucker (P, SS)	3	0	1	0	0	2
B Imrie (2B)	3	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	25	5	6	4	3	7

TB: C Simon 3, B Althoff, K Kucker, T Larson, **SF:** C Larson, **HBP:** B Althoff, R Groeblichhoff, **SB:** C Simon, **LOB:** 5

PITCHING

Groton Legio	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Kucker	4.0	3	1	1	7	3	0
R Groeblich...	3.0	5	3	2	2	4	0
Totals	7.0	8	4	3	9	7	0

W: K Kucker, **P-S:** K Kucker 94-46, R Groeblichhoff 57-37, **WP:** K Kucker, R Groeblichhoff, **BF:** K Kucker 22, R Groeblichhoff 16

Redfield Post 92, C	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Osborn (CF)	4	1	1	1	0	0
O Osborn (2B)	4	1	0	0	1	1
P Osborn (SS)	1	0	1	0	3	0
K Rohfls (P, LF)	3	0	2	2	1	1
N Gall (LF, P)	4	0	1	0	0	0
E Komraus (RF)	2	1	1	0	2	0
S Siebrecht (1B)	4	0	0	0	0	3
K Weller (3B)	2	1	1	1	2	1
E Morrissette (C)	3	0	0	0	0	1
K Hurd	1	0	1	0	0	0
Totals	28	4	8	4	9	7

2B: N Gall, **TB:** K Rohfls 2, K Weller, K Hurd, N Gall 2, C Osborn, P Osborn, E Komraus, **SF:** C Osborn, **SB:** C Osborn, P Osborn 3, O Osborn, E Komraus, **LOB:** 13

Redfield Post	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Rohfls	0.0	1	3	3	3	0	0
N Gall	7.0	5	2	2	0	7	0
Totals	7.0	6	5	5	3	7	0

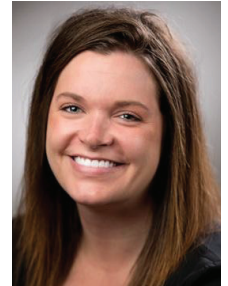
L: K Rohfls, **P-S:** K Rohfls 17-3, N Gall 82-57, **WP:** N Gall 2, **HBP:** K Rohfls, N Gall, **BF:** K Rohfls 5, N Gall 26

"How Are You? Does Midwestern Politeness Get In The Way?"

By Nikki Eining CSW-PIP, QMHP



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Nikki Eining CSW-PIP, QMHP

Midwest Culture is unique. We "America's Heartlanders" are known for our outdoor hobbies, farming, winter survival strategies, hard work and country living. We are also known for our politeness. It is at times an autopilot response to hold a door open, greet another with a smile, drop off treats for a neighbor or when running into someone familiar ask, "how are you?" How often have we asked, "how are you" and heard the answer, "good" or "fine" or even answered this question ourselves this way.

Unfortunately, "Midwestern Polite" has also created a belief that if we truly answer the question, "how are you" with honesty, we are burdening others. For this reason, we often answer "good" or "fine" when maybe in fact, we are not. This is called passive communication. Passive Communication is when we do not express our feelings or needs, do not believe our feelings or needs matter equally to others, or often we find ourselves apologizing for things. Overtime this passive communication style often leads to misunderstanding, anger or even resentment.

This is where it is vital for us to understand emotional and social wellness skills. To learn that every single one of us as humans has feelings and that this is normal. The more we ignore these feelings the more we impact our overall health.

Having the skills to be able to truly answer the question, how are you, requires emotional wellness skills. The skills of recognizing one's feelings, understanding those feelings, labeling them, expressing them and regulating them. This skill, known as the "RULER" skill is an acronym for the five evidence-based skills of emotional intelligence (recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating) founded by psychologist Marc Brackett out of Yale University. This skill is not a skill we are born with. This skill provides a sense of understanding and control of what is going on within us. Emotional wellness skills aid in our overall ability to manage stress, communicate effectively and manage conflict which supports our overall physical wellness.

So, the next time a kind Midwesterner asks, "How Are You?" I encourage you to be honest. I encourage you to use the skills of checking in to recognize how you really are feeling, labeling it and expressing it to that person asking. The other wonderful value we South Dakotans have is showing up for one another. We are not a burden. We are wonderful Midwestern neighbors who show up for each other. Let's continue to work on defining and modeling that "Midwest Nice" as honest and authentic support.

Nikki Eining CSW-PIP, QMHP Outpatient Clinical Mental Health Therapist Avera Medical Group Behavioral Health Brookings Clinic in Brookings, SD. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show based on science, built on trust for 21 seasons, streaming live on Facebook and SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

Weekly Vikings Recap - Future Trade/Release of Dalvin Cook

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

With the ever-important June 1st having passed, the rumors of the Minnesota Vikings moving on from Dalvin Cook are going to start to heat up here. June 1st is an important date in the NFL because after that date teams can now trade or release players without having that player's entire remaining dead cap money hit the team's salary cap that season. In other words, a post-June 1st move of a player allows a team to spread out that player's dead cap money over the next two seasons.

For a team like the Vikings who have little salary cap space and have been rumored to want to move on from Dalvin Cook, a move seems likely to occur any day now with June 1st having passed. The question now becomes whether the Vikings will trade or release Dalvin.

It appears that the only way the Vikings will want to move on from Dalvin is through a trade. If the Vikings were willing to release him, they could have done so earlier this year and did what is called a "post-June 1st designation." This means that the Vikings could have released Cook before June 1st, but that would be treated as occurring after June 1st so the team could have received the cap benefits.

The two teams that have been rumored to be interested in Cook are the Buffalo Bills and the Miami Dolphins. Both teams would make sense for Cook as he has connections to both of them. The Bills would give Dalvin the chance to play with his younger brother, James Cook, whom the Bills drafted in the second round of last year's draft. And, the Dolphins would give Dalvin the chance to play in his hometown of Miami.

Both the Bills and Dolphins are in that position a lot of high-powered offenses find themselves in, thinking they are one true workhorse running back from becoming the best offense in the NFL. The issue for both those teams is that a lot of times, taking a risk on an older, declining running back does not pay off for your offense in the long run.

For the Vikings, the eventual release or trade of Dalvin means several things. First, it means that Alexander Mattison will officially become the true number-one running back in Minnesota. Although Mattison will be entering his fifth season in the NFL, which is old in running back years, he does not have a lot of miles on him. Mattison has a career total of only 404 carries, whereas Dalvin has three times that with 1,282 carries. That difference in career carries is a big reason why the Vikings decided to re-sign Mattison this offseason and will eventually move on from Dalvin Cook.

The other big thing that will come out of Dalvin's eventual trade or release is that it will open the door to a historic Justin Jefferson extension this summer. Jefferson, who has yet to participate in any of the Vikings' offseason activities, is set to make the most money ever for a wide receiver. His extension could completely flip the wide receiver market on its head.

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Tigers Give Back Day

by Dorene Nelson

On the afternoon of Tuesday, May 23, all of the middle and high school Groton Area students participated in a Tigers Give Back Day. These students are very grateful for their school and their various communities where they live. To show their appreciation, they did several different kinds of projects.

The students were divided into groups and performed a variety of community service projects in the Groton Area School District.

Projects consisted of picking up garbage around the towns of Groton, Columbia, and Andover. Other groups helped with smaller projects at local churches and cleaned at the Ferney and Groton Cemeteries.

Students also volunteered at Avantara planting flowers with the residents, while another group helped at Sun Dial Nursing Home in Bristol. They helped with some spring cleaning, washing windows, and cleaning out flower beds.

When the students finished their projects, they gathered back at the school for an ice cream treat to end the day.

The students were happy to have a chance to say "thank you" for all of the privileges they receive, for the excellent education and extracurricular activities that are available to them here in the Groton Area School System and for the community support they receive throughout the year.

The various businesses, individuals, and other recipients of their generous "giving back" are very grateful for the students' hard work and hope for a repeat next spring!



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Weber Landscaping Greenhouse
Final Day Monday, June 5th

All Annuals 30% off

Open 10-6

Closing for the Season Today!



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

More states, including SD, seek postpartum Medicaid coverage beyond two months

BY: MATT VOLZ - JUNE 4, 2023 7:00 AM

At least eight states this year — including South Dakota — have decided to seek federal approval to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage, leaving just a handful that have opted not to guarantee at least a year of health care for women during that critical period after pregnancy.

The new states on the list include Montana, where lawmakers in the recently ended legislative session voted for a state budget that contains \$6.2 million in state and federal funds over the next two years to extend continuous postpartum eligibility from 60 days to 12 months after pregnancy. That would ensure coverage for between 1,000 and 2,000 additional parents in the state each year, according to federal and state estimates.

Maggie Clark, the program director for Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families, has been tracking statehouse bills to expand postpartum coverage under Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for low-income people. What's driving the wave is the recognition by policymakers of all political affiliations that the U.S. is in a maternal health crisis, she said. Maternal mortality rates increased during the pandemic, particularly among non-Hispanic Black women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Whether you're conservative, liberal, or somewhere in between, people are really supportive of maternal health and helping moms and babies get a good start," Clark said.

More than 4 in 10 births in the U.S. are covered under Medicaid. But the default postpartum coverage period is 60 days.

Momentum building

State by state, momentum has been building to ensure that new mothers' medical care isn't interrupted by loss of health care coverage. The American Rescue Plan Act made it easier for states to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage by allowing them to simply amend their Medicaid plans instead of applying for a full waiver from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Besides Montana, legislators in Alaska, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming passed measures this year to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to a year. States must submit amendments to their Medicaid plans to federal officials for approval. South Dakota officials submitted a proposed amendment to the state's Medicaid plan in March.

That amendment is pending with CMS, which has approved 12-month postpartum coverage plans for 33 states and Washington, D.C., as of May 30. New York and Vermont also have applications pending, and the states with newly passed measures are expected to submit theirs soon. It typically takes a couple of months for CMS to approve state Medicaid plan amendments to extend postpartum coverage, Clark said.

Lawmakers in Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin are considering measures to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to 12 months.

Three other states considered but failed to pass legislation this year that would have authorized 12 months of postpartum Medicaid coverage: Idaho; Iowa; and Arkansas, which has the nation's highest reported maternal mortality rate, according to the CDC.

Support in statehouses for such measures has been mostly bipartisan at a time of polarizing debate over

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reproductive health policy since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade last year.

Abortion has crept into the debate in some instances. The Texas House, for example, passed a 12-month postpartum coverage bill in April, only to see the measure amended in the state Senate to bar coverage for women after an abortion. After negotiations, the bill that passed said, "Medicaid coverage is extended for mothers whose pregnancies end in the delivery of the child or end in the natural loss of the child," leading some to worry that federal officials won't approve the amendment to the state plan.

The bill is headed to Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who has said he supports the measure.

Benefits of coverage

Extended postpartum coverage allows new parents to establish a relationship with their health provider and manage their care and chronic illnesses without a disruption in insurance coverage. Continuous care is particularly important in the first year after birth, when patients face an increased risk of post-pregnancy complications and a significant number of maternal deaths occur from suicide and substance use, said Annie Glover, a senior research scientist at the University of Montana's Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities.

"The year that follows the delivery is a very vulnerable year for the pregnant person," Glover said. "They have a new infant in their family, and this is a time when they probably need health care more than ever."

It's particularly important to provide access to mental health and substance use treatment, said Stephanie Morton, the director of programs and impact for the nonprofit Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies: the Montana Coalition. "We know that suicide and overdose combined are a leading cause of death for new mothers," she said.

Montana's Republican governor, Greg Gianforte, included the postpartum coverage extension in his original budget proposal last fall. But a moment of confusion occurred on May 22 when Gianforte vetoed a bill that would have directed how certain provisions of the state budget are implemented, including the postpartum coverage extension. State health officials and the bill's sponsor, Republican Rep. Bob Keenan, said the veto does not affect the ability of the state to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage.

"Supporting new mothers and infants by extending Medicaid coverage for up to 12 months postpartum was a top priority for the governor and his administration this session," said state Department of Public Health and Human Services Director Charlie Brereton in an emailed statement. "We're thankful for the Legislature's support."

States were not allowed to drop most beneficiaries from their programs during the covid-19 pandemic, so parents losing Medicaid coverage after the birth of a child wasn't an issue. But states are reviewing their Medicaid rolls now that the public health emergency has ended. The Biden administration has estimated that 15 million people could lose Medicaid as a result.

That could include some people who would qualify for postpartum coverage in states whose approval of the extension is pending. But state agencies have a lot of discretion in how they redetermine Medicaid enrollment, and Clark said she expects they will do what they can to make sure new parents don't lose coverage as part of what's being called the Medicaid unwinding.

"We hope the state agencies would honor the wishes of the legislature," she said.

Matt Volz, Mountain States Editor, coordinates KFF Health News coverage and partnerships in Montana and Colorado from his base in Helena, Montana. He joined KFF Health News in July 2020 after spending 18 years as a correspondent and editor for The Associated Press in Montana, New York, Alaska, and Mississippi. He is a former Peace Corps volunteer and worked for a humanitarian aid organization in Kosovo after NATO's intervention in the Balkans in 1999. He is a graduate of the University of Richmond and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: With summer bearing down on us, are there any environmentally friendly air conditioners out there? --Fred Johansen, Grand Rapids, MI

Air conditioners are essential for keeping us cool and comfortable during hot summer months, but their environmental impact cannot be ignored. Traditional air conditioning units consume significant amounts of energy and rely heavily on refrigerants that contribute to global warming. However, the good news is that there are several environmentally friendly air conditioning options available today.

One notable advancement is the development of energy-efficient air conditioners. These units are designed to use less electricity, reducing their carbon footprint and lowering energy bills. Energy Star certified air conditioners are a reliable option to consider. They meet strict energy efficiency standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and can help reduce energy consumption by up to 15 percent. By choosing an Energy Star certified model, consumers can make a positive impact on both the environment and their wallets.

Another eco-friendly air conditioning solution gaining popularity is the use of evaporative coolers, also known as swamp coolers. Unlike conventional air conditioners, which use refrigerants and compressors to cool the air, evaporative coolers work by passing air over water-soaked pads, causing evaporation and cooling the air. These units consume significantly less energy than traditional air conditioners and are a suitable option for dry climates. However, they may not be as effective in areas with high humidity.

In recent years, researchers and engineers have been exploring more sustainable alternatives to refrigerants used in air conditioners. One such alternative is hydrofluoroolefin (HFO) refrigerants, which have a much lower global warming potential compared to hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) refrigerants commonly used today. HFOs are less harmful to the ozone layer and have a significantly lower impact on global warming. Some manufacturers have already started producing air conditioners that use HFO refrigerants, offering a greener cooling solution.

Additionally, there is a growing trend towards the use of geothermal heat pumps for cooling purposes. These systems utilize the constant temperature of the earth to provide cooling, rather than relying on electricity to generate cool air. Geothermal heat pumps are highly efficient and can save up to 30-60 percent on energy costs compared to traditional air conditioners. They also have a longer lifespan and require less maintenance. While the initial installation costs may be higher, the long-term environmental and financial benefits make them a viable option for those looking to minimize their ecological impact.

Finally, it is essential to consider sustainable design and proper maintenance practices when using air conditioners. Optimizing insulation, reducing air leaks, and shading windows can help reduce the load on air conditioning systems. Regular maintenance, such as cleaning filters and ensuring proper airflow, ensures that the unit operates at maximum efficiency.

While there is no one-size-fits-all environmentally friendly air conditioner, consumers now have several options to choose from. Energy-efficient models, evaporative coolers, HFO refrigerants, and geothermal heat pumps are all promising alternatives that can help reduce the ecological footprint of cooling our homes and buildings. By making informed choices and adopting sustainable practices, we can stay cool without compromising the health of our planet.

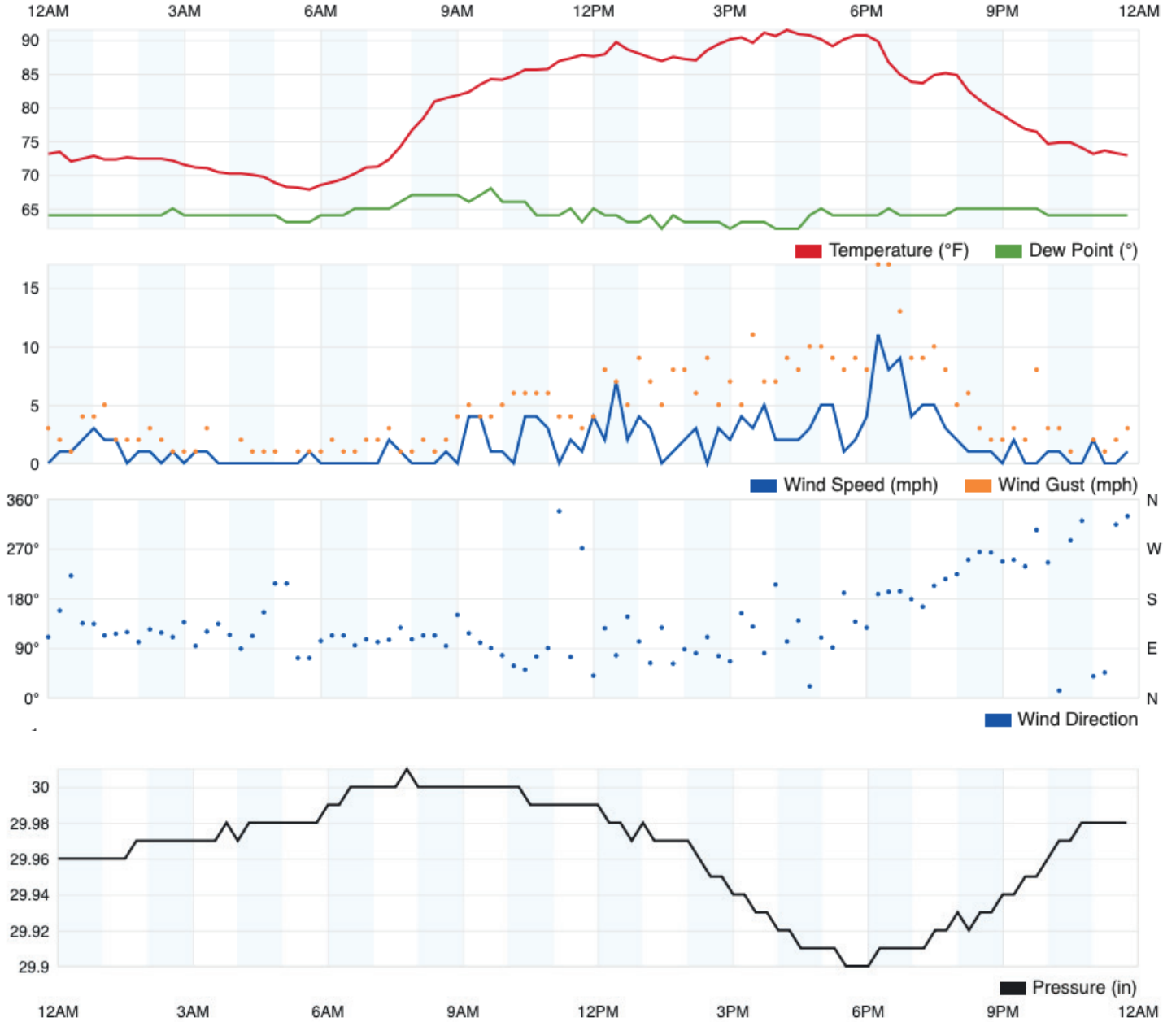
In the face of climate change and growing energy demands, it is encouraging to see advancements in air conditioning technology that prioritize energy efficiency and environmental responsibility. As consumers, we have the power to support and demand these eco-friendly solutions, driving the transition towards a greener future.

Remember, staying cool doesn't have to mean heating up the planet!

Groton Daily Independent






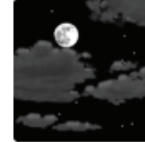

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Chance Showers
High: 91 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 93 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 90 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 86 °F



'Heat of the Afternoon' Storms Again Today

June 5, 2023
3:00 AM

...And Tuesday... ...And Wednesday...

Monday:
Highs Around 90
Light South Winds

Tuesday:
Highs Around 90
Light South Winds

Wednesday:
Highs Around 90
Light Southeast Winds



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Isolated to scattered heat of the afternoon storms will continue to dominate the forecast through the course of the work week. Temperatures will also continue to run about the same. Looks like a change in the pattern for the weekend with closer to average temperatures.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 92 °F at 4:15 PM

Low Temp: 68 °F at 5:43 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 6:20 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 34 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 2021

Record Low: 37 in 1907

Average High: 77

Average Low: 52

Average Precip in June.: 0.55

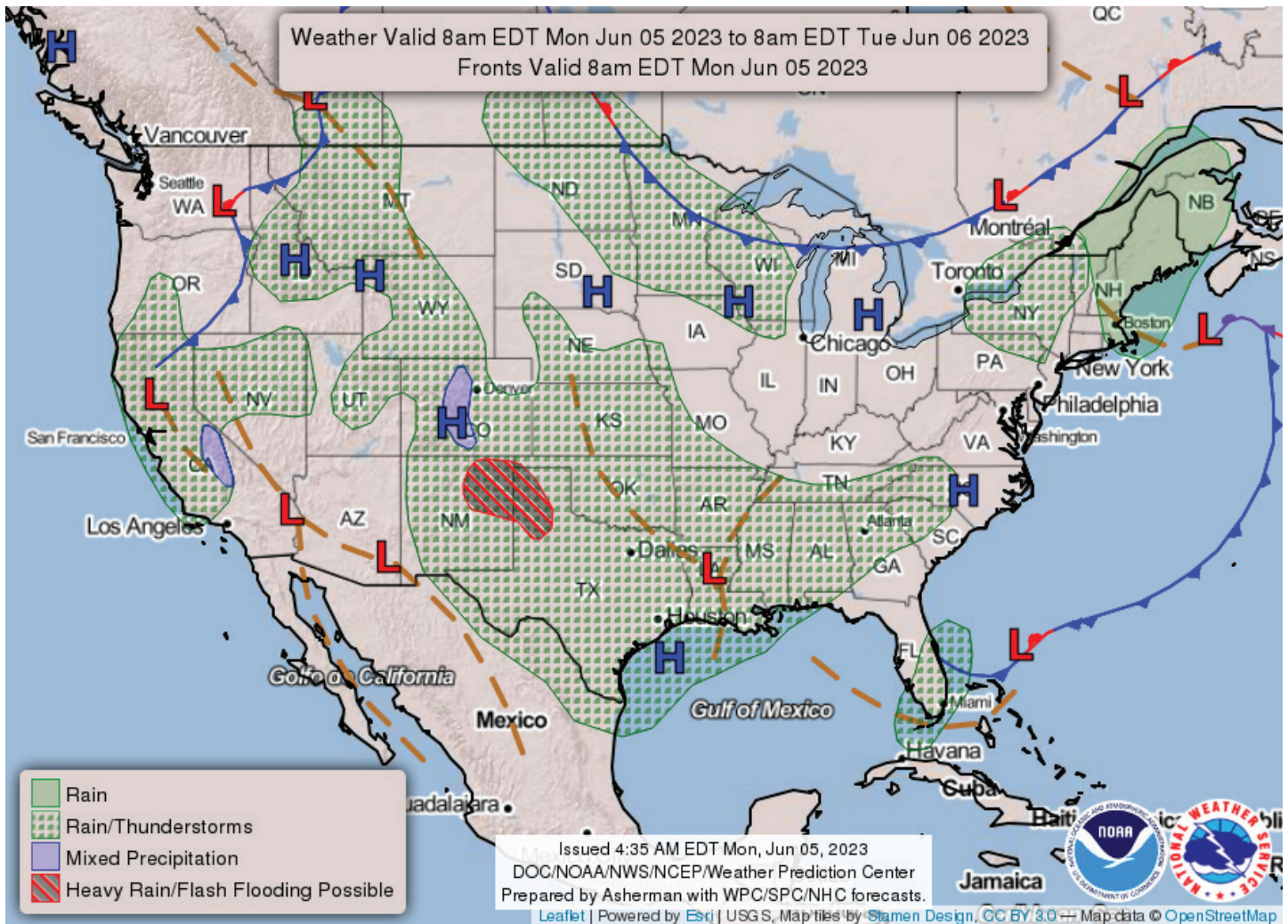
Precip to date in June.: 0.04

Average Precip to date: 7.80

Precip Year to Date: 7.95

Sunset Tonight: 9:18:22 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43:05 AM



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Today in Weather History

June 5, 1925: A severe thunderstorm that probably produced multiple numbers of small tornadoes moved northwest from Presho, in Jones County. There were large gaps of about 15 miles at times between tornadoes. One of these tornadoes passed 10 miles north of Ree Heights and ended north of Miller. Half dozen barns were destroyed west and north of Ree Heights. The strongest of the tornadoes was estimated as having F2 strength. Also on this date, a tornado moved from the southern edge of Fargo, North Dakota and on into Moorhead Minnesota. There were no injuries reported from this storm.

June 5, 1996: Hail, between a golf ball and tennis ball size, broke many windshields and dented vehicles in Watertown. Some houses in Watertown had their windows broken out because of the large hail. Golf ball sized hail also covered most of the ground at the Watertown Airport.

June 5, 1999: Winds gusting to 74 mph knocked down several trees throughout Groton. One tree took out a major transmission line and ripped the electrical service line off of a house. Power was out for parts of Groton for several hours. The high winds shattered the windows at a store on Main Street and tore a standing board on a sign loose which damaged five new vehicles at a dealership in Groton. The high winds also destroyed a small service building and the surrounding fence at the main juncture of natural gas pipelines at Groton. Winds to 70 mph brought several trees and many large tree branches down in Henry. Winds gusting to 80 mph snapped off several trees, blew a garage down, and brought power lines down in Hazel. In Watertown winds gusted to over 70 mph, blowing a portion of a roof off a house and destroyed the attached garage on another house. Near Watertown, a pole barn was destroyed, a hay bale was blown into a basement window of a house, and part of their deck was torn away. Near Florence, winds up to 80 mph tipped over and damaged a small shed, destroyed another storage shed, and also completely demolished a three stall garage.

June 5, 2008: Very heavy rains of 3 to 7 inches caused extensive flooding throughout Dewey County. Many roads, bridges, dams, culverts, along with some buildings were damaged or destroyed by the flooding. One man, west of Promise, used a boat to get back and forth from his ranch. A federal disaster declaration was issued for Dewey County and the Cheyenne River Reservation.

1859 - Frost was reported from Iowa to New England. The temperature dipped to 25 degrees in New York State, and up to two inches of snow blanketed Ohio. The cold and snow damaged the wheat crop. (David Ludlum)

1908 - Helena MT was deluged with 3.67 inches of rain to establish their all-time 24 hour rainfall record. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1916 - A tornado struck the town of Warren AR killing 83 persons. There were 125 deaths that day in a tornado outbreak across Missouri and Arkansas. (David Ludlum)

1917 - Residents near Topeka KS reported disk-shaped hailstones six to ten inches in diameter, and two to three inches thick. The hailstorm was accompanied by a tornado. (The Weather Channel)

1976: When water began leaking from Idaho's new Teton Dam, there seemed to be no cause for alarm. On this date, warnings were frantic that the dam was about to break. As workers tried to shore up the crumbling dam, it crumbled shortly after 11 AM, sending 180 billion gallons of water pouring through Teton Canyon. 11 people lost their lives, but the toll would have been much higher if the dam had failed at night and residents had been asleep.

1987 - International Falls, MN, dipped to a record low reading of 34 degrees during the morning. Williston, ND, and Glasgow, MT, reported record warm afternoon highs of 94 degrees. Major flooding was reported along the Guadalupe River in South Texas, with the water level at Cuero reaching 18 feet above flood stage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Twenty cities in the south central and eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Asheville NC with a reading of 40 degrees. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 108 degrees at Glasgow MT was a record for June. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Southern Atlantic Coast during the day and into the night. Four tornadoes were reported, and there were 87 reports of large hail and damaging winds. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

PREPARING FOR TEMPTATION

It was a very hot summer day. All the boys in the neighborhood decided to go swimming but there was no adult to go with them. Recognizing the danger that might occur, Johnny's mother forbade him to go with them. Later that day, he came home with wet hair.

"What happened?" asked his mother.

"I fell in the pond," came his reply.

"Well, why aren't your clothes wet?" she asked.

"I had a feeling I was going to fall in," he explained, "so I took them off."

The world has been, is, and always will be full of temptations and pressure to sin. So, Paul gave us a warning and an escape route. First, he said that we would be tempted, and then second, that God would always provide a way for us to escape temptation and to be victorious over sin. But we must do our part if we expect Him to do His. We must first prepare ourselves with His Word, and to recognize and avoid people, places and things that will lead us to sin. Then, if we are tempted, look to Him for strength to resist the temptation before we are overpowered and fall into sin.

Prayer: Grant us, Father, the courage to avoid situations that tempt us to sin. Empower us to ask for Your strength and power to turn from sin and live for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. 1 Corinthians 10:13



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:
06.02.23

3 16 19 36 60 25

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$218,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 17
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.23

9 14 21 22 48 2

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$3,470,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 17 Mins 55
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.04.23

13 15 20 35 41 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 47 Mins 55
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.23

7 8 9 14 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$85,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 17
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.23

8 26 34 58 69 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 16 Mins 55
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.03.23

15 45 64 67 68 18

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$269,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 16 Mins 55
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

'I am haunted by it': Survivors of deadly train crash in India recount trauma

By KRUTIKA PATHI and RISHI LEKHI Associated Press

BALASORE, India (AP) — Gura Pallay was watching another train pass by the one he was sitting in when he heard sudden, loud screeching. Before he could make sense of what was happening, he was thrown out of the train.

Pallay, 24, landed next to the tracks along with metal wreckage of the train he'd been riding in, and instantly lost consciousness. The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes was the twisted remains of train on the tracks.

His train had derailed after colliding with a stopped freight train shortly after leaving Balasore, a coastal city about 200 kilometers (125 miles) north of the state capital. Another passenger train, the one he had seen pass by moments earlier, then hit the derailed carriages.

"I saw it with my own eyes, but I still can't describe what I saw. I am haunted by it," he said Sunday at a hospital, where he lay on a stretcher with a broken leg and dark wounds on his face and arms.

Pallay is a laborer, like most of the people onboard the two passenger trains that crashed Friday in the eastern state of Odisha, killing 275 people and injuring hundreds. He was traveling to Chennai city in southern India to take up a job in a paper mill factory when the Coromandel Express crashed with a goods freight train, knocking it off track, and was then hit by a second train coming from the opposite direction on a parallel track.

"I never imagined something like this could happen, but I guess it was our fate," he said.

Investigators said Sunday that a signaling failure might have caused the three-train crash, one of the worst rail disasters in the country's history. Authorities recommended that India's Central Bureau of Investigation, which probes major criminal cases, open an investigation into the crash.

"We can't bring back those we have lost, but the government is with the families in their grief. Whosoever is found guilty will be punished severely," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Saturday while visiting the site of the accident.

The crash occurred as Modi's government is focusing on the modernization of India's colonial-era railroad network.

Several survivors of the crash said they were still struggling to comprehend the disaster.

"Everything happened so quickly," said Subhashish Patra, a student who was traveling with his family from Balasore to the state capital, Bhubaneswar, on the Coromandel Express. He was planning to take his mother to a hospital in Bhubaneswar to seek treatment for a hand injury, and then to travel to Puri, home to one of Odisha's most important temples.

The first thing Patra could make sense of after the crash was the sound of children crying. People were screaming for help in the dark, and around him lay corpses.

"There were dead bodies all around me," he said.

Patra said the rail carriage he was in landed with the door facing up. He climbed onto a pile of wreckage inside the train and managed to pull himself out.

At the hospital on Sunday, Patra's head was bandaged in gauze as he waited for an MRI scan. His head was throbbing with pain, he said, but he was grateful that he and his entire family had survived.

Others weren't so lucky. On Monday, many people were still lined up outside a hospital in the state capital waiting to identify and collect the bodies of relatives.

Alaudin, who goes by one name, travelled almost 200 kilometers (124.3 miles) Saturday from West Bengal state to the crash site in Balasore to look for his brother, who was on one of the trains.

He learned about the crash from television. When he tried to call his brother's mobile phone to check on him, no one answered.

Worried, he and his sister-in-law rushed to the site of the crash afterwards and spent all of Saturday looking for him in various hospitals, hoping he would be alive. But his brother's whereabouts remained unknown as the death toll continued to rise.

Distraught, they finally made their way to the mortuary, where Alaudin's brother body was wrapped in a black plastic bag and placed on top of blocks of melting ice.

"I lost my brother, she lost her husband," Alaudin said, pointing to his sister-in-law. "And his two boys have lost a father."

His brother was 36 years old, Alaudin said.

As India grieves train crash that killed 275 people, relatives still wait for bodies of loved ones

By KRUTIKA PATHI, RISHI LEKHI and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

BHUBANESWAR, India (AP) — Families of the victims of India's deadliest train crash in decades filled a hospital in Bhubaneswar city on Monday to identify and collect bodies of relatives, as railway officials recommended the country's premier criminal investigating agency to probe the crash that killed 275 people.

Distraught relatives of passengers killed in the crash Friday lined up outside the eastern city's All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Meanwhile, survivors being treated in hospitals said they were still trying to make sense of the horrific disaster.

Outside the hospital, two large screens cycled through photos of the victims, their faces so bloodied and charred that they were hardly recognizable.

Each body had a number assigned to it, and relatives stood near the screen and watched as the photos changed, looking out for details like clothing for clues.

Many of them said they had spent days on desperate journeys from neighboring states, travelling in multiple trains, buses or rented cars to identify and claim bodies, a process that stretched into a third day due to the gruesome nature of the injuries.

So far only 45 bodies have been identified, and 33 have been handed over to relatives, said Mayur Sooryavanshi, an administrator who was overseeing the identification process at the hospital in the capital of Odisha state, about 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of the site of the train crash in Balasore.

Upendra Ram began searching for his son, Retul Ram, Sunday, after traveling some 850 kilometers (520 miles) from neighboring Bihar state. The one-day journey in a rented car was exhausting for Ram, who said Retul, 17, had been on his way to Chennai to find work.

After spending hours looking at photographs of the dead, Ram identified his son around noon Monday.

"I just want to take the dead body and go back home. He was a very good son," said Ram, adding that Retul had dropped out of school and wanted to earn money for the family.

"My wife and daughter can't stop crying at home. They are asking me to bring the body back quickly," he said, wiping tears from his eyes with a red scarf he had tied around his head.

Friday's deadly crash was one of the worst rail disasters in India's history. Investigators said that a signaling failure might have been the cause of the disaster, in which a passenger train hit a freight train, derailing on the tracks before being hit by another passenger train coming in the opposite direction on a parallel track.

The collision involved two passenger trains, the Coromandel Express traveling from Howrah in West Bengal state to Chennai in Tamil Nadu state, and the Yesvantpur-Howrah Superfast Express traveling from Bengaluru in Karnataka to Howrah, officials said.

Authorities recommended on Sunday that India's Central Bureau of Investigations, which probes major criminal cases in the country, open an investigation into the crash.

After the accident, at least 123 trains scheduled to pass through Odisha were either cancelled or delayed, Indian railways said Sunday. The disruption led air fares to Odisha to spike, prompting India's civil aviation ministry to advise airlines to watch abnormal surges in pricing.

Meanwhile Sunday evening, some train traffic was restored on the tracks where the crash happened,

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after two days of repair work in which hundreds of workers with excavators removed mangled debris of the trains.

The crash in Balasore occurred as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is focusing on the modernization of India's colonial-era railroad network.

The South Asian nation has one of the world's most extensive and complicated railway systems with more than 40,000 miles (64,000 kilometers) of track, 14,000 passenger trains and 8,000 stations.

Spread across the country from the Himalayas in the north to tropical ports in the south, it has been weakened by decades of mismanagement and neglect. Despite efforts to improve safety, several hundred accidents happen every year.

Most train accidents are blamed on human error or outdated signaling equipment.

In August 1995, two trains collided near New Delhi, killing 358 people in one of India's worst-ever train accidents.

In 2016, a passenger train slid off the tracks between the cities of Indore and Patna, killing 146 people. More than 22 million people ride trains across India every day.

—
Saaliq reported from New Delhi

US releases video showing close-call in Taiwan Strait with Chinese destroyer

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The United States military released video Monday of what it called an "unsafe" Chinese maneuver in the Taiwan Strait on the weekend, in which a Chinese navy ship cut sharply across the path of an American destroyer, forcing the U.S. vessel to slow to avoid a collision.

The incident occurred Saturday as the American destroyer USS Chung-Hoon and Canadian frigate HMCS Montreal were conducting a so-called "freedom of navigation" transit of the strait between Taiwan and mainland China.

China claims the democratic self-governing island of Taiwan as part of its own territory, and maintains the strait is part of its exclusive economic zone, while the U.S. and its allies regularly sail through and fly over the passage to emphasize their contention that the waters are international.

During the Saturday transit, the Chinese guided-missile destroyer overtook the Chung-Hoon on its port side, then veered across its bow at a distance of some 150 yards (137 meters), according to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. The American destroyer held its course, but reduced speed to 10 knots "to avoid a collision," the military said.

The video released Monday shows the Chinese ship cutting across the course of the American one, then straightening out to start sailing in a parallel direction.

The Indo-Pacific Command said the actions violated maritime rules of safe passage in international water.

The Chinese ship did not attempt a similar maneuver on the Canadian frigate, which was sailing behind the American destroyer.

"Chung-Hoon and Montreal's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the combined U.S.-Canadian commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the Indo-Pacific Command said. "The U.S. military flies, sails, and operates safely and responsibly anywhere international law allows."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin defended the maneuver, saying it was undertaken "in accordance with the law."

"China's military actions are completely justified, lawful, safe and professional," he told reporters in Beijing. "It is the U.S. that should deeply reflect upon itself and correct the wrongdoings."

The U.S. recently accused China of also performing an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" in the air, saying a Chinese J-16 fighter jet late last month flew directly in front of the nose of a U.S. Air Force reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea.

The close-calls have raised concerns of a possible accident that could lead to an escalation between the

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two countries' militaries at a time when tensions in the region are already high.

The incident in the Taiwan Strait came on a day when both U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu were in Singapore for an annual defense conference.

Li on Sunday suggested that the U.S. and its allies have created the danger with their patrols, and was intent on provoking China.

"The best way is for the countries, especially the naval vessels and fighter jets of countries, not to do closing actions around other countries' territories," he said through an interpreter. "What's the point of going there? In China we always say, 'Mind your own business.'"

Austin had invited Li to talk on the sidelines of the conference; Li refused.

Racist abuse of Vinícius Júnior highlights entrenched problem in soccer

By TALES AZZONI and STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writers

MADRID (AP) — Hanging from a highway bridge in Madrid, an effigy of one of the world's most famous Black soccer players stands as a graphic reminder of the racism that sweeps through European soccer.

In truth, the signs are everywhere.

In Italy, where monkey chants swirled around the stadium in April as a Black player celebrated a goal. In England, where a banana peel thrown from a hostile crowd during a game in north London landed at the feet of a Black player after he scored a penalty. In France, where Black players from the men's national team were targeted with horrific racial abuse online after they lost in last year's World Cup final.

Go outside Europe and you'll find them, too.

In Australia, where there were monkey noises and fascist chanting during last year's Australia Cup final. In South America, where matches in the continent's biggest competition, the Copa Libertadores, have been blighted by monkey chants. In North Africa, where Black players from visiting teams from sub-Saharan Africa have complained of being targets of racist chants by Arab fans.

The manifestation of a deeper societal problem, racism is a decades-old issue in soccer — predominantly in Europe but seen all around the world — that has been amplified by the reach of social media and a growing willingness for people to call it out. And to think that it was only 11 years ago that Sepp Blatter, then president of soccer governing body FIFA, denied there was any racism in the game, saying any abuse should be resolved with a handshake.

The Black player currently subjected to the most vicious, relentless and high-profile racist insults is Vinícius Júnior, a 22-year-old Brazilian who plays for Real Madrid, arguably the most successful soccer team in Europe.

It was around the neck of an effigy of Vinícius that a rope was tied and the figure hung from an overpass near Madrid's training ground in the Spanish capital in January. It was Vinícius who, two weeks ago in perhaps a defining incident for the Spanish game, was reduced to tears during a match after confronting a fan who called him a monkey and made monkey gestures toward him.

It's Vinícius who is emerging as the leading Black voice in the fight against racism, which continues to stain the world's most popular sport.

"I have a purpose in life," he said on Twitter, "and if I have to keep suffering so that future generations won't have to go through these types of situations, I'm ready and prepared."

Vinícius' biggest concern is that Spanish soccer authorities are doing little to stop the abuse, leading to racism being an accepted part of the game in a country where he has played since he was 18.

Indeed, federations around the world have been too slow — in some cases, apparently unwilling — to equip themselves with the powers to sanction teams for the racist behavior of their fans, despite being given the authority by FIFA to do so since 2013.

Fines? Sure. Partial stadium closures? OK. But more stringent punishments, like point deductions or expulsion from competitions? They are typically reserved for matters such as financial mismanagement, not racial abuse of players.

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The result is frustration and a sense of helplessness among Black players and those wanting to protect them. Asked what he expects to happen after the Vinícius incident, Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said: "Nothing. Because it has happened lots of times and nothing happens."

Anti-racism campaigns and slogans are welcomed but increasingly viewed as tokenism, especially when fines handed to clubs or federations for racial abuse committed by fans often are so pitiful.

Take the juxtaposition, in 2012, of European governing body UEFA handing the Spanish soccer federation a \$25,000 fine for fans directing racial abuse at a Black player for Italy during the European Championship with, around the same time, a Denmark player getting fined five times that amount for revealing underpants with the name of a bookmaker on it.

Experts believe the global outrage, widespread reaction and outpouring of support for Vinícius following his latest abuse could mark a turning point in the fight against racism in Spain. It certainly struck a chord in Brazil, where there were protests outside the Spanish Consulate in Sao Paulo, while the Spanish league is now seeking to increase its authority to issue sanctions. Its protocol up to now has been to detect and denounce incidents and pass evidence to courts, where cases are typically shelved.

Jacco van Sterkenburg, a professor of race, inclusion and communication in soccer and the media at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, said explicit racism in stadiums is more accepted and normalized in some parts of Spanish and southern European soccer culture compared to places like England and the Netherlands, where the media, former players and soccer federations have openly addressed the issue.

"When, as a football association, you don't take a firm stance against it and you don't repeat that message time and time again, it will reappear," Van Sterkenburg said in a video call. "You have to repeat the message that this isn't allowed, this isn't accepted."

"When nothing happens, you should still repeat this message. Some clubs have programs in place where they repeat the message, even when nothing happens. It sets the norm, continuously."

Jermaine Scott, an assistant professor of history at Florida Atlantic University, told the AP that while overt racism is no longer a recurring problem in mainstream American sports, institutional racism is very much evident, reflected in the lack of coaches and executives through the sports landscape who are Black, Indigenous or people of color. He sees this same institutional racism in European soccer, too.

For Scott, a player like Vinícius might be at odds with European soccer's values.

"As soccer spread throughout the world, different cultures made the game their own, and instilled different values, like creativity and innovation, and importantly, joy, and some would even say freedom," Scott said.

"So when a player like Viní Jr. plays with the classic Afro-Brazilian style, accompanied by the samba celebrations, it upsets the value system of European soccer, which has historically disciplined those who challenge such value systems."

Soccer needs outside help with racism and gets it through anti-discrimination campaigners such as Kick It Out in Britain and LICRA in France. The Fare network, a pan-European group set up to counter discrimination in soccer, places undercover observers in crowds at Europe's biggest games to detect racist chants and extremist symbols on banners.

Fans also are increasingly likely to raise awareness of racist incidents by reporting them to federations and campaign groups or posting videos and photos on social media, with the material often used by authorities as evidence to punish perpetrators.

Then again, the growth of social media has its downsides when it comes to the amplification of racist abuse in soccer compared to previous generations, where it was mostly restricted to inside stadiums.

Now, people can fire off racist insults over their phone anonymously, directly to the accounts of the world's best players on Instagram and Twitter. That leads to the paradox of soccer players, eager to boost their brands, using the same platforms on which they are being abused.

As for the Black players themselves, some — such as Vinícius and others like Samuel Eto'o, Mario Balotelli and Romelu Lukaku — call out the abuse when they see it, intent on leading the fight against racism. That's something Paul Canoville, the target of racist insults as the first Black player of English club Chelsea in the 1980s, wishes he had done.

"They should say something right there and then," Canoville said of Black players. "I didn't at that time and I've had to learn from that. That's something I teach to up-and-coming players now."

Van Sterkenburg and Scott said more education and stronger punishments were vital in the ongoing fight to stamp out racism. That's also the opinion of a former World Cup winner who played in Spain and experienced similar abuse to Vinicius.

"Racism is ingrained, it's something people are used to, it's something that is passed from one generation to another," said the player, who declined to be named because he's not allowed by his current employer to give interviews.

"People think it's normal, something that is not wrong, so it's hard to fight against that. And we can't even say that it's something that will get better with time, because it was the same thing many decades ago and nothing has changed."

Douglas reported from Sundsvall, Sweden.

More AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/hub/soccer> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Russia claims it thwarted Ukrainian attacks in provinces annexed by Moscow

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian officials said their forces thwarted large Ukrainian attacks in two provinces of Ukraine illegally annexed by Moscow. The Ukrainian military suggested the Russian reports were part of a misinformation campaign as Kyiv prepares for an anticipated counteroffensive.

Russia's Defense Ministry said in a rare early morning video released Monday that its forces pushed back a "large scale" assault Sunday at five points in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province, one of four regions that President Vladimir Putin claimed as Russian territory last fall but is only partially controlled by Moscow.

"The enemy's goal was to break through our defenses in the most vulnerable, in its opinion, sector of the front," Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said. "The enemy did not achieve its tasks. It had no success."

Konashenkov said 250 Ukrainian personnel were killed, and 16 Ukrainian tanks, three infantry fighting vehicles and 21 armored combat vehicles were destroyed.

Vladimir Rogov, a Moscow-installed official in southeast Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia province, said Sunday that Kyiv's forces also attempted to breach Russian defenses there but were repelled after advancing 400 meters (less than a quarter-mile) into Russian-occupied territory.

Active hostilities resumed early Monday, Rogov said, adding that "the enemy threw an even bigger force into the attack than yesterday." The new attempt to break through the front line was "more large-scale and organized," he said, adding: "A battle is underway."

Ukrainian officials did not confirm the attacks. The Center for Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on Telegram that Russian forces were "stepping up their information and psychological operations."

"In order to demoralize Ukrainians and mislead the community (including their own population), Russian propagandists will spread false information about the counteroffensive, its directions and the losses of the Ukrainian army. Even if there is no counteroffensive," a statement on Telegram read.

Ukraine often waits until the completion of its military operations to confirm its actions, imposing news blackouts in the interim. The Russian Defense Ministry said the alleged Donetsk attack started Sunday morning, and it was unclear why it waited until Monday to announce it.

For months, Ukrainian officials have spoken of plans to launch a spring counteroffensive to reclaim territory Russia has occupied since invading the country on Feb. 24, 2022, as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized in 2014.

But they've given confusing signals about whether preliminary, limited attacks to weaken Russian forces

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and military facilities would mark the start of the campaign, or only a full-fledged simultaneous assault across the entire 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line.

At least two factors have been at play in the timing: the improvement of ground conditions for troop and equipment movement after the winter, and the deployment of more advanced Western weapons and training of Ukrainian troops to use them.

The Russian Defense Ministry spokesman said Ukraine used six mechanized and two tank battalions in the attack. The ministry released a video claiming to show destruction of some of the equipment in a field.

In a rare specific mention of the presence of Russia's top military leaders in battlefield operations, Konashenkov said the chief of the general staff of the Russian armed forces, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, "was at one of the forward command posts."

Announcing Gerasimov's direct involvement could be a response to criticism by some Russian military bloggers and by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of Russian mercenary group Wagner, that Russia's military brass hasn't been visible enough at the front or taken sufficient control or responsibility for their country's military operations in Ukraine.

This version has been corrected to show that Donetsk is located in eastern Ukraine.
Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Prince Harry's battle with British tabloids heads for courtroom showdown

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry's battle with the British press is headed for a showdown in a London courtroom this week with the publisher of the Daily Mirror.

The Duke of Sussex is scheduled to testify in the High Court after his lawyer presents opening statements Monday in the first of his legal cases to go to trial. It's one of three alleging tabloids unlawfully snooped on the prince in their cutthroat competition for scoops on the royal family.

Harry will be the first member of the British royal family in more than a century to testify in court. He is expected to describe his anguish and anger over being hounded by the media throughout his life, and its impact on those around him.

Harry, 38, has blamed paparazzi for causing the car crash that killed his mother, Princess Diana, and said harassment and intrusion by the U.K. press, including allegedly racist articles, led him and his wife, Meghan, to flee to the U.S. in 2020 and leave royal life behind.

Articles he has cited date back to his 12th birthday, in 1996, when the Mirror reported Harry was feeling "badly" about the divorce of his mother and father, now King Charles III.

Harry said in court documents that the reports made him wonder who he could trust as he feared friends and associates were betraying him by leaking information to the newspapers. His circle of friends grew smaller and he suffered "huge bouts of depression and paranoia." Relationships fell apart as the women in his life — and even their family members — were "dragged into the chaos."

He says he later discovered that the source wasn't disloyal friends but aggressive journalists and the private investigators they hired to eavesdrop on voicemails and track him to locations as remote as Argentina and an island off Mozambique.

Mirror Group Newspapers said it didn't hack Harry's phone and its articles were based on legitimate reporting techniques. The publisher admitted and apologized for hiring a private eye to dig up dirt on one of Harry's nights out at a bar, but the resulting 2004 article headlined "Sex on the beach with Harry" is not among the 33 in question at trial.

Phone hacking that involved guessing or obtaining security codes to listen in on celebrities' cell phone voice messages was widespread at British tabloids in the early years of this century. It became an existential crisis for the industry after the revelation in 2011 that the News of the World had hacked the phone of a slain 13-year-old girl.

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Owner Rupert Murdoch shut down the paper and several of his executives faced criminal trials.

Mirror Group has paid more than 100 million pounds (\$125 million) to settle hundreds of unlawful information-gathering claims, and printed an apology to phone hacking victims in 2015. But it denies executives – including Piers Morgan, who was editor of the Daily Mirror editor between 1995 and 2004 — knew about hacking.

Harry's fury at the U.K. press — and sometimes at his own royal relatives for what he sees as their collusion with the media — runs through his memoir, "Spare," and interviews conducted by Oprah Winfrey and others. His claims will face a tough audience in court when he is cross-examined by Mirror Group's attorney.

The opening statements being presented on Monday mark the second phase of a trial in which Harry and three others have accused the Mirror of phone hacking and unlawful information gathering.

In the first part, attorney David Sherborne, who represents Harry and the other claimants, including two actors from the soap opera "Coronation Street," said the unlawful acts were "widespread and habitual" at the Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror and Sunday People, and carried out on "an industrial scale."

Two judges — including Justice Timothy Fancourt, who is overseeing the current trial — are in the process of deciding whether Harry's two other phone hacking cases will proceed to trial.

Murdoch's News Group Newspapers, publisher of The Sun, and Associated Newspapers Ltd., which owns the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday, have argued the cases should be thrown out because Harry failed to file the lawsuits within a six-year deadline of discovering the alleged wrongdoing.

Harry's lawyer has argued that he and other claimants should be granted an exception to the time limit, because the publishers lied and deceived to hide the illegal actions.

US Navy says Iran Revolutionary Guard fast-attack boats 'harassed' ship in Strait of Hormuz

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. Navy said Monday its sailors and the United Kingdom Royal Navy came to the aid of a ship in the crucial Strait of Hormuz after Iran's Revolutionary Guard "harassed" it.

Three fast-attack Guard vessels with armed troops aboard approached the merchant ship at a close distance Sunday afternoon, the U.S. Navy said in a statement. It offered black-and-white images it said came from a U.S. Navy Boeing P-8 Poseidon overhead, which showed three small ships close to the commercial ship.

The U.S. Navy's guided-missile destroyer USS McFaul and the Royal Navy's frigate HMS Lancaster responded to the incident, with the Lancaster launching a helicopter.

"The situation deescalated approximately an hour later when the merchant vessel confirmed the fast-attack craft departed the scene," the Navy said. "The merchant ship continued transiting the Strait of Hormuz without further incident."

The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, sees 20% of the world's oil pass through it.

While the Navy did not identify the vessel involved, ship-tracking data from MarineTraffic.com analyzed by The Associated Press showed the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier Venture erratically changed course as it traveled through the strait at the time of the incident. Its location also matched information about the incident given by the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, a British military operation overseeing traffic in the region. The vessel also resembled the images released by the Navy.

The ship's registered manager, Trust Bulkcarriers of Athens, Greece, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Iranian state media and the Revolutionary Guard did not immediately acknowledge the incident. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

This latest incident comes after a series of maritime incidents involving Iran following the U.S. unilaterally withdrawing from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

The suspected American seizure of the Suez Rajan, a tanker linked to a U.S. private equity firm believed

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to have been carrying sanctioned Iranian crude oil off Singapore, likely sparked Tehran to recently take the Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Advantage Sweet. That ship carried Kuwaiti crude oil for energy firm Chevron Corp. of San Ramon, California.

While authorities have not acknowledged the Suez Rajan's seizure, the vessel is now off the coast of Galveston, Texas, according to ship-tracking data analyzed by the AP.

Meanwhile, Iran separately seized the Niovi, a Panama-flagged tanker, as it left a dry dock in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, bound for Fujairah on the UAE's eastern coast. While not carrying any cargo, data from S&P Global Market Intelligence seen by the AP showed the Niovi in July 2020 received oil from a ship known then as the Oman Pride.

The U.S. Treasury in August 2021 sanctioned the Oman Pride and others associated with the vessel over it being "involved in an international oil smuggling network" that supported the Quds Force, the expeditionary unit of the Guard that operates across the Mideast. Purported emails published online by Wikiran, a website that solicits leaked documents from the Islamic Republic, suggest that cargo carried by the Niovi was sold on to firms in China without permission.

Satellite images analyzed by the AP show those two vessels anchored off Bandar Abbas, Iran.

The recent seizures have put new pressure on the U.S., long the security guarantor for Gulf Arab nations. The United Arab Emirates claimed last week it earlier "withdrew its participation" from a joint naval command called the Combined Maritime Forces though the U.S. Navy said it was still in the group. Meanwhile, the U.S. military's Central Command said Saturday its chief visited the region, met with Emirati leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and "discussed shared regional security concerns as well as U.S. and UAE security partnerships."

The Mideast-based commanders of the U.S., British and French navies last month also transited the Strait of Hormuz on Friday aboard an American warship, a sign of their unified approach to keep the crucial waterway open after Iran seized the two oil tankers.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

Pride becomes a minefield for big companies, but many continue their support

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

Many big companies, including Target and Bud Light's parent, are still backing Pride events in June despite the minefield that the monthlong celebration has become for some of them.

Target and Bud Light recently came under fire for their efforts to appeal to the LGBTQ+ community, only to come under more fire when they tried to backpedal.

But even as they battle the negative publicity, Target and Bud Light haven't pulled away from this year's Pride celebrations. Target is a platinum sponsor of NYC Pride, which requires a \$175,000 donation. And Bud Light's parent Anheuser-Busch is a sponsor of Pride celebrations in Chicago, San Francisco, Charlotte and elsewhere.

Many other big companies are sticking to their sponsorships as well, including PepsiCo, Starbucks, General Motors and Jeep parent Stellantis — all of which said they have been supporting Pride events for decades and aren't hesitating to back them again this year.

Jeff Gennette, CEO of Macy's, another major Pride sponsor, told The Associated Press that although the company has received some negative reactions to its Pride merchandise, the company is "very careful about how we put out this product that we select and how we position it on website and in stores" and doesn't plan to remove any of it.

"We stand by our values and we're a highly inclusive organization. And we think the bulk of America is as well," Gennette said.

InterPride, which represents more than 375 Pride organizations globally, said 40% have reported their

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sponsorship dollars are up 20% or more this year.

The buying power of the LGBTQ+ community is likely too big for companies to ignore. LGBT Capital, a U.K.-based investment company, estimates the U.S. has more than 17 million LGBTQ+ people with more than \$1 trillion in spending power.

"For every one customer knocking the display over, there are 10 who love it, and they are going to vote with their feet," said Allen Adamson, co-founder and managing partner of marketing firm Metaforce.

Anheuser-Busch didn't respond to questions from the AP about its Pride sponsorships. Target said its focus is "moving forward with our continuing commitment to the LGBTQIA+ community."

Despite the corporate support, there are clouds hovering over the rainbow.

A majority of negative social media posts about Pride this year are attacking companies for being "woke" and accusing them of sexualizing or grooming children, says RILA Global Consulting, which tracks more than 100 million websites and social media pages per day.

That's an abrupt change from last year, when a majority of negative social media posts were focused on brands being "inauthentic" and not truly supporting the LGBTQ population even as they expanded their offerings.

In May and June of 2022, there were fewer than 400 posts calling for Pride-related boycotts, RILA said. This year, in May alone there were more than 15,000.

The backlash comes amid a furious and fast-spreading debate over the rights of transgender people. At least 17 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for minors, most since the start of this year.

That has left many companies feeling jittery.

"I had a sponsor last night say their CEO is skittish about getting political," said Fernando Lopez, executive director of San Diego Pride. "The fact that they're even having that conversation is disheartening at best."

Target has long marketed to the LGBTQ+ community. But it recently found itself at the center of the bullseye when angry customers tipped over Pride displays and threatened staff in some stores. Target wound up removing certain items, to the dismay of LGBTQ+ supporters.

Six weeks earlier, transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney revealed on social media that Bud Light had sent her a commemorative can emblazoned with her picture. Boycott threats immediately followed, fueled by conservative commentators such as Matt Walsh, who has 1.9 million Twitter followers.

Kohl's, Lego and Southwest Airlines also have taken heat for their LGBTQ-friendly marketing in recent days.

The backlash has produced real consequences. In the month ending May 13, Bud Light's U.S. sales were down 23%, according to Bump Williams Consulting. Target's shares have plunged 20% since mid-May, wiping away \$15 billion in market value, although that's partly due to investor concerns about inflation's impact on shoppers.

Lopez, at San Diego Pride, worries that some companies will back out of Pride celebrations because of concerns that boycotters will target them.

"Companies may not be anti-LGBTQ, but they don't want to be putting their employees in a potentially dangerous space," Lopez said.

Suzanne Ford, the executive director of San Francisco Pride, said she understands that companies are facing difficult decisions but they also know that the LGBTQ+ community is watching very closely this year.

"In the end, human rights will win out," Ford said. "And we're going to remember: Did you shirk and disappear on us or did you step forward and say, 'Even if it's unpopular with a segment of the country, this is the right thing to do.'"

Some Pride organizations had already distanced themselves from Bud Light because they felt it wasn't doing enough to support the LGBTQ+ community beyond the street parties in June.

When Anheuser-Busch's multi-year sponsorship agreement with Miami Beach Pride ended in 2021, the organization signed a new multi-year contract with Molson Coors. Robert Legere, director of sponsorships for Miami Beach Pride, noted that Molson Coors' seltzer brand Vizzy made a \$1 million donation to the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ+ group.

"We don't just blindly say, 'Oh sure, we'll take your money.' We want to make sure the companies have

a clear path to why they want to participate," Legere said.

Others, like San Francisco Pride, are sticking with Bud Light but bracing themselves for backlash from attendees who think the brand should have done more to support Mulvaney.

Ford, the executive director, said Anheuser-Busch has been a longtime patron and increased its donation to San Francisco Pride this year. The group relies on its sponsors to keep its two-day, \$3 million festival free, Ford said, and its costs for labor and security are skyrocketing.

"There is some tension and we will be watching it. But on a local level, they've been a very great supporter," she said.

In its hometown of St. Louis, Bud Light will sponsor the main stage at Pride and provide the beer for the VIP tent, said Jordan Braxton, the director of diversity, inclusion and outreach for Pride St. Louis.

"Times can be difficult, but they support us and we support them," Braxton said. "They've been supporting us for years. It's not our fault that you just woke up and realized it."

Associated Press Capitol Correspondent Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Arkansas contributed to this report.

UN climate chief calls fossil fuel phase out key to curbing warming but may not be on talks' agenda

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The world needs to phase out fossil fuels if it wants to curb global warming, the United Nations climate chief said in an interview with The Associated Press. But he said the idea might not make it on to the agenda of "make-or-break" international climate negotiations this fall, run in and by an oil haven.

A phase out of heat-trapping fossil fuels "is something that is at top of every discussion or most discussions that are taking place," U.N. climate Executive Secretary Simon Stiell said. "It is an issue that has global attention. How that translates into an agenda item and a (climate talks) outcome we will see."

Stiell told AP he couldn't quite promise it would get a spot on the agenda in climate talks, called COP28, in Dubai later this year.

That agenda decision is up to the president of the negotiations, Stiell said. He is the head of the state-owned Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Sultan al-Jaber.

The decision by host nation United Arab Emirates to make al-Jaber the head of the climate conference has drawn fierce opposition from lawmakers in Europe and the United States, as well as environmental advocates. UAE officials said they want game-changing results in the climate talks and note that al-Jaber also runs a large renewable energy company.

Last year at climate talks, a proposal by India to phase out all fossil fuels, supported by the United States and many European nations, never got on the agenda. What gets discussed is decided by the COP president, who last year was the foreign minister of Egypt, a natural gas exporting nation.

When asked if Egypt's leaders kept the concept off the agenda, Stiell, speaking via Zoom from Bonn, Germany, where preliminary talks start Monday, said he couldn't comment except to say that "it's within their purview."

An engineer-turned government official and diplomat, Stiell walked a fine line between talking about the importance of a fossil fuel phase out and supporting the U.N. process that has put countries that export oil and natural gas in charge of negotiations about global warming for two consecutive years.

About 94% of the heat-trapping carbon dioxide human industrial activity put in the air last year was from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, according to the scientists who monitor emissions at Global Carbon Project. Al-Jaber's company has the capacity to produce 2 million barrels of oil and 7 billion cubic feet of natural gas a day and said it plans to increase that drilling to 5 million barrels a day by 2027.

Getting a fossil fuel phase out on the agenda this year depends on the conference president al-Jaber and on whether there is enough pressure from other nations, Stiell said.

"Where better to have a discussion ... then in a region where fossil fuels is at the center of their econ-

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organization trying to do its best.”

Republican House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, who launched the panel and is now running for secretary of state, said lawmakers ultimately decided to take a back seat to a U.S. Justice Department investigation that predated the committee’s formation by two years. And he accused the second-term Democratic governor of declining to participate.

Edwards recently told reporters he would still be willing to testify about his handling of the Greene case but added “there wouldn’t be anything new to be gained.”

For Greene’s mother, Mona Hardin, who last month marked the fourth anniversary of her son’s May 10, 2019, death, it’s another disappointment in a long wait for justice.

A state grand jury late last year brought the first charges in the case, indicting five law enforcement officers on counts ranging from negligent homicide to obstruction. But the Justice Department still has not indicated whether it will bring federal charges following a yearslong civil rights investigation. Hardin says the abandoned legislative inquiry cuts deeper because of the hope and spotlight it promised.

“No matter where you turn there’s nobody who can be trusted,” she said. “I’m bothered more than anything that everyone can just continue on their merry way.”

Greene’s death at the end of a high-speed chase in rural northeast Louisiana was shrouded in secrecy from the beginning, when troopers told grieving relatives and put in initial reports that the 49-year-old died in a car crash — an account questioned by both his family and an emergency room doctor who examined his battered body. But it would take 464 days before the Louisiana State Police opened an internal probe, and officials from Edwards on down refused for more than two years to release the troopers’ body-camera video.

That all changed in May 2021 when The Associated Press obtained and published the footage that showed troopers stunning, punching and dragging Greene by his ankle shackles as he wailed, “I’m your brother! I’m scared! I’m scared!” It showed the heavysset Greene forced to stay face-down on the ground for nine minutes before he eventually went limp. One trooper was later captured on video admitting in a phone call to a colleague that he “beat the ever-living f--- out of him.”

Lawmakers began looking into Edwards’ role early last year after an AP investigation found he had been informed in a text from the state police within hours of Greene’s death that troopers engaged in a “violent, lengthy struggle,” yet the governor stayed mostly silent on the case for more than two years as the state police he oversees continued to press the car crash theory.

Another AP report found that Edwards in 2020 privately watched a key body-camera video of Greene’s deadly arrest six months before state prosecutors say they knew it even existed, and neither the governor, his staff nor the state police acted urgently to get the footage into the hands of those with the power to bring charges.

Fellow Democrats on the Legislative Black Caucus berated Edwards behind closed doors over his handling of the case, and GOP leader Schexnayder invoked the language of impeachment from the outset of the probe, saying the governor’s actions “would demonstrate gross misconduct.”

But Edwards has repeatedly said he did nothing to influence or hinder the Greene investigation and eventually described the troopers’ actions on the video as both criminal and racist. He also said there was no way he could have known that the footage he privately watched in 2020 had not already been turned over to prosecutors.

After initially dismissing the legislative inquiry as a “witch hunt,” Edwards agreed to cooperate and testify. Lawmakers postponed his first scheduled testimony last June due to a special legislative session. When the committee invited the governor to testify again at its last meeting in November, it gave him only a few days notice and Edwards instead attended an out-of-town ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Since then, Edwards hasn’t received another invitation, his spokesman told AP, and the committee “never made any requests for documents from us.”

Schexnayder acknowledged there were no plans for the committee to meet again and he seemed resigned to move on. “Our role was to be a voice for the people who were demanding a fair and unbiased

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investigation of the matter," he said. "I believe that mission was accomplished."

Lost in the demise of the committee is that its handful of hearings elicited testimony that revealed several new details and expanded the ongoing criminal investigations.

A state police supervisor told the committee he had been instructed by superiors not to turn over body-camera footage to prosecutors, the agency's own use-of-force expert described Greene's death as "torture and murder," and detectives testified they were pressured by commanders to hold off on arresting the trooper who boasted of beating Greene and was seen on body-camera video striking him in the head.

But perhaps the most significant revelation came when a state police official admitted he had "sanitized" the cellphones of former State Police Superintendent Kevin Reeves and two other top commanders who retired amid the FBI investigation of Greene's death. That testimony prompted the state's internal watchdog to subpoena information about all three officials' iCloud accounts, according to court filings. Federal authorities also examined the cellphone wiping as part of their investigation into whether state police brass obstructed justice, according to law enforcement officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing inquiry.

"We uncovered a lot of things the general public did not know, but there needs to be some accountability," said state Rep. C. Denise Marcelle, a Baton Rouge Democrat who served on the committee. "I don't know that we actually got to the bottom of what happened and I don't think the mother got the answers she was looking for. I think there was a cover-up, and the question becomes: Who is going to look at this any further?"

The committee's "death by legislative neglect" is especially unsettling for people of color, whose trust in the state police was shattered by Greene's death and the years of delays in anyone being held to account for it, said Silas Lee, a political analyst at Xavier University of Louisiana.

Even if Edwards escaped the limelight, Lee said, the governor can hardly claim a political victory because there are so many unanswered questions about his handling of the case.

"This isn't going to go away just because it's not happening now," he said. "This chapter may be coming to an end, but there are still a few others beyond the control and influence of state and local government."

Contact AP's global investigative team at Investigative@ap.org.

Sharing the sentence: Separation takes toll on incarcerated moms and their kids

By CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press/Report for America

LINCOLN, Ill. (AP) — Dressed in her Sunday best — pink ruffled sleeves and a rainbow tulle tutu — Crystal Martinez's 4-year-old daughter proudly presented her with a multicolored bouquet of carefully crafted tissue paper flowers. With her 5-year-old son nestled on her lap, laughing in delight, Martinez held out her arms and pulled the girl into a hug so tight that her glasses were knocked askew.

"I want you! I don't want the flowers," Martinez said, smiling and holding her children close.

Martinez' five children, including the three aged 13, 10 and 6, last month traveled for three hours from Chicago to visit her in Logan Correctional, Illinois' largest state prison for women and transgender people, on the Reunification Ride. The donation-dependent initiative buses prisoners' family members 180 miles (290 km) from the city to Logan every month so they can spend time with their mothers and grandmothers.

The number of incarcerated women in the United States dropped by tens of thousands because of COVID-19. But as the criminal justice system returns to business as usual and prison populations creep back to pre-pandemic norms, more children are being separated from their mothers, putting them at greater risk of health and behavioral problems and making them vulnerable to abuse and displacement.

Black and Hispanic women are more likely to be imprisoned than white women and are affected disproportionately by family separation due to incarceration.

Women held at Logan describe the Reunification Ride — one of the increasingly rare, under-funded programs designed to keep families together — as a crucial lifeline.

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"I thank God that it is at least once a month. Some people don't get to see their kids at all," said Joshlyn Allen, whose 5- and 3-year-old children visited her with their grandmother.

The kids and their caregivers meet at 7 a.m. at a South Side big box store parking lot, bleary-eyed but excited. Organizers hand out snacks, games, water and coloring supplies as they get on the road.

Three hours later, the charter bus pulls up at the facility's barbed wire gates in Lincoln, Illinois, with children peering from the windows. As families progress slowly through security, shouts of "Mommy!" and squeals of glee fill the prison gym made cheerful with handmade decorations.

The prisoners create decorations for the visits, including colorful paper flowers, butterflies, family photos framed in construction paper and even the bouquet presented to Martinez by her daughter. Families are not allowed to bring anything besides essentials, such as diapers.

The number of women incarcerated in the U.S. dropped by about 30%, to 146,000, from 2019 to 2020, according to U.S. Department of Justice data. The nonprofit Prison Policy Initiative attributes that decrease to slowdowns in court proceedings, temporary process changes and efforts to reduce prison populations due to the pandemic.

But female prison and jail populations are rebounding to pre-pandemic levels.

"We are seeing more and more families separated," said Alexis Mansfield, Reunification Ride coordinator for the Women's Justice Institute.

About 58% of women in state or federal prisons are parents of minor children in the U.S. Black and Latina women experience greater incarceration rates than white women and are about as likely or more likely to be parents, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Although women are far less likely to be imprisoned than men, their incarceration can have outsized effects on families, Mansfield said. She has witnessed children reuniting with their incarcerated mothers after months or years apart who "immediately disclose that they're being abused or that they're facing a challenge at school."

"That bond between mothers and children is so strong. And without seeing their moms, very often kids are in vulnerable positions with nobody to turn to," she said.

Gina Fedock, professor at the University of Chicago's Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy and Practice, researches the well-being of marginalized women, particularly those behind bars.

Programs like Reunification Ride that offer recurring visits are rare in the U.S., Fedock said.

"Most states don't have such opportunities," she said. "There's a real lack of consistent resources, particularly these types of transportation programs."

University of Chicago researchers found only one similar initiative in a nationwide sweep, Hour Children in New York, Fedock said.

Incarcerated women tend to be the primary caregivers and often are the breadwinners, meaning children whose mothers are imprisoned are frequently displaced or enter the child welfare system, she said.

The impact of this kind of "ambiguous loss" of a parent can lead to increased risk of health issues, developmental delays, behavioral problems and issues with education, since kids moving in with a different caregiver often have to switch schools abruptly, according to the researcher.

"It's really easy for (the children) to fall through the cracks," Fedock said.

Maintaining the maternal bond can reduce "the traumatic effects of parental incarceration for those children and their families," Fedock explained. "Every constraint on the parent constrains the parenting relationship."

Nyia Pritchett said she was unable to visit her mother, Latonya Dextra, without Reunification Ride. Before the trip, the 27-year-old had not seen Dextra in person for three years.

Pritchett, who lives an hour outside of Chicago, awoke at 4 a.m. to catch the bus.

"It's worth it," she said. "So much time my mom has missed out of our lives. The little times like this mean a lot."

Dextra is serving a 28-year sentence and has been imprisoned since Pritchett was a child. During the visit, she braided Pritchett's vibrant red curls into a crown.

"It felt like when I was a little girl," Pritchett said.

Pritchett wept while recounting the time spent without her mother. Dextra held her and wiped away her tears.

Dextra said her children give her hope and that "this program means a lot."

The Reunification Ride, formerly the recipient of public funds that dried up in 2015 during Illinois' two-year budget impasse, has been adopted by nonprofits that rely on crowdsourcing and volunteers to keep the program alive. Each trip costs about \$3,000 to \$3,500.

"We realized that this was just too important to stop," Mansfield said.

Erika Ray is serving a 42-year sentence for armed robbery and murder. Her 23-year-old daughter, Jada Lesure, was just 7 when her mother was charged. Lesure now brings her 4-year old son to visit.

The programs offer a child-friendly, welcoming alternative to the strict rules of a typical visit behind glass or in small visitor spaces where kids struggle to sit still, without games or food, Ray said.

"There wasn't any program like this" when Jada was a child, Ray said, watching her grandson zoom happily around the gym.

But even as an adult, Lesure said, "I need my mom. Everybody needs their mom."

Ray laments it will be a long time before she is able to return home.

"There is no way to punish the parent and not punish the child," she said.

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

No survivors found after plane that flew over DC and led to fighter jet scramble crashes in Virginia

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and ASHLEY THOMAS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A wayward and unresponsive business plane that flew over the nation's capital Sunday afternoon caused the military to scramble a fighter jet before the plane crashed in Virginia, officials said. The fighter jet caused a loud sonic boom that was heard across the capital region.

Hours later, police said rescuers had reached the site of the plane crash in a rural part of the Shenandoah Valley and that no survivors were found.

The Federal Aviation Administration says the Cessna Citation took off from Elizabethtown, Tennessee, on Sunday and was headed for Long Island's MacArthur Airport. Inexplicably, the plane turned around over New York's Long Island and flew a straight path down over D.C. before it crashed over mountainous terrain near Montebello, Virginia, around 3:30 p.m.

It was not immediately clear why the plane was nonresponsive, why it crashed or how many people were on board. The plane flew directly over the nation's capital, though it was technically flying above some of the most heavily restricted airspace in the nation.

A U.S. official confirmed to The Associated Press that the military jet had scrambled to respond to the small plane, which wasn't responding to radio transmissions and later crashed. The official was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the military operation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Flight tracking sites showed the jet suffered a rapid spiraling descent, dropping at one point at a rate of more than 30,000 feet per minute before crashing in the St. Mary's Wilderness.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command later said in a statement that the F-16 was authorized to travel at supersonic speeds, which caused a sonic boom that was heard in Washington and parts of Virginia and Maryland.

"During this event, the NORAD aircraft also used flares – which may have been visible to the public – in an attempt to draw attention from the pilot," the statement said. "Flares are employed with highest regard for safety of the intercepted aircraft and people on the ground. Flares burn out quickly and completely

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and there is no danger to the people on the ground when dispensed.”

Virginia State Police said officers were notified of the potential crash shortly before 4 p.m. and rescuers reached the crash site by foot around four hours later. No survivors were found, police said.

The plane that crashed was registered to Encore Motors of Melbourne Inc, which is based in Florida. John Rumpel, who runs the company, told The New York Times that his daughter, 2-year-old granddaughter, her nanny and the pilot were aboard the plane. They were returning to their home in East Hampton, on Long Island, after visiting his house in North Carolina, he said.

Rumpel, a pilot, told the newspaper he didn't have much information from authorities but hoped his family didn't suffer and suggested the plane could've lost pressurization.

“I don't think they've found the wreckage yet,” Rumpel told the newspaper. “It descended at 20,000 feet a minute, and nobody could survive a crash from that speed.”

A woman who identified herself as Barbara Rumpel, listed as the president of the company, said she had no comment Sunday when reached by The Associated Press.

The episode brought back memories of the 1999 crash of a Learjet that lost cabin pressure and flew aimlessly across the country with professional golfer Payne Stewart aboard. The jet crashed in a South Dakota pasture and six people died.

President Joe Biden was playing golf at Joint Base Andrews around the time the fighter jet took off. Anthony Guglielmi, spokesperson for the U.S. Secret Service, said the incident had no impact on the president's movements Sunday. Biden was playing golf at the Maryland military base with his brother in the afternoon.

A White House official said the president had been briefed on the crash and that the sound of the scrambling aircraft was faint at Joint Base Andrews.

Associated Press writers Chris Megerian and Zeke Miller in Washington and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Biden set for critical talks on Ukraine this week with Denmark's Frederiksen, UK's Sunak

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is welcoming Denmark and Britain's prime ministers this week to Washington for talks that will focus heavily on what lays ahead in the war in Ukraine —including the recently-launched effort to train, and eventually equip, Ukraine with American-made F-16s fighter jets

Britain and Denmark are playing a pivotal role in the nascent joint international plan that Biden recently endorsed after months of resisting calls from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for U.S. aircraft

Biden's separate meetings with the leaders of two key NATO allies — he'll huddle with Denmark's Mette Frederiksen on Monday and the UK's Rishi Sunak on Thursday — come at a crucial period in the 15-month war as Ukraine readies to launch a counteroffensive. It's also a moment when the U.S. and Europe are looking to demonstrate to Moscow that the Western-alliance remains strong and focused on cementing a longer-term commitment to Ukraine with no end to the conflict in sight.

“One of the things we'll be looking for their perspectives on and the President will be interested in sharing his perspectives on is the long term security needs of Ukraine,” White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said. “And that's really where the F-16s kind of come into this discussion.”

Denmark has purchased dozens of American-made F-16s since the 1970s and has indicated it is open to the possibility of providing Ukraine with some. Britain strongly advocated for a coalition to supply Ukraine with fighter planes, and says it will support Ukraine getting the F-16s it wants. But the U.K. does not have any F-16s, and has ruled out sending Royal Air Force Typhoon jets.

Instead, Britain says it will give Ukrainian pilots basic training on Western-standard jets starting in early summer to prepare them to fly F-16s. The Ukrainian pilots will then go on to other countries for the next stages of training.

omy?" Stiell asked.

But the issue of a coal, oil and natural gas phase out is so central to Stiell he brought it up four times in the half-hour interview Saturday. He said the real issue is getting something done, not putting it on the agenda.

In public appearances, al-Jaber has emphasized being "laser-focused on phasing out fossil fuel emissions," not necessarily the fuels themselves, by promoting carbon capture and removal of the pollutant from the air.

Stiell dismissed the idea that carbon removal can be a short-term solution.

"Right now, in this critical decade of action to achieve those deep reductions, the science tells us it can only be achieved through the reduced use, significantly reduced use, of all fossil fuels," Stiell said in the interview.

Stiell defended the back-to-back years of having climate negotiations run in and by fossil fuel-exporting nations as the wishes of the "parties" or countries involved.

This year will be critical because it is the first global stocktake to see where the world is in its efforts to reduce carbon emissions. To reach the Paris agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, greenhouse gas pollution needs to be cut in half by 2030, he said.

"We know we are a long way from where we need to be," Stiell said.

This year's stocktake sets up a new round of pledges for even tighter emissions cuts by telling nations the stark truth of how bad the situation is, Stiell said. The problem hasn't been nations knowing how bad it is, he said.

"It's lack of implementation," Stiell said. "I don't believe it is the lack of knowledge. There's been report after report after report that all say the same thing, all with increasing urgency."

After less than a year on the job, but years as a national negotiator before that, Stiell said he has "gone beyond frustration. What drives me is a desire to make a difference."

Frank Jordans contributed from Berlin.

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Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears

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Fizzled probe spares governor scrutiny over Ronald Greene's deadly arrest

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Louisiana legislators who last year demanded answers from Gov. John Bel Edwards on whether he was complicit in a cover-up of state troopers' deadly arrest of a Black motorist have quietly abandoned their work without hearing from the governor or issuing any findings.

Lawmakers involved in the special committee probing the 2019 death of Ronald Greene offered an array of explanations, including election-year politics, concern the probe of state police wasn't playing well with Louisiana's mostly conservative voters and even a lack of resources in the legislature.

"We only make \$17,000 a year, and as much as I want to get to the heart of the Ronald Greene matter for justice, I also want my kids to have dinner tonight," said state Rep. Tanner Magee, a Republican who chaired the bipartisan panel and ran unsuccessfully last year for a state judgeship.

"We're not the feds with unlimited resources," Magee said. "Behind the facade, it's a Mickey Mouse

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The F-16 agreement is among several recent high-profile efforts by the U.S. and Europe focused on bolstering Western resolve as the war grinds on. Russia's Defense Ministry announced early Monday its forces had thwarted a large Ukrainian attack in the eastern province of Donetsk. It wasn't clear if this was the start of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Last week, Frederiksen and Sunak were among 45 European leaders who traveled to Moldova for the first summit of the European Political Community where they underscored support for Eastern Europe's ambitions to draw closer to the West and keep Moscow at bay.

Biden is also expected to discuss with Frederiksen and Rishi preparations for next month's NATO summit in Lithuania that comes amid growing pressure on the alliance from Zelenskyy on NATO to offer Ukraine concrete security guarantees and a defined path for Kyiv to eventually win membership into the group.

The 31-member alliance is also looking at boosting Ukraine's non-member status in NATO and preparing a framework for security commitments that it can offer once the war with Russia is over.

Max Bergmann, a former senior State Department official during the Obama administration, said Biden and his European counterparts' task is to stay on the same page for what comes after Ukraine's much-anticipated counteroffensive.

"Throughout this conflict, we have not only underestimated the Ukrainians but we have also underestimated the Europeans," said Bergmann, who is now director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.. "They're not wavering but they will also need to keep finding new funds to plow into military equipment to support the Ukrainians. There's a question on both sides of the Atlantic: How much will it actually take to sustain Ukraine?"

Biden is also expected to check in with Frederiksen and Rishi on his effort to press fellow NATO member Turkey to back off blocking Sweden from joining the military alliance.

Sweden and Finland, both historically unaligned militarily, jointly sought NATO membership after being rattled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Turkey initially blocked both countries from joining the alliance before agreeing to membership for Finland while continuing to object to Sweden.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has objected to Sweden's perceived support of the banned Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, the leftist extremist group DHKP-C, and followers of the U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, who Ankara claims was behind a failed military coup attempt in 2016.

Erdogan won reelection last week to a third term despite his government's struggle to deal with runaway inflation and the aftermath of an earthquake that leveled entire cities in the country. Now that his reelection battle is behind him, White House officials are increasingly optimistic that the Turkish leader will withdraw his opposition to Sweden's membership, according to a U.S. official familiar with internal deliberations. The official was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Biden said he raised Sweden's NATO application and Turkey's desire to buy 40 new F-16s from the U.S. — a move some in Congress oppose until Turkey approves NATO membership for Sweden — during a phone call last week with Erdogan.

"He still wants to work on something on the F-16s. I told him we wanted a deal with Sweden, so let's get that done," Biden told reporters shortly after the call.

Days later, at his commencement address at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado, Biden spoke with certainty about Sweden's NATO membership hopes. "It will happen. I promise you," Biden said.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken both expressed hope that Sweden will be brought into the NATO fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12. Stoltenberg met with Erdogan on Sunday in Istanbul for talks but no breakthrough was made.

Associated Press writer Jill Lawless in London contributed to this report.

Error in signaling system led to train crash that killed 275 people in India, official says

By KRUTIKA PATHI, SHEIKH SAALIQ and ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

BALASORE, India (AP) — The derailment in eastern India that killed 275 people and injured hundreds was caused by an error in the electronic signaling system that led a train to wrongly change tracks and crash into a freight train, officials said Sunday.

Authorities worked to clear the mangled wreckage of the two passenger trains that derailed Friday night in Balasore district in Odisha state in one of the country's deadliest rail disasters in decades.

An Odisha government statement revised the death toll to 275 after a top state officer put the number at over 300 on Sunday morning. The officer spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

Jaya Verma Sinha, a senior railway official, said the preliminary investigations revealed that a signal was given to the high-speed Coromandel Express to run on the main track line, but the signal later changed, and the train instead entered an adjacent loop line where it rammed into a freight loaded with iron ore.

The collision flipped Coromandel Express's coaches onto another track, causing the incoming Yesvantpur-Howrah Express from the opposite side also to derail, she said.

The passenger trains, carrying 2,296 people, were not overspeeding, she said. Trains that carry goods are often parked on an adjacent loop line so the main line is clear for a passing train.

Verma said the root cause of the crash was related to an error in the electronic signaling system. She said a detailed investigation will reveal whether the error was human or technical.

The electronic interlocking system is a safety mechanism designed to prevent conflicting movements between trains. It also monitors the status of signals that tell drivers how close they are to a next train, how fast they can go and the presence of stationary trains on the track.

"The system is 99.9% error free. But 0.1% chances are always there for an error," Verma said. To a question whether the crash could be a case of sabotage, she said "nothing is ruled out."

On Sunday, a few shattered carriages, mangled and overturned, were the only remnants of the tragedy. Railway workers toiled under the sun's glare to lay down blocks of cement to fix the broken tracks. A crew with excavators was removing mud and the debris to clear the crash site.

At one of the hospitals nearly 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the site, survivors spoke of the horror of the moment of the crash.

Pantry worker Inder Mahato could not remember the exact sequence of events, but said he heard a loud bang when the Coromandel Express crashed into the freight. The impact caused Mahato, who was in the bathroom, to briefly lose consciousness.

Moments later when he opened his eyes, he saw through the door that was forced open people writhing in pain, many of them already dead. Others were frantically trying to get out from the twisted wreckage of his rail car.

For hours, Mahato, 37, remained stuck in the train's bathroom, before rescuers scaled up the wreckage and pulled him out.

"God saved me," he said, lying on the hospital bed while recuperating from a hairline fracture in his sternum. "I am very lucky I am alive."

Mahato's friends weren't so lucky. Four of them died in the crash, he said.

Meanwhile, many desperate relatives were struggling to identify the bodies of their loved ones because of the gruesomeness of the injuries. Few others were searching hospitals to check whether their relatives were alive.

In the same hospital where Mahato was recovering from his injuries, Bulti Khatun roamed outside the premises in a dazed state, holding an identity card of her husband who was onboard the Coromandel Express and traveling to southern Chennai city.

Khatun said she visited the morgue and other hospitals to look for him, but was unable to find him.

"I am so helpless," she said, sobbing.

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Fifteen bodies were recovered on Saturday evening and efforts continued overnight with heavy cranes being used to remove an engine that settled on top of a rail car. No bodies were found in the engine and the work was completed on Sunday morning, said Sudhanshu Sarangi, director-general of fire and emergency services in Odisha.

The crash occurred at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is focusing on the modernization of the British colonial-era railroad network in India, which has become the world's most populous country with 1.42 billion people. Despite government efforts to improve safety, several hundred accidents occur every year on India's railways, the largest train network under one management in the world.

Modi visited the crash site on Saturday and talked to rescue officials. He also visited a hospital to inquire about the injured, and spoke to some of them.

Modi told reporters he felt the pain of the crash victims. He said the government would do its utmost to help them and strictly punish anyone found responsible.

In 1995, two trains collided near New Delhi, killing 358 people in one of the worst rail accidents in India. In 2016, a passenger train slid off the tracks between the cities of Indore and Patna, killing 146 people.

Most such accidents in India are blamed on human error or outdated signaling equipment.

About 22 million people ride 14,000 trains across India every day, traveling on 64,000 kilometers (40,000 miles) of track.

Saaliq and Sharma reported from New Delhi.

This story corrects the death toll reported in a government statement.

Series tied: Heat roar back in the 4th quarter, beat Nuggets 111-108 in Game 2 of NBA Finals

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

DENVER (AP) — Staring down a 2-0 deficit in the NBA Finals, as the visitors in a hostile arena where no road team had prevailed in more than two months, the Miami Heat decided to do what they've done throughout the postseason.

They found a way. Against all odds. Again.

The Heat tied the NBA Finals and had to overcome a monster 41-point effort from Nikola Jokic to do it. Gabe Vincent scored 23 points, Jimmy Butler and Bam Adebayo each had 21 and Heat beat the Denver Nuggets 111-108 in Game 2 on Sunday night.

"Our guys are competitors," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "They love these kind of moments."

Evidently.

They were down by as many as 15 points, down eight going into the fourth, and those numbers signified they were going to lose. Denver was 11-0 in these playoffs when leading by double digits at any point in a game, and 37-1 this season overall when leading by at least eight going into the fourth.

The Heat didn't care. They outscored Denver 17-5 in the first 3:17 of the fourth to take the lead for good, eventually went up by 12, then frittered most of it away and had to survive a 3-point try by Jamal Murray as time expired.

"This is the finals," Adebayo said. "We gutted one out."

Game 3 is Wednesday in Miami.

Max Strus scored 14 and Duncan Robinson had 10 — all of them in the fourth — for the Heat, who had a big early lead, then got down by as many as 15. They had no answers for Jokic, who was 16 of 28 from the floor, the last of those shots a 4-footer with 36 seconds left to get the Nuggets within three.

Denver elected not to foul on the ensuing Miami possession and it paid off. Butler missed a 3, and with a chance to tie, Murray missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

"I just contested it," Butler said. "Pretty glad that he missed it."

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Denver lost at home for the first time since March 30, and for the first time in 10 home playoff games this year. And just as he did after a Game 1 win, Nuggets coach Michael Malone sounded the alarm after a Game 2 loss.

"Let's talk about effort," Malone said. "I mean, this is the NBA Finals and we're talking about effort. That's a huge concern of mine. You guys probably thought I was just making up some storyline after Game 1 when I said we didn't play well. We didn't play well. ... This is not the preseason. This is not the regular season. This is the NBA Finals."

Murray had 18 points and 10 assists for Denver, while Aaron Gordon had 12 points and Bruce Brown scored 11.

"They just played hard, and like I said, it was more discipline," Murray said. "It's defeating when you're giving up mistake after mistake, and it's not them beating you, you're giving them open dunks or open shots. That's tough to come back from."

Strus, who was 0 for 10 in Game 1, had four 3-pointers in the first quarter of Game 2. Butler made a jumper with 4:56 left in the opening quarter to put Miami up 21-10, tying the second-biggest lead any opponent had built in Denver so far in these playoffs.

In a flash, it was gone — and then some.

The Nuggets outscored Miami 32-11 over the next 9 minutes, turning the double-digit deficit into a double-digit lead thanks to an absolute 3-point barrage.

In a 70-second span early in the second quarter, Denver got four 3s — more points than Miami got in that entire 9-minute stretch — and they came from four different players: Brown, then Jeff Green, then Murray, then Gordon.

Boom, boom, boom, and boom. Murray had five straight points to end the flurry, and Denver led 44-32 when it was over. It looked like everything was going Denver's way.

Miami insisted otherwise. And for the 44th time this season, the Heat won a game by five points or less. None of them was bigger than this one.

"When it comes down to the wire," Vincent said, "we're strangely comfortable."

TIP-INS

Heat: Miami changed its starting lineup, with Kevin Love back in the opening five and Caleb Martin — who missed practice Saturday with an illness — coming off the bench. ... The Heat got their 13th win of these playoffs, breaking a tie with the 1999 New York Knicks for the most ever by a No. 8 seed.

Nuggets: Jokic became the 14th different player in NBA history to score at least 41 in a finals loss. ... Denver hadn't lost a game since May 7 — four weeks ago. ... Nuggets legends Alex English, LaPhonso Ellis (who actually ended his NBA career with Miami) and David Thompson were among those in attendance.

HERRO UPDATE

Injured Heat guard Tyler Herro played 2-on-2 on Saturday as he continues his efforts to try to return from a broken hand at some point in these finals — but remained out. Herro got hurt in the first half of Game 1 of Round 1 at Milwaukee. His status for Game 3 is unclear.

EXPANSION TALK

Commissioner Adam Silver told NBA TV before the game that negotiations for the next media rights deal are now a priority since the new Collective Bargaining Agreement has been ratified — and how expansion talk will come after that.

Silver said he thinks the media deal negotiations will begin "in earnest probably this next spring." And after that, plans to add franchises will be the next item on the to-do list.

"We don't have anything specific in mind right now," Silver said. "But I think it makes sense over time if you're a successful organization to continue to grow. There's no doubt there's a lot of great cities we're interested in having in the NBA."

Russia says it thwarted attack in Donetsk; unclear if this was start of Ukrainian counteroffensive

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's Defense Ministry announced early Monday its forces had thwarted a large Ukrainian attack in the eastern province of Donetsk, though it's unclear if this was the start of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

The ministry, in a rare early morning video, said its forces pushed back a "large scale" Ukrainian assault on Sunday at five points in southern Donetsk, one of four Ukrainian regions Russia illegally annexed last fall.

"The enemy's goal was to break through our defenses in the most vulnerable, in its opinion, sector of the front," said the ministry's spokesman, Igor Konashenkov. "The enemy did not achieve its tasks. It had no success."

Konashenkov said 250 Ukrainian personnel were killed, and 16 Ukrainian tanks, three infantry fighting vehicles and 21 armored combat vehicles were destroyed.

Ukraine didn't comment, and often waits until the completion of its military operations to confirm its actions, imposing news blackouts in the interim. It was unclear why the Russian Defense Ministry waited until Monday morning to announce the attack, which it said started Sunday morning.

For months, Ukrainian officials have spoken of plans to launch a spring counteroffensive to reclaim territory Russia has occupied since invading Feb. 24, 2022, as well as the Crimean Peninsula it seized in 2014. But they've given confusing signals about what would constitute a counteroffensive — preliminary, limited attacks to weaken Russian forces and military facilities or a full-fledged simultaneous assault across the entire 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line. At least two factors have been at play in timing the counteroffensive: awaiting improvement of ground conditions for troop and equipment movement after the winter, and deployment of more advanced Western weapons and training of Ukrainian troops to use them.

The Russian Defense Ministry spokesman said Ukraine used six mechanized and two tank battalions in the attack, and it released a video claiming to show destruction of some of the equipment in a field.

In a rare specific mention of the presence of Russia's top military leaders in battlefield operations, the spokesman said the chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, "was at one of the forward command posts."

Announcing Gerasimov's direct involvement could be a response to criticism by some Russian military bloggers and mercenary group head Yevgeny Prigozhin that Russia's military brass hasn't been visible enough at the front or taken sufficient control or responsibility for their country's military operations in Ukraine.

Elsewhere on the battlefield, Ukrainian authorities said Sunday a Ukrainian man rushed to his home outside the central city of Dnipro in hopes of rescuing his family, only to find his 2-year-old daughter dead and wife seriously wounded as he helped pull them from the rubble of their apartment destroyed in one of Russia's latest airstrikes of the war.

Writing on Telegram after the body of the girl, Liza, was recovered, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that at least 500 Ukrainian children have been killed in the war. The United Nations says that around 1,000 other Ukrainian children have been wounded, and thousands of others have been forcibly deported to Russia.

Zelenskyy said: "Russian weapons and hatred continue to take and destroy the lives of Ukrainian children every day," adding that "many of them could have become famous scholars, artists, sports champions, contributing to Ukraine's history."

"We must hold out and win this war!" he said. "All of Ukraine, all our people, all our children, must be free from the Russian terror!"

Liza was killed when a Russian missile landed Saturday night in a yard next to her apartment building while she was home with her mother, said Serhiy Lysak, the regional governor of Dnipropetrovsk. The girl's father rushed home from work.

"The father was on duty, and as I was told, he personally cleared the rubble and pulled out his wife and

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his daughter. Just imagine the scale of this tragedy," Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said, reporting on the rescue that lasted until early Sunday. The girl's mother was hospitalized under intensive care.

Zelenskyy said five children were among 25 people wounded in Saturday's attack, which damaged two residential buildings.

The mother of one of the children sat amid broken concrete, twisted metal, children's toys and clothes near her apartment building and described what happened.

"I was running from the electrical station across the traffic," Alyona Serednyak recalled. "I was running home. My child was alone at home. We tried to pull my child from under the cage on the window."

She said they managed to free him and he was hospitalized.

Russian drone and cruise missile strikes on Sunday targeted multiple areas of the country, including the capital, Kyiv.

The Ukrainian air force updated earlier figures and said air defenses downed six of eight Shahed self-exploding drones and four of six cruise missiles fired.

Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said two missiles struck a military air base in Kropyvnytskyi in central Ukraine's Kyrovohrad province. He didn't report damage.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the military destroyed Ukrainian warplanes and ammunition depots in strikes on Ukrainian airfields, but didn't give further specifics.

The Russian military has reported attacks in recent days on Ukrainian air defense batteries, air bases, troop and ammunition depots, military production factories and battlefield positions. While Ukrainian officials refrain from announcing the launch of their much-anticipated counteroffensive to reclaim more Russian-occupied territory, the pace of military activity suggests the operation may be underway.

Ukrainian forces maintained pressure on Russian forces in the eastern city of Bakhmut, which Moscow claimed control of last month after the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

Elsewhere, Russians fighting alongside Ukrainian forces declared they had launched new attacks on Russia's Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. One of the groups, the Russian Volunteer Corps, released videos Sunday showing a purported raid and offering to exchange prisoners with Russian authorities. The Associated Press couldn't independently verify the videos' authenticity.

Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov responded to the prisoner exchange offer in a video of his own, saying he was skeptical that the captives are still alive, but that he was open to a meeting to discuss a swap. The Russian Volunteer Corps said in a video posted later that no meeting had occurred, and that the Russian prisoners would be turned over to Ukrainian forces, which have periodically swapped prisoners with Russia in one of the few areas of cooperation.

Gladkov also reported more Ukrainian shelling Sunday of the border district of Shebekino and neighboring areas. He said at least two people were killed and multiple people wounded on Saturday. Russia's Defense Ministry said the country's forces repelled an attempted incursion in the town of Novaya Tavolzhanka.

Some observers see attacks in Belgorod, which prompted Russian authorities to evacuate thousands of residents, as part of Ukraine's efforts to distract Moscow and stretch its forces to help the counteroffensive succeed.

In Crimea, regional leader Sergei Aksenov reported a Ukrainian drone attack on the city of Dzhankoi early Sunday. He claimed that five of the attacking drones were shot down and four others jammed and forced to land, adding that there were no casualties.

Andrew Katell contributed to this report from New York.

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

Chuck Todd leaving NBC political panel show 'Meet the Press' and being replaced by Kristen Welker

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Chuck Todd said on Sunday that he'll be leaving "Meet the Press" after a tumultuous near-decade of moderating the NBC political panel show, to be replaced in the coming months by Kristen Welker.

Todd, 51, told viewers that "I've watched too many friends and family let work consume them before it was too late" and that he'd promised his family he wouldn't do that.

Todd has often been an online punching bag for critics, including Donald Trump, during a polarized time, and there were rumors that his time at the show would be short when its executive producer was reassigned at the end of last summer, but NBC gave no indication this was anything other than Todd's decision. It's unclear when Todd's last show will be, but he told viewers that this would be his final summer.

"I leave feeling concerned about this moment in history but reassured by the standards we've set here," Todd said. "We didn't tolerate propagandists, and this network and program never will."

Welker, a former chief White House correspondent, has been at NBC News in Washington since 2011 and has been Todd's chief fill-in for the past three years. She drew praise for moderating the final presidential debate between Trump, a Republican, and Joe Biden, a Democrat, in 2020.

Her "sharp questioning of lawmakers is a masterclass in political interviews," said Rebecca Blumenstein, NBC News president of editorial, in a memo announcing Welker's elevation on Sunday.

Now Welker, 46, will be thrust into what promises to be another contentious presidential election cycle.

The Sunday morning political interview show has aired since 1947, led by inventor and first host Martha Rountree. Its peak came in the years that Tim Russert moderated, from 1991 until his death in 2008, with its footing less certain since then. Tom Brokaw briefly filled in after Russert's death, and David Gregory replaced him until being forced out in favor of Todd.

Welker will be the first Black moderator of "Meet the Press" and the first woman since Rountree left in 1953.

Todd said that he was proud of expanding the "Meet the Press" brand to a daily show, which initially aired on MSNBC but was shifted to streaming, along with podcasts and newsletters, even a film festival.

"He transformed the brand into a vital modern-day franchise, expanding its footprint to an array of new mediums, and kept 'Meet the Press' at the forefront of political discourse," Blumenstein said.

It didn't stop critics from jumping on to social media when they didn't like an interview Todd conducted. Trump even anointed Todd with one of his signature nicknames, Sleepy Eyes, and later called on NBC to fire Todd in 2020 over its airing of a CBS interview clip with his then-Attorney General William Barr. Todd later said the show had been unaware at the time of a longer soundbite of the interview that would have provided more context, and he apologized for the mistake.

Todd was roasted at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in 2022 by Trevor Noah, who pointed him out in the audience and said, "How are you doing? I'd ask a follow-up, but I know you don't know what those are."

Todd alluded to his critics in announcing his exit on Sunday.

"If you do this job seeking popularity, you are doing this job incorrectly," he said. "I take the attacks from partisans as compliments. And I take the genuine compliments with a grain of salt when they come from partisans."

The goal of each show, he said, is to "make you mad, make you think, shake your head in disapproval at some point and nod your head in approval at others."

In the just-concluded television season, "Meet the Press" was third in viewers after CBS' "Face the Nation" and ABC's "This Week," each of them averaging between 2.5 million and 2.9 million viewers, the Nielsen ratings company said.

Jacinda Ardern given a top New Zealand honor for her service during shooting, pandemic

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Monday received one of New Zealand's highest honors for her service leading the country through a mass shooting and pandemic.

Ardern was made a Dame Grand Companion, the second-highest honor in New Zealand, as part of King Charles III's Birthday Honors. It means people will now call her Dame Jacinda. Royal honorees are typically chosen twice a year in New Zealand by the prime minister and signed off by Charles, the British king who is also recognized as New Zealand's king.

Ardern was just 37 when she became prime minister in 2017, and was seen as a global icon of the left.

She shocked New Zealanders in January when she said she was stepping down as leader after more than five years because she no longer had "enough in the tank" to do it justice.

She was facing mounting political pressures at home, including for her handling of COVID-19, which was initially widely lauded but later criticized by those opposed to mandates and rules.

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, who succeeded Ardern, said she was being recognized for her service during "some of the greatest challenges our country has faced in modern times."

"Leading New Zealand's response to the 2019 terrorist attacks and to the COVID-19 pandemic represented periods of intense challenge for our 40th prime minister, during which time I saw firsthand that her commitment to New Zealand remained absolute," Hipkins said in a statement.

Fifty-one Muslim worshippers were killed during Friday prayers in the 2019 attack at two Christchurch mosques by a white supremacist gunman.

Within weeks of the attack, Ardern led major changes to New Zealand's gun laws by banning assault weapons. More than 50,000 guns were handed over to police during a subsequent buyback scheme.

Ardern said she was in two minds about whether to accept the award because much of what she was being recognized for were experiences that were collective to all New Zealanders.

"So for me this is about my family, my colleagues and all those who supported me to do that incredibly rewarding job," she told 1News.

Ardern will be temporarily joining Harvard University later this year after she was appointed to dual fellowships at the Harvard Kennedy School. She has also taken on an unpaid role combatting online extremism.

Also recognized in the King's Birthday Honors list was rugby coach Wayne Smith, who helped lead both men's and women's rugby teams representing New Zealand to World Cup victories.

In keeping with tradition, Britain's Queen Camilla was given the top award by being appointed to the Order of New Zealand.

Transgender adults in Florida 'blindsided' that new law also limits their access to health care

By THALIA BEATY, BRENDAN FARRINGTON and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Debate surrounding Florida's new restrictions on gender-affirming care focused largely on transgender children. But a new law that Republican presidential candidate and Gov. Ron DeSantis signed last month also made it difficult — even impossible — for many transgender adults to get treatment.

Eli and Lucas, trans men who are a couple, followed the discussions in the Legislature, where Democrats warned that trans children would be more prone to suicide under a ban on gender-affirming care for minors and Republicans responded with misplaced tales of mutilated kids. Eli said he and his partner felt "blindsided" when they discovered the bill contained language that would also disrupt their lives.

"There was no communication. ... Nobody was really talking about it in our circles," said Eli, 29.

Like many transgender adults in Florida, he and Lucas are now facing tough choices, including whether to uproot their lives so that they can continue to access gender-confirming care. Clinics are also trying to

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figure out how to operate under regulations that have made Florida a test case for restrictions on adults. Lucas, 26, lost his access to treatment when the Orlando clinic that prescribed him hormone replacement therapy stopped providing gender-affirming care altogether. The couple also worries about staying in a state that this year enacted several other bills targeting the LGBTQ+ community.

"My entire life is here. All my friends, my family. I just got a promotion at my job, which I'm probably not to be able to keep," Lucas, who works in a financial aid office at a college, said. "I'm losing everything except Eli and my pets moving out of here. So this was not a decision that I took lightly at all."

The Associated Press is not using Eli's and Lucas' last names because they fear reprisal. While their friends and families know they are trans, most people who meet them do not.

The new law that bans gender-affirming care for minors also mandates that adult patients seeking trans health care sign an informed consent form. It also requires a physician to oversee any health care related to transitioning, and for people to see that doctor in person. Those rules have proven particularly onerous because many people received care from nurse practitioners and used telehealth. The law also made it a crime to violate the new requirements.

Another new law that allows doctors and pharmacists to refuse to treat transgender people further limits their options.

"For trans adults, it's devastating," said Kate Steinle, chief clinical officer at FOLX Health, which provides gender-affirming care to trans adults through telemedicine. Her company decided to open in-person clinics and hire more physicians licensed in Florida in order to continue to provide care to patients who have already enrolled, even though that represents a major change to the company's business model.

Eli has been seeing a physician for years and therefore still has access to care. But SPEKTRUM Health Inc., the Orlando clinic that prescribed Lucas hormone replacement therapy, has stopped providing gender-affirming care.

"There are a lot of people looking for care that we're no longer legally able to provide," said Lana Dunn, SPEKTRUM Health's chief operating officer.

Florida has the second-largest population of transgender adults in the U.S., at an estimated 94,900 people, according to the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law. It used state-level, population-based surveys to determine its estimates. Not all transgender people seek medical interventions.

At least 19 states have now enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors. But restrictions on adults haven't been part of the conversation in most places. Missouri's attorney general tried to impose a rule in that state, but it was pulled back.

Florida is "the proving ground of what they can get away with," Dunn said.

Her organization treats about 4,000 people — most in Florida and some out-of-state telehealth patients, she said. While SPEKTRUM has bolstered its mental health services since the law passed, it and other organizations heavily rely on nurse practitioners to provide care.

Dunn estimates that 80% of trans adults in the state were getting their health care from a nurse practitioner and now have lost access.

"Right now what we're seeing in the community is just chaos," Dunn said.

The law also contains language that she said could scare off doctors who would be otherwise willing to treat trans patients, such as a 20-year statute of limitations to sue over care they provide.

As a trans woman herself, Dunn is grappling with losing her own access to hormones while trying to provide support to terrified patients. That's taken "a significant emotional toll," she said.

"Not only am I faced with this lack of care for myself but a lot of people within the community are also facing the same thing, and they're reaching out to me for guidance," Dunn said. "So I'm doing my best to help guide people and console them, but nobody's really reaching out to me saying, 'How are you doing? Are you OK?'"

Lucas, who transitioned eight years ago when he was 18, anticipates running out of hormone treatments in June. In the best case scenario he can foresee now, he will be able to get a new prescription in August.

He fears he might start to get his period again.

"It's just going to be extremely difficult mentally to have your body changing in a way that doesn't align with your brain," Lucas said.

Eli and Lucas have switched to a month-to-month lease and tentatively plan to relocate to Minnesota in November. They said they would leave sooner if they can afford it and started an online fundraiser to help. Moving with their dog and two cats increases the expense and difficulty of finding a new place.

"I just never thought it could happen this way, this fast and to us," Eli said.

Beaty reported from New York City and Schoenbaum reported from Raleigh, North Carolina.

Slow start to New York's legal pot market leaves farmers holding the bag

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

ARGYLE, N.Y. (AP) — Seth Jacobs has about 100 bins packed with marijuana flower sitting in storage at his upstate New York farm.

And that's a problem. There aren't enough places to sell it.

The 700 pounds (318 kilograms) of pungent flower was harvested last year as part of New York's first crop of legally grown pot for recreational use. He also has roughly 220 pounds (100 kilograms) of distillate. Months later, there are only a dozen licensed dispensaries statewide to sell what Jacobs and more than 200 other farmers produced.

Now, another growing season is underway and farmers still sitting on much of last year's harvest are in a financial bind.

"We are really under the gun here. We're all losing money," Jacobs recently said at his farm on rolling land near the Vermont border. "Even the most entrepreneurial and ambitious amongst us just can't move much product in this environment."

New York pot farmers aren't the only ones struggling with difficult economic conditions. Marijuana growers in western states have also complained that low prices, tough competition from the black market, high state taxes and federal banking and exporting restrictions have made it tough for legal growers to make money.

But the farmers' plight in New York is directly tied to the bumpy launch of the state's recreational pot market.

State leaders had always planned to gear up the market in stages, giving a chance for a diverse set of participants to get a toe-hold. The state's process for licensing new dispensaries, however, has moved at a far slower pace than expected.

Last fall, Gov. Kathy Hochul foresaw 20 new shops opening every month or so to start this year. Instead, one store was open by the start of the year, with 11 more opened since.

Unlicensed shops rushed in to fill the void, especially in New York City, but those outlets aren't a legal market for the state's farmers. Federal law prohibits the New York farmers from transporting their crop across state lines.

That means limited shelf space to sell the 300,000 pounds (136,000 kilograms) of cannabis grown in the state last year, much of the product meant to be processed for items like gummies and vapes.

Statewide, there is estimated to be hundreds of millions of dollars worth of unsold cannabis, about 80% in the form of cannabis oil, according to the Cannabis Association of New York, a trade group. There are concerns the smokable flower will eventually become too old to sell.

Jacobs keep his bins of buds at Slack Hollow Organics in secure, temperature controlled units. More valuable still is the distillate at various processors he's waiting to sell. Elsewhere in rural New York, Brittany Carbone, co-founder of Tricolla Farms, said the stock they're sitting on includes 1,500 packs of pre-rolled joints and about 2,000 packs of edibles.

"What we really need to see is more retailers get open, and that's going to actually give us the sustainable solution," Carbone said.

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The lack of sales is a particular problem for small farmers who stretched themselves thin financially to produce last year's crop and now need capital for their second year.

Jacobs, whose brand is Bud & Boro, said he won't grow plants for distillate this year because of the backlog. Carbone said they are planting on less than the acre they're legally allowed and are holding off on infrastructure investments, like hoop houses to help with growing.

In New York, many critics blame missteps by state officials in their well-intentioned effort to open the market to a diverse array of entrepreneurs. That meant reserving the first legal pot harvests for struggling hemp farmers. And people with past marijuana convictions were given the chance to open some of the first dispensaries.

Critics say the process has been cumbersome for dispensary applicants. And there have been issues with a planned \$200 million fund to help "social equity" dispensary licensees with the costly task of setting up shops.

The fund was supposed to consist of up to \$150 million in private investment. But state Dormitory Authority spokesperson Jeffrey Gordon declined to say whether any private money had been invested yet, saying in an email only that "work to raise private capital is ongoing."

Gordon noted New York's "complex and unprecedented" effort to create a new statewide enterprise from scratch, which included evaluating 10,000 commercial properties for dispensary locations and arranging for banking, training and other services for the licensees.

The retail rollout also was hobbled by a federal judge's ruling in November that temporarily barred New York from issuing dispensary licenses in parts of the state, including Brooklyn and Buffalo. The injunction was later narrowed to the Finger Lakes region before a settlement was reached this week.

The Office of Cannabis Management has taken recent steps to boost demand, including the provisional approval last month of 50 new dispensary licenses. And plans are in the works for that would allow groups of growers to join with retail licensees to sell their cannabis at places other than stores, like at a farmers' market or a festival.

"We know these cultivators are worried about how to sell last year's harvest as they decide whether to plant a cannabis crop in 2023, and we will continue to support them as more adult-use dispensaries open to sell their products," cannabis office spokesman Aaron Ghitelman said in an email.

On a separate track, Hochul and the Legislature approved a new law giving regulators broader power to seize weed from the illicit shops competing with the legal shops.

Though frustrated, farmers like Jacobs and Carbone are hanging on. Carbone has gotten her farm's brand, TONIC, into six dispensaries. Jacobs has received some intermittent payments and hopes the farmers market policy being devised will give him a new avenue to sell his marijuana.

"This all will get worked out," Jacobs said. "And I want to be there when it does."

'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse' swings to massive \$120.5 million opening

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" opened in U.S. and Canadian theaters with a massive \$120.5 million, more than tripling the debut of the 2018 animated original and showing the kind of movie-to-movie box-office growth that would be the envy of even the mightiest of Hollywood franchises.

Sony Pictures' "Across the Spider-Verse," the multi-verse spinning animated Spider-Man spinoff, sailed way past expectations, according to studio estimates Sunday, riding terrific reviews (95% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) and strong buzz for the hotly anticipated follow-up to the Oscar-winning "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse."

In the sometimes formulaic realm of superhero movies, 2018's "Into the Spider-Verse" offered a blast of originality, introducing a teenage webslinger from Brooklyn, Miles Morales (Shameik Moore), a punk-rock Gwen (Hailee Steinfeld) and a host of other Spider-People. It launched with \$35.4 million on its way to \$384.3 million worldwide.

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"Across the Spider-Verse," which exponentially expands the film's universe-skipping worlds, cost \$100 million to make, about half the cost of the average live-action comic-book movie. So at even the forecast \$80 million that "Spider-Verse" had been expected to open, "Across the Spider-Verse" would have been a hit.

Instead, it has turned out to be a box-office sensation, and the second largest domestic opening of 2023, trailing only "The Super Mario Bros. Movie." "Across the Spider-Verse," directed by Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers and Justin K. Thompson, even topped "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3," which debuted with \$118 million, for best opening weekend of the summer so far.

The film, shepherded by writer-producers Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, is part two in a trilogy that will conclude with a third chapter to be released next year. "Across the Spider-Verse" over-performed abroad, too, with \$88.1 million overseas.

After few family offerings for much of the first half of 2023, theaters are suddenly flush with kid-friendly entertainment. Last week's top film, the Walt Disney Co.'s live action remake "The Little Mermaid," slid to second with \$40.6 million in its second weekend.

After launching with \$95.5 million and \$117.5 million over the four-day Memorial Day weekend, "The Little Mermaid" dipped 57%, partly due to the formidable competition from "Across the Spider-Verse."

Having cost a reported \$250 million to make, "The Little Mermaid" was met with mixed reviews but more enthusiasm from audiences, which gave it an "A" CinemaScore. But overseas, where previous Disney live-action remakes have thrived, is proving harder territory this time. The film added \$42.4 million internationally over the weekend.

Disney also supplied the weekend's top counter-programming option in "The Boogeyman," a mostly well-received horror adaptation of a Stephen King short story. Director Rob Savage's \$35 million film, starring Sophie Thatcher and Chris Messina, had originally been intended to debut on Hulu before the studio pivoted. It opened with \$12.3 million in ticket sales.

In limited release, the Sundance breakout film "Past Lives" launched with an impressive \$58,067 per-screen average on four screens. Celine Song's directorial debut stars Greta Lee as a woman torn between a childhood friend from Korea (Teo Yoo) and her American husband (John Magaro).

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

1. "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," \$120.5 million.
2. "The Little Mermaid," \$40.6 million.
3. "The Boogeyman," \$12.3 million.
4. "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3," \$10.2 million.
5. "Fast X," \$9.2 million.
6. "The Super Mario Bros. Movie," \$3.4 million.
7. "About My Father," \$2.1 million.
8. "The Machine," \$1.8 million.
9. "Suga: Agust D Tour Live in Japan," \$1.2 million.
10. "You Hurt My Feelings," \$770,000.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Ukraine keeps up pressure following Russian declaration of victory in Bakhmut

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

OUTSIDE BAKHMUT, Ukraine (AP) — Watching imagery from a drone camera overhead, Ukrainian battalion commander Oleg Shiryayev warned his men in nearby trenches that Russian forces were advancing across a field toward a patch of trees outside the city of Bakhmut.

The leader of the 225th Battalion of the 127th Kharkiv Territorial Defense Brigade then ordered a mortar team to get ready. A target was locked. A mortar tube popped out a loud orange blast, and an explosion

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cut a new crater in an already pockmarked hillside.

"We are moving forward," Shiryayev said after at least one drone image showed a Russian fighter struck down. "We fight for every tree, every trench, every dugout."

Russian forces declared victory in the eastern city last month after the longest, deadliest battle since their full-scale invasion of Ukraine began 15 months ago. But Ukrainian defenders like Shiryayev aren't retreating. Instead, they are keeping up the pressure and continuing the fight from positions on the western fringes of Bakhmut.

The pushback gives commanders in Moscow another thing to think about ahead of a much-anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive that appears to be taking shape.

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said Russia sought to create the impression of calm around Bakhmut, but in fact, artillery shelling still goes on at levels similar to those at the height of the battle to take the city. The fight, she said, is evolving into a new phase.

"The battle for the Bakhmut area hasn't stopped; it is ongoing, just taking different forms," said Maliar, dressed in her characteristic fatigues in an interview from a military media center in Kyiv. Russian forces are now trying — but failing — to oust Ukrainian fighters from the "dominant heights" overlooking Bakhmut.

"We are holding them very firmly," she said.

From the Kremlin's perspective, the area around Bakhmut is just part of the more than 1,000-kilometer (621-mile) front line that the Russian military must hold. That task could be made more difficult by the withdrawal of the mercenaries from private military contractor Wagner Group who helped take control of the city. They will be replaced with Russian soldiers.

For Ukrainian forces, recent work has been opportunistic — trying to wrest small gains from the enemy and taking strategic positions, notably from two flanks on the northwest and southwest, where the Ukrainian 3rd Separate Assault Brigade has been active, officials said.

Russia had envisioned the capture of Bakhmut as partial fulfillment of its ambition to seize control of the eastern Donbas region, Ukraine's industrial heartland. Now, its forces have been compelled to regroup, rotate fighters and rearm just to hold the city. Wagner's owner announced a pullout after acknowledging the loss of more than 20,000 of his men.

Maliar described the nine-month struggle against Wagner forces in nearly existential terms: "If they had not been destroyed during the defense of Bakhmut, one can imagine that all these tens of thousands would have advanced deeper into Ukrainian territory."

The fate of Bakhmut, which is largely in ruins, has been overshadowed in recent days by near-nightly attacks on Kyiv, a series of unclaimed drone strikes near Moscow and the growing anticipation that Ukraine's government will try to regain ground.

But the battle for the city could still have a lingering impact. Moscow has made the most of its capture, epitomized by triumphalism in Russian media. Any slippage of Russia's grip would be a political embarrassment for President Vladimir Putin.

Michael Kofman of the Center for Naval Analyses, a U.S. research group, noted in a podcast this week that the victory brings new challenges in holding Bakhmut.

With Wagner fighters withdrawing, Russian forces are "going to be increasingly fixed to Bakhmut ... and will find it difficult to defend," Kofman told "War on the Rocks" in an interview posted Tuesday.

"And so they may not hold on to Bakhmut, and the whole thing may have ended up being for nothing for them down the line," he added.

A Western official who spoke on condition of anonymity said Russian airborne forces are heavily involved in replacing the departing Wagner troops — a step that is "likely to antagonize" the airborne leadership, who see the duty as a further erosion of their "previously elite status" in the military.

Ukrainian forces have clawed back slivers of territory on the flanks — a few hundred meters (yards) per day — to solidify defensive lines and seek opportunities to retake some urban parts of the city, said one Ukrainian analyst.

"The goal in Bakhmut is not Bakhmut itself, which has been turned into ruins," military analyst Roman

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Svitan said by phone. The goal for the Ukrainians is to hold on to the western heights and maintain a defensive arc outside the city.

More broadly, Ukraine wants to weigh down Russian forces and capture the initiative ahead of the counteroffensive — part of what military analysts call “shaping operations” to set the terms of the battle environment and put an enemy in a defensive, reactive posture.

Serhiy Cherevatyi, a spokesman for Ukrainian forces in the east, said the strategic goal in the Bakhmut area was “to restrain the enemy and destroy as much personnel and equipment as possible” while preventing a Russian breakthrough or outflanking maneuver.

Analyst Mathieu Boulègue questioned whether Bakhmut would hold lessons or importance for the war ahead.

Military superiority matters, he said, but so does “information superiority” — the ability “to create subterfuge, to create obfuscation of your force, to be able to move in the shadows.”

Boulègue, a consulting fellow with the Russia and Eurasia program at the Chatham House think tank in London, said those tactics “could determine which side gains an advantage that catches the other side by surprise, and turns the tide of the war.”

Jamey Keaten reported from Kyiv, Ukraine. Hanna Arhirova and Illia Novikov in Kyiv, Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, and Jill Lawless in London, contributed to this report.

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

A previous version of this story was corrected to show that Oleg Shiryayev is the leader of the 225th Battalion, not the 228th Battalion.

Hundreds of thousands march in Poland anti-government protests to show support for democracy

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of people marched in an anti-government protest in Poland’s capital on Sunday, with citizens traveling from across the country to voice their anger at officials who they say have eroded democratic norms and created fears that the nation is following Hungary and Turkey down the path to autocracy.

Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, who belongs to the opposition party that led the march, estimated that 500,000 people took part. The Onet news portal estimated there were at least 300,000 at the march’s culmination.

Large crowds also gathered in Krakow and other cities across the nation of 38 million people, showing frustration with a government that critics accuse of violating the constitution and eroding fundamental rights in Poland.

Former President Lech Walesa, the leader of the Solidarity movement that played a historic role in toppling communism in Poland, marched alongside the leader of the opposition Civic Platform party, ex-Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

Walesa and Tusk are reviled by the ruling Law and Justice party led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, and the Warsaw crowd chanted “Democracy!” and “Constitution!”

The rally started at Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki’s office and ended up at the Royal Castle, where Tusk hailed the turnout and pledged to fight to win an autumn election.

“We are going to these elections to win and to right human wrongs. I promise you victory, a settlement of evil, compensation for human wrongs and reconciliation among Poles,” Tusk told the crowd.

The government spokesman, Piotr Mueller, accused Tusk and Walesa of “trying to overthrow the government.”

Tusk had called on Poles to march with him for the sake of the nation’s future — a message that reso-

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nated for Radek Tusinski, 49, who arrived with his wife and two children. A handmade sign reading "I cannot give up freedom" was attached to their baby stroller.

Tusinski said that he worries about the creeping return of an authoritarian system similar to what he remembers from his childhood.

"We want a free country for our children," he said.

Supporters of the march have warned that the election might be the nation's last chance to stop the erosion of democracy under Law and Justice amid growing fears that the fall election might not be fair.

In power since 2015, Law and Justice has found a popular formula, combining higher social spending with socially conservative policies and support for the church in the mostly Catholic nation.

However, critics have warned for years that the party is reversing many of the achievements made since Poland emerged from communist rule in 1989.

The U.S. government has intervened at times when it felt the government was eroding media liberties and academic freedom in the area of Holocaust research.

Critics point mainly to the party's step-by-step takeover of the judiciary and media, and fear that Law and Justice could eventually force Poland to leave the 27-member European Union.

A clampdown on abortion rights has triggered mass protests. Some also voiced anger at double-digit inflation in the country. Poland's government blames Russia's war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic, but economists say its spending policies have accelerated spiraling prices.

Barbara Dec, 26, and her grandmother left their hometown of Zielona Gora at 4:30 a.m. and traveled seven hours on a bus organized by Civic Platform to protest.

Dec held up a cardboard sign that read, "I am afraid to have children in Poland."

"Women have lost the right to have an abortion even when the fetus is terminally ill, and some women have died," she explained. "And I am also afraid I couldn't manage financially."

The march was held on the 34th anniversary of Poland's first partly-free election. The protest was seen as a test for Tusk's Civic Platform, a centrist and pro-European party which has trailed behind Law and Justice in polls.

However, the passage of a contentious law last month seems to have mobilized greater support for Tusk. Poland is expected to hold a general election in October, though a date hasn't been set.

The law allows for the creation of a commission to investigate Russian influence in Poland. Critics argue that it would have unconstitutional powers, including the capacity to exclude officials from public life for a decade. They fear it will be used by the ruling party to remove Tusk and other opponents from public life.

President Andrzej Duda, who signed the law on May 29, proposed amendments to it on Friday. In the meantime, the law will take effect with no guarantees that lawmakers in parliament will weaken the commission's powers.

Some Poles say it could come to resemble the investigations of Joseph McCarthy, the U.S. senator whose anti-communist campaign in the early 1950s led to hysteria and political persecution.

That fear was underlined last weekend when Kaczynski was asked by a reporter if he still had trust in the defense minister in connection with a Russian missile that fell in Poland in December.

"I am forced ... to view you as a representative of the Kremlin," he replied. "Because only the Kremlin wants this man to stop being the minister of national defense."

The media freedom group Reporters Without Borders expressed concerns that the commission "could serve as a new weapon for this type of attack, in which doubt is cast on journalists' probity in an attempt to smear their reputation."

Tusk, who once served as European Council president, had called for the march weeks ago, urging people to demonstrate "against high prices, theft and lies, for free elections and a democratic, European Poland."

Law and Justice sought to discourage participation in the rally with a video spot using Auschwitz as a theme — drawing criticism from the state museum that preserves the site of the Nazi German death camp.

Apple is expected to unveil a sleek, pricey headset. Is it the device VR has been looking for?

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

Apple appears poised to unveil a long-rumored headset that will place its users between the virtual and real world, while also testing the technology trendsetter's ability to popularize new-fangled devices after others failed to capture the public's imagination.

After years of speculation, the stage is set for the widely anticipated announcement to be made Monday at Apple's annual developers conference in a Cupertino, California, theater named after the company's late co-founder Steve Jobs. Apple is also likely to use the event to show off its latest Mac computer, preview the next operating system for the iPhone and discuss its strategy for artificial intelligence.

But the star of the show is expected to be a pair of goggles — perhaps called "Reality Pro," according to media leaks — that could become another milestone in Apple's lore of releasing game-changing technology, even though the company hasn't always been the first to try its hand at making a particular device.

Apple's lineage of breakthroughs date back to a bow-tied Jobs peddling the first Mac in 1984 — a tradition that continued with the iPod in 2001, the iPhone in 2007, the iPad in 2010, the Apple Watch in 2014 and its AirPods in 2016.

But with a hefty price tag that could be in the \$3,000 range, Apple's new headset may also be greeted with a lukewarm reception from all but affluent technophiles.

If the new device turns out to be a niche product, it would leave Apple in the same bind as other major tech companies and startups that have tried selling headsets or glasses equipped with technology that either thrusts people into artificial worlds or projects digital images with scenery and things that are actually in front of them — a format known as "augmented reality."

Apple's goggles are expected to be sleekly designed and capable of toggling between totally virtual or augmented options, a blend sometimes known as "mixed reality." That flexibility also is sometimes called external reality, or XR for shorthand.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has been describing these alternate three-dimensional realities as the "metaverse." It's a geeky concept that he tried to push into the mainstream by changing the name of his social networking company to Meta Platforms in 2021 and then pouring billions of dollars into improving the virtual technology.

But the metaverse largely remains a digital ghost town, although Meta's virtual reality headset, the Quest, remains the top-selling device in a category that so far has mostly appealed to video game players looking for even more immersive experiences.

Apple executives seem likely to avoid referring to the metaverse, given the skepticism that has quickly developed around that term, when they discuss the potential of the company's new headset.

In recent years, Apple CEO Tim Cook has periodically touted augmented reality as technology's next quantum leap, while not setting a specific timeline for when it will gain mass appeal.

"If you look back in a point in time, you know, zoom out to the future and look back, you'll wonder how you led your life without augmented reality," Cook, who is 62, said last September while speaking to an audience of students in Italy. "Just like today you wonder how did people like me grow up without the internet. You know, so I think it could be that profound. And it's not going to be profound overnight."

The response to virtual, augmented and mixed reality has been decidedly ho-hum so far. Some of the gadgets deploying the technology have even been derisively mocked, with the most notable example being Google's internet-connected glasses released more than a decade ago.

After Google co-founder Sergey Brin initially drummed up excitement about the device by demonstrating an early model's potential "wow factor" with a skydiving stunt staged during a San Francisco tech conference, consumers quickly became turned off to a product that allowed its users to surreptitiously take pictures and video. The backlash became so intense that people who wore the gear became known as "Glassholes," leading Google to withdraw the product a few years after its debut.

Microsoft also has had limited success with HoloLens, a mixed-reality headset released in 2016, although

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the software maker earlier this year insisted it remains committed to the technology.

Magic Leap, a startup that stirred excitement with previews of a mixed-reality technology that could conjure the spectacle of a whale breaching through a gymnasium floor, had so much trouble marketing its first headset to consumers in 2018 that it has since shifted its focus to industrial, healthcare and emergency uses.

Daniel Diez, Magic Leap's chief transformation officer, said there are four major questions Apple's goggles will have to answer: "What can people do with it? What does this thing look and feel like? Is it comfortable to wear? And how much is it going to cost?"

The anticipation that Apple's goggles are going to sell for several thousand dollars already has dampened expectations for the product. Although he expects Apple's goggles to boast "jaw dropping" technology, Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives said he expects the company to sell just 150,000 units during the device's first year on the market — a mere speck in the company's portfolio. By comparison, Apple sells more than 200 million iPhones, its marquee product a year. But the iPhone wasn't an immediate sensation, with sales of fewer than 12 million units in its first full year on the market.

In a move apparently aimed at magnifying the expected price of Apple's goggles, Zuckerberg made a point of saying last week that the next Quest headset will sell for \$500, an announcement made four months before Meta Platform plans to showcase the latest device at its tech conference.

Since 2016, the average annual shipments of virtual- and augmented-reality devices have averaged 8.6 million units, according to the research firm CCS Insight. The firm expects sales to remain sluggish this year, with a sales projection of about 11 million of the devices before gradually climbing to 67 million in 2026.

But those forecasts were obviously made before it's known whether Apple might be releasing a product that alters the landscape.

"I would never count out Apple, especially with the consumer market and especially when it comes to finding those killer applications and solutions," Magic Leap's Diez said. "If someone is going to crack the consumer market early, I wouldn't be surprised it would be Apple."

Biden's 2024 pitch highlights pragmatism over Trump's pugilism

By ZEKE MILLER AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden promised voters in 2020 that he knew how to get things done in Washington and could bring stability to the capital. It seemed like a message out of step with the more combative era brought on by Donald Trump.

But Biden prevailed, and as he seeks a second term, he's again trying to frame the race as a referendum on competence and governance, pointing to the bipartisan debt limit and budget legislation he signed on Saturday as another exemplar of the success of his approach.

The agreement the Democratic president negotiated with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and other Republicans averted the catastrophe of a U.S. government default — and forestalled another threat until after the 2024 election — while largely protecting the domestic agenda that formed the backbone of what he hopes will form his legacy.

His approach, favoring pragmatism over Trumpian pugilism, will be tested as never before in the coming campaign, with his approval rating even among Democrats low despite the results he has delivered, in large part because of concerns about his age as the oldest person to ever seek the presidency.

"The results speak for themselves," said Jeff Zients, the 80-year-old Biden's chief of staff. "This level of support shows that we got a bipartisan deal that, most importantly, protects the president's priorities. And now we have a runway to execute on the president's priorities."

Biden's allies say his strategy reflects his broader view of the presidency: tuning out the daily chatter and focusing on making a prolonged impact.

"This was quintessential Joe Biden," said longtime Biden confidant and former Delaware Sen. Ted Kaufman. "He really understands the institutions, how they function, how they interact, and what their limitations are. It's the incredible advantage he has from having 36 years in the Senate and eight years

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as vice president.”

That perceived advantage — longevity — is also perhaps Biden’s steepest hill as he seeks four more years. Biden, aides said, devised a strategy shortly after Republicans took the House in November and stuck by it through the talks, despite second-guessing from members of his own party. He pressed the Republicans to define their budget priorities, then hammered them in public for unpopular proposed cuts once they did, to enter the negotiations with the strongest hand possible.

“He believes in the institutions of American governance. He’s approached this with an eye toward making the presidency and the Congress work and the way they were designed to work,” said Mike Donilon, a senior adviser to the president.

As the talks progressed, Biden stepped out of the limelight to allow Republican leaders to claim a win — necessary to sell it to their caucus — and quietly reassured Democrats that they would grow to like the deal the more they learned about it.

The result is an agreement that White House aides say exceeded their projections of what a budget agreement would look like with Republicans in charge of the House. It essentially freezes spending for the next year, rather than the steep cuts proposed by the GOP, and protects Biden’s infrastructure and climate laws and spending on Social Security and Medicare.

From the view of Biden’s team, it’s also far better than the result than the debt limit showdown of 2011, when Biden was a negotiator for then-President Barack Obama and House Republicans forced them to accept stiffer budget cuts that they believe hampered the country’s recovery from the Great Recession.

Biden still has come under fire from some in his own party for agreeing to tougher work requirements for some federal food assistance recipients and speeding up environmental reviews for infrastructure projects.

But the White House sees an upside: The permitting changes will speed up implementation of Biden’s infrastructure and climate laws, and the Biden aides highlight that Congressional Budget Office projections show that carve-outs from work requirements for veterans, people who are homeless and those leaving foster care will actually expand the number of people eligible for federal food assistance.

“While the rest of us are sweating the micro-news cycles and who’s up and who’s down on Twitter, the president is playing the long game,” said Obama spokesman and Democratic strategist Eric Schultz.

“He ran for the presidency pledging to restore functionality to Washington after his predecessor, and it’s hard to argue with his record of doing so,” Schultz added. “He’s proven he can rack up significant Democratic wins while also working in good faith with the other side.”

Biden drew a red line in negotiations that the debt limit had to be extended until after the 2024 presidential election, worried both on substance and style about the potential for another showdown in an even more heated political environment.

His sentiment may be right, but voters are increasingly concerned about his age and its toll, a message relentlessly reinforced by prospective Republican challengers and the conservative media ecosystem.

“Biden has chalked up a series of impressive accomplishments on a bipartisan basis and demonstrated that he can do that without being the center of attention,” said presidential historian Lindsay Chervinsky. “That’s what the American voters said they wanted then. But 2024 will have an entirely different context.”

Biden, she said, would need to argue that the stability he’s brought about is at risk by his opponents and hope voters’ memories are long enough.

White House aides say the deal gives them “running room” through the 2024 election to focus on making people feel the impacts of the legislation Biden signed into law, as well as begin to lay out their priorities for what he would do with another term and more Democrats in Congress.

Biden himself on Friday underlined the contrast with the combative character of the Republicans’ race and his adult-in-the-room posture. He called on both parties to “join forces as Americans to stop shouting, lower the temperature,” even as he highlighted GOP opposition to his efforts to raise taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations and cut tax breaks.

“Republicans defended every single one of these special interest loopholes,” Biden said, testing out a campaign line he is expected to hone in on in the coming months. “Every single one. But I’m going to be

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coming back. And with your help, I'm going to win."

Despite Biden's protestations, and his goal of unburdening himself and future office holders from the potential of future "hostage-taking," Biden still proved to be incapable of breaking the cycle of the debt ceiling being used as leverage in negotiations. Princeton University historian Julian Zelizer said it made the agreement a "mixed bag," staving off crisis now, but one that could come back to haunt him and subsequent presidents.

"Republicans just did it again. It happened when he was vice president, it happened when he was president, and it'll happen again," he said. "A lot of Republicans always wanted the tactic more than the outcome – he didn't stop that."

Zelizer acknowledged that Biden may not have had any other options — a proposal to use the 14th Amendment to pay obligations without Congress' say-so was untested and had its own pitfalls.

"When you have a threat like that, you have to negotiate," he acknowledged.

But for Biden's team, the results are what matter.

"He had his eyes on the prize, which was, 'How is this deal going to get done? And how does my doing that advance this deal?'" Donilon said. "We need to have our politics come together in moments where it has to do it. And so I think that actually will be a reassuring moment for the country."

China defends buzzing American warship in Taiwan Strait, accuses US of provoking Beijing

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — China's defense minister defended sailing a warship across the path of an American destroyer and Canadian frigate transiting the Taiwan Strait, telling a gathering of some of the world's top defense officials in Singapore on Sunday that such so-called "freedom of navigation" patrols are a provocation to China.

In his first international public address since becoming defense minister in March, Gen. Li Shangfu told the Shangri-La Dialogue that China doesn't have any problems with "innocent passage" but that "we must prevent attempts that try to use those freedom of navigation (patrols), that innocent passage, to exercise hegemony of navigation."

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told the same forum Saturday that Washington would not "flinch in the face of bullying or coercion" from China and would continue regularly sailing through and flying over the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea to emphasize they are international waters, countering Beijing's sweeping territorial claims.

That same day a U.S. guided-missile destroyer and a Canadian frigate were intercepted by a Chinese warship in the strait dividing the self-governed island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own, and mainland China. The Chinese vessel overtook the American ship and then veered across its bow at a distance of 150 yards (about 140 meters) in an "unsafe manner," according to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Additionally, the U.S. has said a Chinese J-16 fighter jet late last month "performed an unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" while intercepting a U.S. Air Force reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, flying directly in front of the plane's nose.

Those and previous incidents have raised concerns of a possible accident occurring that could lead to an escalation between the two nations at a time when tensions are already high.

Li suggested the U.S. and its allies had created the danger, and should instead should focus on taking "good care of your own territorial airspace and waters."

"The best way is for the countries, especially the naval vessels and fighter jets of countries, not to do closing actions around other countries' territories," he said through an interpreter. "What's the point of going there? In China we always say, 'Mind your own business.'"

In a wide-ranging speech, Li reiterated many of Beijing's well-known positions, including its claim on Taiwan, calling it "the core of our core interests."

He accused the U.S. and others of "meddling in China's internal affairs" by providing Taiwan with defense

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support and training, and conducting high-level diplomatic visits.

"China stays committed to the path of peaceful development, but we will never hesitate to defend our legitimate rights and interests, let alone sacrifice the nation's core interests," he said.

"As the lyrics of a well-known Chinese song go: 'When friends visit us, we welcome them with fine wine. When jackals or wolves come, we will face them with shotguns.'"

In his speech the previous day, Austin broadly outlined the U.S. vision for a "free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific within a world of rules and rights."

Austin said the U.S. was stepping up planning, coordination and training with "friends from the East China Sea to the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean" with shared goals "to deter aggression and to deepen the rules and norms that promote prosperity and prevent conflict."

Li scoffed at the notion, saying "some country takes a selective approach to rules and international laws."

"It likes forcing its own rules on others," he said. "Its so-called 'rules-based international order' never tells you what the rules are and who made these rules."

By contrast, he said, "we practice multilateralism and pursue win-win cooperation."

Li is under American sanctions that are part of a broad package of measures against Russia — but predate its invasion of Ukraine — that were imposed in 2018 over Li's involvement in China's purchase of combat aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles from Moscow.

The sanctions, which broadly prevent Li from doing business in the United States, do not prevent him from holding official talks, American defense officials have said.

Still, he refused Austin's invitation to talk on the sidelines of the conference, though the two did shake hands before sitting down at opposite sides of the same table together as the forum opened Friday.

Austin said that was not enough.

"A cordial handshake over dinner is no substitute for a substantive engagement," Austin said.

The U.S. has noted that since 2021 — well before Li became defense minister — China has declined or failed to respond to more than a dozen requests from the U.S. Defense Department to talk with senior leaders, as well as multiple requests for standing dialogues and working-level engagements.

Li said that "China is open to communications between our two countries and also between our two militaries," but without mentioning the sanctions, said exchanges had to be "based on mutual respect."

"That is a very fundamental principle," he said. "If we do not even have mutual respect, than our communications will not be productive."

He said that he recognized that any "severe conflict or confrontation between China and the U.S. will be an unbearable disaster for the world," and that the two countries need to find ways to improve relations, saying they were "at a record low."

"History has proven time and again that both China and the United States will benefit from cooperation and lose from confrontation," he said.

"China seeks to develop a new type of major-country relationship with the United States. As for the U.S. side, it needs to act with sincerity, match its words with deeds, and take concrete actions together with China to stabilize the relations and prevent further deterioration," Li said.

Vigilantes in Haiti strike back at gangsters with brutal street justice

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Old cars, used tires and barbed wire block off the biggest neighborhood in the capital of Haiti.

Gun-toting gangsters have been robbing, raping and murdering the innocent. Weak or corrupt police and officials have done little, or worse.

Now, the people are taking action and a wave of brutal vigilante justice is roiling Haiti, concentrated in this capital of about 1 million. The vigilantes close off neighborhoods. They stone and often chop the limbs of suspected gangsters, behead them and set them afire, sometimes while they are still alive.

Vigilantes have killed at least 164 people since the movement dubbed "bwa kale" began in April, according

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to the United Nations. The name means "peeled wood" in Haitian Creole and insinuates male dominance and power in street slang.

"If you're not from here, we're going to kill you," said Leo, a community leader who granted the AP access to the Turgeau neighborhood so that journalists could see how the neighborhood is responding to the gangs estimated to control 80% of Port-au-Prince. He did not provide his last name to protect his family.

Banners that read, "We are tired of the kidnapping," and "Watch out for one another," are strung throughout the city, and many neighborhoods have erected barricades like those closing off Turgeau.

On a recent afternoon, Leo and neighbors guarded one of the four makeshift barriers blocking roads into their hilly community of doctors, nurses, pastors, lawyers, street vendors and engineers.

People who wanted to enter had to show their IDs, open their bags, lift their shirts to reveal any gang tattoos, and, if they didn't live there, explain where they were going. At night, those seeking to enter Turgeau also had to provide a password, which the community changes every week.

Haitian police don't keep reliable crime statistics. But gang-related killings and kidnappings have dropped because of *bwa kale*, say human-rights activists, who also worry about the gruesome violence, and that innocent people could be killed.

Weslander Al Cégeaire, a cook in the southern city of Les Cayes with a round face and easy smile, told the AP that his cousin was recently killed by *bwa kale* participants while riding with a motorcycle driver who was targeted.

"It's a good movement, but at the same time, the innocent are paying for the guilty," Cégeaire said, adding that he left Port-au-Prince because he feared the gang violence and the *bwa kale* movement.

Turgeau is under siege by a gang known as "5 Seconds," because that's supposedly how long it takes them to kill someone. The *bwa kale* movement gained momentum in Turgeau after residents said the gang launched a pre-dawn attack in late April, killing nearly a dozen people.

"They burned down motorcycles. They burned down houses. They burned people. They raped. They looted," said Kenson Dimanche, a volunteer who controls one of the barricades.

Kettia, a resident who provided only her first name to protect her and her family, said that the gang snatched her husband, forced him to lead them out of the neighborhood, and used him as a shield as they exchanged fire with police. He survived.

Kettia, a short woman with a soft demeanor, tries to stay strong for her 4-year-old and 1-year-old, but they keep wondering if the gang will return.

"If the people doing *bwa kale* didn't stand up, it could've been worse," she said.

More than 1,630 people were killed, wounded or kidnapped in Haiti in the first three months of the year, a nearly 30% increase compared with the previous quarter, according to a report issued in May by the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti. In April alone, more than 600 people were reported killed, compared with a total of 846 people slain in the first three months of the year.

In October, Prime Minister Ariel Henry requested the immediate deployment of an international military force to quell gang violence, but neither the U.N. Security Council, the U.S. or Canada has acted.

María Isabel Salvador, the U.N. special envoy for Haiti, told The Associated Press that, "Haiti truly can't take it anymore."

"The world has to respond," she said.

Haiti's National Police has only some 9,000 active officers for a country of more than 11 million people. Police have arrested more than 2,700 suspected criminals and seized dozens of weapons since launching an operation dubbed "Tornado" in January to target gangs, but they are often overwhelmed. Both police and civilians are fighting against an estimated seven major gang coalitions that operate in Haiti, along with some 200 affiliated groups.

In Turgeau, some vigilantes walked around with sharpened machetes, like 63-year-old René Mizak, who said he was a former Tonton Macoute — a private militia that terrorized Haiti during the dictatorships of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude.

"I bought it to defend myself," said Mizak, a tall, slender man with a relaxed gait. "We are seeking justice

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our way.”

Mizak, who also declined to provide his full identity due to fear of gangsters, said he recently cut off one man’s arm and burned another’s face with gasoline because no one in the community recognized them, adding that bwa kale participants have killed at least three people in Turgeau who were suspected gang members.

The bwa kale movement began when police detained 13 suspected gang members during a traffic stop in Port-au-Prince in late April.

“We took them from the police and finished them,” recalled Israel Bien-Aimé, who said he helped stone and set fire to the group that day. “This is the only movement that can give us a solution to the gangs in Haiti.”

Bien-Aimé, a tall man with an athletic build, vowed to continue.

“If we found a bandit right now, we would hold them, beat them and kill them,” he said.

The killings have grown increasingly grisly.

Just a couple of blocks from Turgeau, a man on a motorcycle carried a decapitated head as the crowd yelled, “Bwa kale! Bwa kale!” The incident could be seen in a video that has been shared on social media and discussed among international observers.

Gangs have yet to respond to the bwa kale movement, although some neighborhoods are bracing for revenge. In a recent TikTok video, a man who said he’s a member of the gang that controls the Grand Ravine area southeast of Port-au-Prince said he’s waiting for the bwa kale movement to come to the area.

With a black balaclava covering his face and a belt of .50-caliber bullets draped around his neck, the man said his gang will give Haitians their own taste of bwa kale in due time.

“We are very relaxed,” he said. “We’re not going to rush. We’re not going to fuss. We’re just going to wait.”

Associated Press reporter Evens Sanon contributed to this report.

DeSantis hits Trump from the right while the ex-president looks ahead to the general election

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In his first week on the campaign trail as a presidential candidate, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis repeatedly hit his chief rival, Donald Trump, from the right.

“This is a different guy than 2015, 2016,” DeSantis told a conservative radio host before slamming the bipartisan criminal justice reform legislation Trump championed as “basically a jailbreak bill” that allowed dangerous people out of prison.

He also accused Trump of “turning the reins over” to Dr. Anthony Fauci during the COVID-19 pandemic, said Trump had “endorsed and tried to ram” an “amnesty” bill through Congress and vowed that — unlike the former president — he would finish building the U.S.-Mexico border wall.

In Iowa on Saturday, he hit back at Trump for saying he didn’t like the term “woke” because people have a hard time defining it. “Woke is an existential threat to our society,” DeSantis said. “To say it’s not a big deal, that just shows you don’t understand what a lot of these issues are right now.”

Trump, meanwhile, has repeatedly attacked DeSantis from the left. He has suggested that even anti-abortion activists consider Florida’s new six-week abortion ban “too harsh” and argued that DeSantis has made himself unelectable on a national level with his votes as a congressman to cut Social Security and Medicare — even though Trump’s proposed budgets also repeatedly called for major entitlement cuts.

The attacks underscore the underlying early dynamic of the race: As DeSantis tries to win over GOP primary voters and chip away at Trump’s commanding early lead, Trump is already pivoting to a general election matchup against President Joe Biden. In the meantime, Trump has been pushing back against DeSantis’ argument that the Florida governor, not the former president, is the more viable general election candidate.

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"Don't forget, we have to win elections," Trump stressed during a Fox News Channel town hall on Thursday as he discussed abortion politics.

To be clear, Trump has also leaned in on other right-wing causes. This week, he revived his pledge to end birthright citizenship, saying he would sign an executive order on the first day of his second term to change the long-settled interpretation of the 14th Amendment. He also renewed his pledge to use the U.S. military to attack foreign drug cartels and has pushed the death penalty for drug dealers.

But DeSantis' efforts to out-Trump Trump have raised eyebrows among some observers who question his tactics.

"I do not think it's a smart strategy," said Sarah Longwell, an anti-Trump Republican political strategist whose firm has been leading weekly focus groups with GOP voters where DeSantis' appeal has been fading.

Longwell said she had expected DeSantis to tailor his pitch to the slice of the Republican electorate that wants to move on from Trump.

"You can't out-MAGA Trump," she said, referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" political movement. DeSantis, she argued, should be working to "consolidate the 'Move on from Trump'-ers and move into the 'Maybe Trump'-ers, and instead he's tried to wrestle Trump for the 'Always Trump'-ers."

DeSantis allies argue the governor has been responding to what they see as Trump's attacks from the left and highlighting his stances on issues they believe will resonate with Republican primary voters, particularly abortion and DeSantis' PR war with Disney.

An official from Never Back Down, a pro-DeSantis super PAC handling much of his political operation, said DeSantis' strategy is being informed by what the group's canvassers have been picking up from voters in recent weeks. The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss messaging strategy, said voters have voiced confusion about Trump's attacks and have responded especially well to portrayals of DeSantis as a fighter who refuses to back down.

The group ran a digital ad this week highlighting Trump's comment on abortion that was geotargeted to areas Trump was visiting in Iowa. It is also exploring messaging that will accuse Trump of being too cozy with major corporations during his time in the White House.

Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung slammed DeSantis' insinuations and accused him of ripping off Trump's ideas.

"Ron DeSantis has tried to steal every single one of President Trump's Agenda47 policy platforms. He is a fraudster and masquerading as someone who knows what he's talking about," he said.

DeSantis, in his early campaign stops, has also tried to paint himself as a disciplined executive who will make good on his promises, implying Trump had not.

"When I tell you I'm going to do something, I don't just say that because I think that may be what you want to hear, then get into office and forget all the promises I made," he said in Lexington, South Carolina.

Longwell said her research had consistently found that on-the-fence voters are willing to put aside concerns about Trump's temperament because they feel he was so effective in office, raising questions about DeSantis' strategy.

"They don't like his mouth, they don't like his tweets, they don't like his character. But they like what he did as president," she said.

Trump, meanwhile, has made clear he is looking toward next year's general election.

In Grimes, Iowa, on Thursday, Trump received a pointed question from a woman who claimed that "we have lost people because you supported the jab," a reference to conspiracies about mRNA vaccines, which have been credited with saving millions of lives.

While Trump did not dismiss her suggestion — and stressed that he was never in favor of mandates — he explained that "there's a big portion of the country that thinks that was a great thing, you understand that. Not a lot of the people in this room, but there is a big portion."

During the Fox News town hall later that day, Trump said "only stupid people" could suggest they had done more than him on abortion given that he picked some of the conservative Supreme Court justices who overturned *Roe v. Wade*. But he also continued to criticize conservative Republican midterm candidates who did not support exceptions, including when the life of the mother is at risk, a position in line

with the majority of voters.

A recent memo to donors from Trump super PAC pollster Tony Fabrizio, first reported by Axios, made the case that DeSantis is vulnerable among swing state voters in a general election on issues including cuts to Social Security and Medicare, book bans in schools, Florida's ban on abortions at six weeks — before most women know they are pregnant — and his fight with Disney.

Voters, meanwhile, have mixed views about the escalating feud.

Heidi Lillibridge, a 51-year-old farmer and Republican activist from Vinton, Iowa, worries that Democrats will benefit from the two leading GOP candidates criticizing each other. She is particularly frustrated by DeSantis' early attacks.

"Criticizing President Trump's conservative credentials, when we all know how he acted as president and what he got accomplished, I don't really know why he would do that," she said.

Darcy Cowart, who saw DeSantis speak outside a bar and restaurant in Bluffton, South Carolina, said that while she had previously backed Trump, she was glad to see a large field with other options.

"He's not going to change, and he just has this bully mentality. He just won't give in on it," she said. "I know he fights for us, and I know that he does some good things, but at the same time, it's like having this obnoxious relative that's always got to be at the dinner table, that you dread being around."

Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, and Meg Kinnard in Bluffton, S.C., contributed this report.

This story has been corrected to show the surname of the Trump spokesperson is Cheung, not Chueng.

7 shot, 1 fatally, in Chicago when gunfire erupts amid remembrance for man killed in car crash

CHICAGO (AP) — A 25-year-old woman was fatally shot and six other people were wounded early Sunday when gunfire erupted in Chicago during a remembrance for a man who died in a car crash, police said.

A large group of people had gathered about 1 a.m. to mark four years since a man's fatal crash when there was an altercation and shots rang out, said Deputy Chief Adnardo Gutierrez of the Chicago Police Department, WLS-TV reported.

Seven people were wounded and one of them, a 25-year-old woman, was pronounced dead at a hospital, he said. The six other shooting victims were hospitalized, one in critical condition.

"They were out there celebrating and then something happened and a verbal altercation occurred and somebody began shooting, or multiple people began shooting," Gutierrez said at a Sunday briefing.

He said it's still under investigation how many people opened fire, but he said the gunshots were fired by a person or persons who were taking part in the remembrance.

Gutierrez said a witness told officers an altercation occurred before the shooting, which happened as the group was in a street in the Austin neighborhood on Chicago's West Side.

Among the six other victims, a 29-year-old man was hospitalized in critical condition with a chest wound. The five others, a 17-year-old girl, a 28-year-old woman, and three men ages 27, 28 and 29, were hospitalized in good condition, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Police detectives were investigating the shooting, and no one was in custody as of midmorning Sunday.

Gutierrez said detectives were still working to find and interview witnesses. He urged anyone with information about the shooting to contact police and pass that information along.

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Today in History: June 5, Robert F. Kennedy assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, June 5, the 156th day of 2023. There are 209 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 5, 1968, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was shot and mortally wounded after claiming victory in California's Democratic presidential primary at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles; assassin Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was arrested at the scene.

On this date:

In 1794, Congress passed the Neutrality Act, which prohibited Americans from taking part in any military action against a country that was at peace with the United States.

In 1950, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Henderson v. United States*, struck down racially segregated railroad dining cars.

In 1967, war erupted in the Middle East. Israel, anticipating a possible attack by its Arab neighbors, launched a series of airfield strikes that destroyed nearly the entire Egyptian air force; Syria, Jordan and Iraq immediately entered the conflict.

In 1975, Egypt reopened the Suez Canal to international shipping, eight years after it was closed because of the 1967 war with Israel.

In 1976, 14 people were killed when the Teton Dam in Idaho burst.

In 1981, the Centers for Disease Control reported that five men in Los Angeles had come down with a rare kind of pneumonia; they were the first recognized cases of what later became known as AIDS.

In 2002, 14-year-old Elizabeth Smart was abducted from her Salt Lake City home. (Smart was found alive by police in a Salt Lake suburb in March 2003. One kidnapper, Brian David Mitchell, was sentenced to life without parole; the other, Wanda Barzee, was released in September 2018.)

In 2004, Ronald Wilson Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, died in Los Angeles at age 93 after a long struggle with Alzheimer's disease.

In 2006, more than 50 National Guardsmen from Utah became the first unit to work along the U.S.-Mexico border as part of a crackdown by President George W. Bush.

In 2016, Novak Djokovic (NOH'-vak JOH'-kuh-vich) became the first man in nearly a half-century to win four consecutive major championships, finally earning an elusive French Open title with a win over Andy Murray to complete a career Grand Slam.

In 2020, Minneapolis banned chokeholds by police, the first of many changes in law enforcement practices to be announced in the aftermath of George Floyd's death; officers would also now be required to intervene any time they saw unauthorized force by another officer.

Ten years ago: British newspaper The Guardian reported the National Security Agency was collecting the telephone records of millions of American customers of Verizon under a top secret court order. President Barack Obama named Susan Rice his national security adviser, and nominated Samantha Power to replace Rice as United Nations ambassador. U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, accused of killing 16 Afghan civilians, many of them sleeping women and children, pleaded guilty to murder at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, to avoid the death penalty. Carrie Underwood won the top honor video of the year at the CMT Music Awards for "Blown Away"; Miranda Lambert and Florida Georgia Line were the night's top winners with two awards apiece.

Five years ago: Fashion designer Kate Spade, known for her sleek handbags, was found dead in her Park Avenue apartment in New York in what the medical examiner determined was a suicide by hanging; she was 55. After it became clear that most players from the Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles weren't going to show up, President Donald Trump gave the boot to a White House ceremony for the team, and instead threw his own brief "Celebration of America." Former TV mogul Harvey Weinstein pleaded not guilty in New York to rape and criminal sex act charges; he'd been indicted a week earlier on charges involving two women. The Miss America pageant announced that it was eliminating the swimsuit competition from

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the event; the new head of the organization's board of trustees, Gretchen Carlson, said on ABC, "We're not going to judge you on your appearance because we are interested in what makes you you."

One year ago: Queen Elizabeth II appeared at the balcony of Buckingham Palace, delighting fans who had hoped to catch a glimpse of her during the final day of festivities marking the monarch's 70 years on the throne. Thousands massed outside the palace as the monarch appeared on the balcony with her son and heir, Prince Charles, his wife Camilla, and her eldest grandson Prince William and his family. (The queen died three months later, and Charles became king.) A massive fire at a container depot near a port city in southeastern Bangladesh killed at least 49 people, including nine firefighters, and injured more than 100 others. Alec John Such, former bassist and a founding member of Bon Jovi, died at age 70.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-singer Bill Hayes is 98. Broadcast journalist Bill Moyers is 89. Former Canadian Prime Minister Joe Clark is 84. Author Dame Margaret Drabble is 84. Country singer Don Reid (The Statler Brothers) is 78. Rock musician Freddie Stone (AKA Freddie Stewart) (Sly and the Family Stone) is 76. Rock singer Laurie Anderson is 76. Country singer Gail Davies is 75. Author Ken Follett is 74. Financial guru Suze Orman is 72. Rock musician Nicko McBrain (Iron Maiden) is 71. Jazz musician Peter Erskine is 69. Jazz musician Kenny G is 67. Rock singer Richard Butler (Psychedelic Furs) is 67. Actor Beth Hall is 65. Actor Jeff Garlin is 61. Actor Karen Sillas is 60. Actor Ron Livingston is 56. Singer Brian McKnight is 54. Rock musician Claus Norreen (Aqua) is 53. Actor Mark Wahlberg is 52. Actor Chad Allen is 49. Rock musician P-Nut (311) is 49. Actor Navi Rawat (ROH'-waht) is 46. Actor Liza Weil is 46. Rock musician Pete Wentz (Fall Out Boy) is 44. Rock musician Seb Lefebvre (Simple Plan) is 42. Actor Chelsey Crisp is 40. Actor Amanda Crew is 37. Musician/songwriter/producer DJ Mustard is 33. Actor Sophie Lowe is 33. Actor Hank Greenspan is 13.