

# Groton Daily Independent

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## First Round of State Golf Meet

Carly Guthmiller 90- 19th place  
Carlee Johnson 97- 36th place  
Mia Crank 113- 77th place  
Shaylee Peterson 126- 87th place  
Carly Gilbert 126- 87th place

## Groton Community Calendar

### 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)  
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

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

## 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)  
U8Blue vs. Borge at Aberdeen North Complex, 5:30 p.m. (2)  
U8SB hosts Oakes, 5:30 p.m.  
U10SB hosts Oakes, 7 p.m.  
U18SB vs. Claremont at Aberdeen, 6:30 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

by military jets over Washington D.C. on Sunday was allegedly seen "slumped over" in his seat by pursuing pilots before the plane crashed, according to sources.

Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. faces the start of a civil trial on claims that he raped a woman in a New York City hotel a decade ago, an encounter that he insists was consensual.

A state school board in Oklahoma has approved what will be the nation's first religious charter school, despite the state's attorney general claiming the decision violates the Oklahoma Constitution.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, an emergency announcement from Russian President Vladimir Putin that aired on TV and radio stations on Monday night was allegedly a deepfaked video created using A.I., according to Moscow. The incident is thought to represent the first weaponized use of deepfakes in war.

### TALKING POINTS

"I don't want to be unkind to Senator Manchin, but he's kind of dead man walking in West Virginia. There's nowhere for him to go," Former Obama Advisor David Axelrod said about Manchin's chances of re-election to the Senate.

"One of the things I think about, and one of the reasons why I'm on this show, is because of the comments that were made, frankly, on this show: That the only way for a young African American kid to be successful in this country is to be the exception and not the rule. That is a dangerous, offensive, disgusting message to send to our young people today, that the only way to succeed is by being the exception," 2024 presidential candidate and South Carolina Senator Tim Scott said during an appearance on The View.

"Signatories who have services with a potential to disseminate [artificial intelligence]-generated disinformation should, in turn, put in place technology to recognize such content and clearly label this to users. I said many times that we have the main task to protect the freedom of speech. But when it comes to the AI production, I don't see any right for the machines to have the freedom of speech," European Commission Vice President Vera Jourova said.

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is expected to announce his 2024 GOP presidential campaign during a town hall event at Saint Anselm College in New Hampshire.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is expected to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Washington Nationals' LGBTQ-themed "Night OUT" game with the Arizona Diamondbacks this evening.

Prince Harry has arrived at London's Royal Courts of Justice to testify as part of a lawsuit against Mirror Group Newspapers, which he claims illegally obtained information about him and his family over a span of decades.

Progressive activist Cornel West announced his bid for the 2024 presidential election with the left-wing People's Party, claiming that "neither political party wants to tell the truth about Wall Street, about Ukraine, about the Pentagon, about Big Tech."

The pilot of the light aircraft which prompted a response

## Dangerous wild animals encroaching on South Dakota neighborhoods

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

SPEARFISH, S.D. – Holly Hansen doesn't have hard data to prove that potentially dangerous wild animals are entering residential areas with greater frequency, but she does have some pretty strong anecdotal evidence.

In early May, a black bear entered her suburban Spearfish property and killed 16 ducks, chickens and turkeys, she said. Large paw prints in the mud and two piles of bear scat provided evidence of the daytime intruder's identity.

On May 23, an adult mountain lion was hunkered down in a tree at a home on Wyoming Court, well within Spearfish city limits and not far from two schools, a recreation center and two parks. State game officers tranquilized the lion and safely relocated it before any people were endangered. However, the property owner posted a note on social media indicating that her children likely walked beneath the big cat, whose method of killing animals can include an ambush from a tree limb overhead.

Also in May, a resident near Whitewood, between Spearfish and Sturgis, reported that a suspected mountain lion had killed a foal found dead on her ranch, according to the Lawrence County Sheriff's Office.

Those incidents came amid numerous other wild animal sightings reported in residential areas across South Dakota. Among them: a mountain lion photographed on a street in west Rapid City in March and an encounter at Sertoma Park in Sioux Falls in May where a woman walking her dogs had to carry the canines and run from two coyotes that chased her.

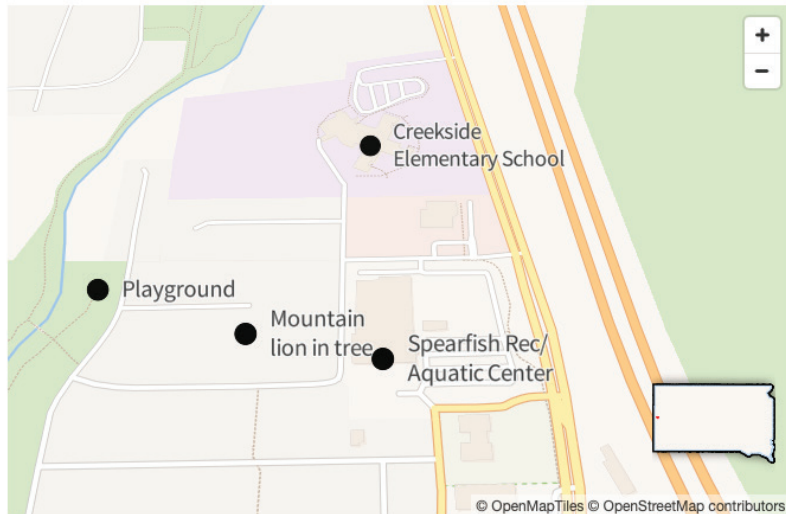
"If they're coming into town and they're comfortable, that's a different level of concern," said Hansen, who has had mountain lions, coyotes, skunks and now a bear visit her Spearfish property, though only the bear attacked animals. "If they're in your stuff, tearing animals apart and eating them, it's a dangerous situation."



**A mountain lion climbed a tree in a residential area in Spearfish in May, near two schools and two parks.** (Photo: Spearfish Police Department)

## Mountain lion sighting in Spearfish

On May 23, an adult mountain lion was hunkered down in Spearfish, near two schools, a recreation center and two parks. State game officers tranquilized the lion and safely relocated it before any people were endangered.



Graphic: Michael Klinski /SD News Watch

be very bad.”

Officials from the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks — the agency tasked with responding to wild animal encounters — were unwilling to answer questions about the frequency and potential risks of wild animals encroaching into residential areas.

Mike Apland, a GFP supervisor in Spearfish, did not return calls or a text message seeking comment from News Watch.

GFP spokesperson Nick Harrington declined to answer questions about the topic or arrange an interview for News Watch despite numerous email and phone requests.

## Animal encounters a global issue

Expanding research into wildlife habitat and human encounters reveals a consistent theme. Encroachment of urban life into animal habitat across the world is increasing. As a result, so are human-animal interactions.

A 2019 study by Colorado State University researchers found that housing and other development had intruded on protected wildlife areas and could reduce them by as much as 12% by 2030.

As urban areas across the world continue to expand, they increasingly shrink habitat for wild animals.

The greater interface between wild animals and residential and developed areas leads to a change in how wild animals behave. It makes them even more likely to brush up against unsuspecting humans, according to a 2020 review of 83 wildlife studies published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*.

## Report of mountain lion above kids concerning, official says

Some wildlife interactions in residential areas are to be expected in South Dakota, where numerous cities border the Black Hills National Forest and other animal habitats.

But the lion removed from Spearfish in May should increase concerns about future interactions with humans, said Terry Mayes, a vice president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation.

“He wasn’t up there to sleep overnight because that is their normal prey activity,” Mayes said. “They ambush from a branch above, and that’s how they get their major kills, including deer and elk. They disable it and eat that animal pretty much entirely, so there’s a potential for an encounter that could



**This paw print found on the property of Holly Hansen of Spearfish measures nearly five inches across and is believed to be that of a black bear that barged into her property and ate more than a dozen farm fowl.** (Photo: Courtesy Holly Hansen)

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**The mountain lion that Spearfish police tranquilized in May after it wandered into a residential area.** (Photo: Spearfish Police Department)

director of the non-profit South Dakota Wildlife Federation.

"I think it's harder on the animals for sure because they don't have the habitat they need. And they're put in a situation where they don't have malicious intent, they're just subject to new situations," she said. "And in those situations, we do need to keep humans safe."

While feeding habits, a change in availability of food or water or illness can lead wild animals into residential areas, the biggest reason for increasing human interactions is loss of habitat for animals across South Dakota and the world, Howell said.

"We've lost so much habitat. And not only that, but it's more fragmented, so the habitat isn't in big chunks, which is what most wildlife needs to thrive," Howell said. "When they lose their habitat, that's when we have more interactions."

## **Small steps to possible improvement**

Farmers and urban planners can improve practices to maintain animal habitat and provide buffers between wild areas and residential or crop lands, Howell said.

Public education can help residents maintain suburban or rural properties in ways that reduce animal interactions.

And government and environmental groups can continue to seek money and methods to put more land under protection.

"Everyone that has an interest in wildlife or any natural resources, we need to remember that it's ours and we need to protect it," she said. "For the federation, we personally take it as a responsibility to protect the natural resources because they are a public trust."

## **Mountain lions, and the hunt, hot topics in S.D.**

Mountain lions have a long and storied history in South Dakota, and the hunting season remains a controversial program for many.

The mountain lion population was strong in the 1800s but rapidly declined amid unregulated hunting in the early 1900s to the point where the animal was listed as a state threatened and protected species from 1978 to 2003. A hunting season was approved in 2005 and has been in place since.

That study concluded that 9 in 10 wild animals adapted to their new urban habitat by changing their diets to include more human foods. They also reduced their range of movement. Both changes could make them more likely to enter or even reside entirely in urban areas.

A July 2020 National Geographic article examined the rising incidence of wildlife in urban areas. It included a map showing how one collared coyote in 2014 had a den atop a parking garage in Chicago and traveled along elevated train tracks and other urban corridors from Michigan Avenue downtown and several miles along Lake Michigan to the city's south side.

## **Increased interactions bad for people and animals**

The increasing interface between wild animals and humans in non-wild areas is not good for either side of the equation. But it's far worse for the animals who find themselves in unfamiliar settings and subject to car accidents or euthanization, said Megan Howell, executive

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Due to difficulty of pursuit and sometimes challenging weather (light snow is best for tracking and sighting), hunters have had a hard time reaching the state's annual quota of 60 total lions or 40 females killed.

The Black Hills season runs from December to April, and prairie hunting is allowed year-round. Hunters are allowed to use dogs in the hunt in Custer State Park and on some other public lands.

## **Big male mountain lion topped 150 pounds**

About 3,000 to 4,000 lion licenses are sold each year, and 2011-2012 was the last time the quota was reached, with 73 animals taken in the Black Hills and Custer State Park.

In recent years, the kill total has ranged from a low of 21 in 2018-2019 to a recent high of 51 total in 2019-2020. So far in 2023, 44 lions have been killed, the largest a 153-pound male estimated to be 7½ years old taken in January in Pennington County.

A 2021 proposal to expand use of hounds to hunt on some public lands outside Custer State Park was opposed by numerous residents who wrote to the GFP before the commission voted in favor. Their comments shone a light on the emotions surrounding the lion hunt overall in South Dakota.

Some argued that the rules could decimate the state's population of roughly 300 lions, while others decried the lion hunt as existing only to provide hunters with a trophy.

"I am very opposed to a pointless mountain lion season," Katie Gilmore of Harrisburg wrote. "Shooting animals for food serves a purpose, trophy hunting does not."

Others were opposed to the use of dogs in lion hunting, which often culminates in a lion being flushed up a tree where it can be shot.

"It is bad enough we have a hunting season on mountain lions when there is no need for one, but to allow the use of hounds is truly despicable," wrote Teresa Hicks of Rapid City. "This isn't hunting. It's cruel and unsportsmanlike."

But the GFP and some wildlife groups support the hunt as an important way to manage the state's lion population. The season continues "as a management tool to manage mountain lion populations at a desired level," according to the GFP website.

## **Deer population may influence interactions**

In addition to habitat loss, the declining deer population in the Black Hills may be another reason mountain lions are migrating into residential areas, according to Mayes with the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, who has become an animal behavior expert.

Deer populations — a primary food source for mountain lions — have declined slightly due to animal losses caused by the emergence of chronic wasting disease and epizootic hemorrhagic disease, a viral illness spread by midge flies, Mayes said.

One metric of deer population is the annual harvest by hunters, which reached a low of roughly 20,000 per year in the late 1970s, rebounded to nearly 100,000 a year in 2010 and recently has hovered closer to 50,000 annually.

Along with population changes, more deer have taken up full-time residence in South Dakota cities. That has caused more than 300 car-deer crashes and \$1 million in property damage a year in Rapid City, said Mayes, who serves on the Rapid City wildlife management board.

In recent years, Mayes said, more deer have become part of established herds that are born, live and die entirely inside city limits. That not only dramatically increases the likelihood of animal interactions with humans but theoretically could attract more lions into buffer lands in and outside the urban area.

The high population of deer in Rapid City has led to six years of an annual culling by city sharpshooters, who removed 237 deer in January and February 2023, according to city records.

## **A devastating loss of family's fowl**

Hansen, the Spearfish area resident, said the bear that tore up her yard and killed her fowl entered her property sometime during the daylight hours of Mother's Day while she and her sons were off fishing.

She keeps animal feed and garbage in metal containers with strong lids to reduce enticements for wild animal visits, but she has experienced a mountain lion on her deck and other close calls with coyotes and other critters.

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The bear climbed a wood pile and broke through a fence before clawing and tearing up her animal houses, killing numerous farm fowl but also a "silly turkey" that followed her around, pecked at windows to get attention and had become somewhat of a pet.

"I walked out there, and it was pretty devastating. There were dead animals and animal parts everywhere," she said. "The bear had torn off a panel attached with deck screws, and he tore off wood and wire."

The bear scat found on her property contained corn and egg shells, which Hansen said likely came from attacks the bear reportedly made on her neighbors' properties.

## Seeking greater information sharing

Hansen said the bear attack and recent mountain lion sightings around Spearfish have heightened her concerns to where she tries not to do chores after dark and traverse her property with a dog or other person present.

"I've seen more and more mountain lions in the past year and more and more coyotes," she said. "They say there's never been a mountain lion attack in South Dakota. But there's also never been a bear killing this many animals, so maybe anything is possible, and it's just a matter of time."

Hansen said she has shared her bear story with neighbors so they are aware. She added that she felt like GFP officials have not done enough to inform the public about wild animal encounters on her property and in other areas of South Dakota. "I think we need to know so people can be prepared," she said.

## Risk can be mitigated, not eliminated

Mayes, who has seen mountain lion tracks at his home about a mile from Monument Hospital in Rapid City, said wild animals will adapt to their surroundings fairly quickly and do what they must to survive, even if it means traipsing into areas populated by humans.

"They're adaptable, they know where the food is, and with them it's all about survival," he said.

Mayes said that regardless of the species, people need to realize that animal encounters are always possible, and that some basic precautions can reduce the risk of a negative interaction.

He urged people not to feed wildlife, to keep animal feed and household garbage safely secured, and to drive slower and be more aware of potential animal movement at dusk, overnight and dawn.

"We have to make peace with the fact that we're going to interact. And we have to know that you can do things to mitigate that, but you can't eliminate it," he said.

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org).



Terry Mayes



## ABOUT BART PFANKUCH

Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is the content director for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal and also worked at newspapers in Florida. Bart has spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and writing coach.



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## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

June 6, 2023 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

- Approval of Agenda
- Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1  
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
- Department Reports
- Water Reservoir Tank Update
- Airport Discussion – Darrell Hillestad
- Park Bathrooms – Dean Marske from HKG Architects
- Approval to Transfer Ownership of Jailhouse to Groton Historical Society – Topper Tastad
- Park Soundsystem Update – Topper Tastad
- Resignation of Chris Khali from Planning & Zoning Board – Effective July 1, 2023
- Baseball Concessions Project
- Pickleball Court Discussion
- Swimming Pool Signage
- Skating Rink Discussion
- Discussion Regarding City Hall Surveillance
- First Reading of Ordinance No. 768 – Amending Sewer Penalty Timeframe
- Minutes
- Bills
- Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
- Hire Summer Employees
- Establishment of Wage for Day Baseball/Softball Coach
- Adjournment

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## Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Out-Hits Competition, Yet Aberdeen Smittys 13U Takes The Win

Even though Groton Jr. Teeners 14U collected six hits to Aberdeen Smittys 13U's three, they still fell 9-4 on Monday

In the second inning, Aberdeen Smittys 13U got their offense started. An error scored one run for Aberdeen Smittys 13U.

In the bottom of the second inning, Groton Jr. Teeners 14U tied things up at two. TC Schuster grounded out, scoring one run.

Aberdeen Smittys 13U pulled away for good with five runs in the third inning. In the third Brooks Jett's sac fly scored one run for Aberdeen Smittys 13U, Jace Byrum doubled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run, an error scored one run for Aberdeen Smittys 13U, and Kaylor Swenson drew a walk, scoring one run.

Donovan Kiesow earned the win for Aberdeen Smittys 13U. Kiesow surrendered two runs on three hits over three innings, striking out six. Maddox Dinger and Mason Backous entered the game out of the bullpen and helped to close out the game in relief.

Tristin Mcgannon took the loss for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The righthander went two and two-thirds innings, allowing seven runs on two hits and striking out four.

Ethan Kroll led Groton Jr. Teeners 14U with two hits in two at bats.

Aberdeen Smittys 13U stole 12 bases during the game as four players stole more than one. Byrum led the way with three.

## Aberdeen Smittys 13U Runs Away With Early Lead in Victory

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U watched the game slip away early and couldn't recover in a 29-10 loss to Aberdeen Smittys 13U on Tuesday. Aberdeen Smittys 13U scored on a double by Brooks Jett and a triple by Porter Lozenski in the first inning.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U collected ten hits and Aberdeen Smittys 13U had 13 in the high-scoring affair.

Aberdeen Smittys 13U got on the board in the first inning when Jett doubled on a 2-1 count, scoring two runs.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U tallied four runs in the second inning. Gavin Kroll, Lincoln Krause, Shaydon Wood, and Ryder Schelle all moved runners across the plate with RBIs in the inning.

Aberdeen Smittys 13U scored 15 runs in the fifth inning. Jett, Maddox Dinger, Donovan Kiesow, Max Bonns, Ryan Peterson, and Preston Welke each had RBIs in the frame.

Jace Byrum got the win for Aberdeen Smittys 13U. The righty surrendered eight runs on eight hits over four innings, striking out two. Mason Backous threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Ethan Kroll took the loss for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The righty surrendered nine runs on four hits over one and two-thirds innings.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U saw the ball well today, racking up ten hits in the game. Karson Zak and Nick Groeblichhoff each managed multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Zak led Groton Jr. Teeners 14U with three hits in four at bats.

Aberdeen Smittys 13U tallied 13 hits on the day. Jett, JaSean Rivera, Backous, and Lozenski all collected multiple hits for Aberdeen Smittys 13U.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Inflation drives up cost of broadband internet projects**

**Proponents call for continued commitment while legislator questions subsidies**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 5, 2023 4:12 PM**

COLTON — Inflation has taken a toll on ambitious state and national plans for expanding access to high-speed internet service, causing funding for the projects to lose purchasing power.

And while proponents say it's time to double down on support for the projects, a state representative sees it as an opportunity to rein in the spending.

At a project site near Colton, Golden West Telecommunications CEO Denny Law said the price of fiber-optic cable has gone up 15-50% since 2018. He said higher fuel prices and rising wages are also taking a toll.

"All of those things flow through to increase the price of the broadband deployment," Law said.

Mike Young is the chief operating officer of South Dakota-based ANCO Underground, a contractor that installs utility infrastructure. Young said pandemic-related supply chain issues have resulted in six- to eight-month backorders on new equipment.

"Which makes it difficult for a contractor to forecast around," Young said.

And in some instances, the cost of that equipment "is going up by about 4% a quarter – that's 16% in a year," Young said. "If inflation doesn't slow down, it will continue to have an impact on our bottom line."

Young said that's all having an impact on the company's ability to bring broadband to places like the Black Hills, where cutting through rock to bury fiber-optic cable is an already expensive endeavor, requiring help from state and federal government funding.

"These subsidies can offset that to help close the digital divide out there," Young said.

Law said Golden West Telecommunications is deciding whether to moderate the size and scope of projects. He's optimistic that Congress and the Federal Communications Commission will refill broadband funding pools. Law said these projects could not happen without subsidies, and D.C. delivering "will allow companies like Golden West to continue with this for years ahead."

Federal Communications Commissioner Brendan Carr and U.S. Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, joined Law at the Colton job site recently.

"We have a unique opportunity to truly end the digital divide," Carr told South Dakota Searchlight. "We have the support available from D.C. to do that. The real challenge, now, is making sure we have the right policies in place."

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic – and record stimulus spending by governments in response – a rising tide of inflation has engulfed nations worldwide. The pandemic also highlighted the value of high-speed internet connections, as the world increasingly relied on digital platforms for work, education and health care.



**Workers lay fiber-optic cable at a broadband expansion site near Colton.** (Joshua Haiar/  
South Dakota Searchlight)

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**Golden West CEO Denny Law shows Federal Communications Commissioner Brendan Carr and Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, a broadband expansion site near Colton.** (Joshua

Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

While the definition of "high-speed internet" has changed over time, it generally refers to an internet connection that provides faster data transfer rates compared to traditional dial-up connections. "Broadband" is a term often used interchangeably with high-speed internet. It refers to a type of internet connection that has a wide bandwidth, enabling the transition of multiple data streams.

Thune is the ranking member of the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Media and Broadband. Despite rising costs, he remains committed to broadband expansion given the benefits.

"Whether it's distance learning, telemedicine or precision agriculture," Thune said. "And it's becoming easier for people to work and live here. Even if they have a job someplace else, if you have high-speed internet services, the sky is the limit as to what you can do."

## Questioning subsidies

Not every South Dakota Republican politician is excited about the additional spending.

Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, questions if providing

high-speed internet access is the role of government.

"The federal government has already been spending billions and billions of dollars on this," Karr said. "Is it the role of government to cut through a mountain to deliver internet? I question that. Because, if you move somewhere remote, there are going to be trade-offs."

Citing mounting concerns over inflation and the federal budget deficit, Karr argues government's involvement in broadband expansion is an overstep that should be curtailed.

"We talk about a debt ceiling and the question is always, 'What are you gonna cut?'" Karr said. "This is one of these areas where we should take a look."

Karr argues that market forces and private-sector initiatives can drive broadband expansion, pointing to industry-led projects like high-altitude balloons that beam down wireless internet.

"We are stifling innovation; because, when we hand out cash, it's those that are not innovative that are first to the trough," Karr said. "If inflation has increased the cost, these private companies benefiting from this should pony up that difference."

Proponents of government-subsidized broadband expansion say it has measurable benefits. According to a 2020 Federal Reserve report, a 10 percentage point increase in broadband access in 25 developed countries resulted in a 0.9 to 1.5 percentage point increase in annual per capita growth. Additionally, consumers benefited from access to a wider array of goods and services, leading to cost savings estimated at \$1,850 per household annually. And homeowners experienced higher property values.

According to the Governor's Office of Economic Development, \$221.3 million was spent on 90 broadband expansion projects in South Dakota from 2019 to 2022. That includes \$86.3 million of federal funds, \$28 million of state funds, and \$107 million of private funds, giving high-speed internet access to 27,500 locations.

In May, the governor's office announced another \$32.5 million would go toward 13 more projects, connecting 3,137 more locations. The Governor's Office of Economic Development did not respond to South Dakota Searchlight questions for this story.

According to BroadbandNow, 88% of South Dakotans have access to 100 megabit-per-second internet service, ranking 35th among all states in that statistic.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **Higher-ed policy by the 'perpetually aggrieved and easily offended' For Noem, better universities are just a phone call away**

**DANA HESS**

In late May, Gov. Kristi Noem sent a four-page letter to the Board of Regents, telling them to get busy and start graduating more students. In the letter, Noem noted that South Dakota's university graduation rate is 47% while the national average is 63%. She told the regents to have South Dakota's graduation rate up to 65% by 2028.

That seems like a reasonable goal. The rest of Noem's letter hit on familiar, some would say worn out, topics — don't do business with the China, ban drag shows, and make history and government courses a graduation requirement. Noem also admonished regents to remove any barriers that keep students from exercising their right to free speech.

One of Noem's edicts was banning "preferred pronouns." Well, if you prefer to pick your own pronoun, the governor's policy hardly enhances your right to free speech. The same goes for banning drag shows. She's all for free speech, just don't pick dressing in drag as your preferred way of expressing yourself. She doesn't seem to realize that it's impossible to mandate what you want to see or hear if you're really a champion of free speech.

Her instructions to the regents on the topic of drag shows notes that the topic may be debated in classrooms but shouldn't be "celebrated through public performances on taxpayer-owned property at taxpayer-funded schools." And there's the rub. State government in South Dakota has been turning its back on higher education for years. With fewer and fewer state dollars funneled into our universities, the responsibility for funding education has fallen to students through higher tuition and fees. Since they pay most of the costs, maybe the students are the ones who should be making policies concerning personal pronouns and drag shows.

University building projects, for which a university has raised all the funds, still need to be endorsed by the Legislature. It has gotten to the point in Pierre where there is a small but consistent GOP minority, often part of what the Senate Republican Leader refers to as "wackadoodles," who vote against each of those projects. If they can't even get behind higher education when the universities themselves raise all the money for their projects, it's probably not worth betting on them ever voting for increasing state funding to ease the burden on students.

Tucked away toward the end of Noem's letter was one of its highlights: she announced the institution of a "whistleblower hotline." In an effort to increase "transparency" and "accountability," the hotline will allow callers to point out when the universities aren't living up to Noem's standards. Those calls are important to her as they will "guide policy decisions moving forward."

So that's what it has come to: Higher education policy decisions will be made based on the comments of the perpetually aggrieved and the easily offended. What could possibly go wrong?

In the letter, Noem makes the case that it is her duty to "protect the people of South Dakota, ensure that their tax burden remains low, and spend those tax dollars wisely." That was likely also her role in 2019 when she started her first term as governor. Did the graduation rate suddenly plunge during her first four years in office? Why wait until now to expect more of the Board of Regents and make those expectations known in such a public way?

It's easy to suspect that the bulk of the letter — dumping personal pronouns, making history and government courses a graduation requirement, prohibiting drag shows and setting up a whistleblower hotline — will make for pretty good talking points on the Fox News programs Noem frequents.

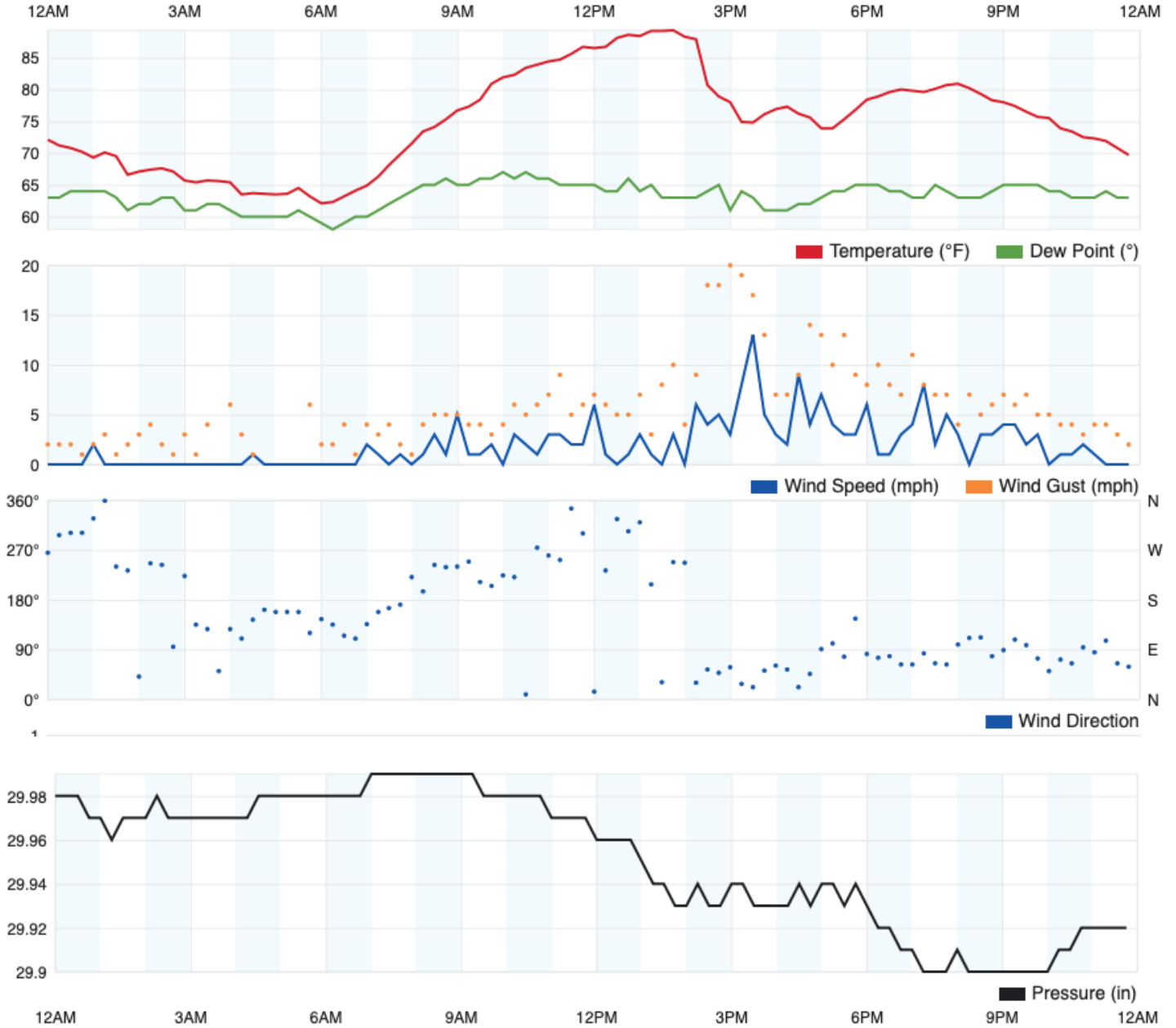
Let's hope Noem really wants to improve higher education. Though it's hard to believe that dumping personal pronouns is going to do much to spark an increase in graduation rates. Maybe all of this is timed to help the governor burnish her conservative credentials before making a move in the Republican primary.

*Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
 20%		 40%	 20%	 30%	 30%	 40%
Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Chance T-storms	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Sunny then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms
<b>High: 92 °F</b>	<b>Low: 64 °F</b>	<b>High: 92 °F</b>	<b>Low: 64 °F</b>	<b>High: 90 °F</b>	<b>Low: 64 °F</b>	<b>High: 87 °F</b>

## Ongoing Shower and Thunderstorm Chances Through Saturday

### High Temperatures

Today: 87 to 93°

Wed: 83 to 94° (warmest over central SD)

Thursday: 84 to 94° (warmest over central SD)

Friday: 83 to 90°

Weekend: Cooler! Upper 70s/low 80s

	Probability of Precipitation Forecast												6/11 Sun Maximum									
	6/6 Tue			6/7 Wed			6/8 Thu			6/9 Fri				6/10 Sat								
	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm		
Aberdeen	0	5	20	10	5	5	35	35	15	15	35	35	30	30	45	45	25	20	10	10	0	43
Britton	10	10	25	20	10	10	40	40	15	15	35	35	35	30	40	40	20	15	10	10	0	42
Brookings	5	10	35	25	15	25	60	60	15	15	20	20	15	20	50	50	40	40	40	35	5	60
Chamberlain	0	5	20	20	0	0	15	15	15	15	25	25	25	20	35	60	60	60	40	35	20	60
Clark	5	10	25	20	10	10	45	45	15	15	30	30	25	30	45	45	30	25	20	10	5	46
Eagle Butte	0	5	5	0	0	0	5	10	10	10	30	35	35	25	55	60	60	45	30	15	10	62
Ellendale	5	10	20	10	5	10	45	45	15	20	40	40	35	30	45	45	20	15	10	10	0	44
Eureka	0	5	10	5	5	5	30	30	15	15	40	40	35	30	50	50	25	20	10	10	5	48
Gettysburg	0	5	5	5	5	0	20	20	15	15	30	35	35	25	50	50	50	35	20	15	5	52
Huron	0	5	20	20	5	10	40	40	15	15	25	25	20	20	40	45	45	45	30	25	10	47
Kennebec	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	10	10	10	20	25	25	20	50	65	65	50	30	25	15	63
McIntosh	0	5	5	5	5	0	10	10	10	15	35	40	40	30	55	55	40	30	20	10	5	55
Milbank	10	10	35	30	15	15	45	45	15	15	25	25	25	25	45	45	20	20	20	20	5	47
Miller	5	5	10	5	5	5	25	25	15	15	30	30	30	30	50	50	50	40	20	15	5	48
Mobridge	0	5	5	5	5	0	15	15	10	10	30	30	30	25	50	50	40	30	15	10	5	48
Murdo	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	10	10	10	20	25	25	15	50	70	70	55	40	30	15	68
Pierre	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	5	5	10	20	25	25	25	45	60	60	50	25	15	10	60
Redfield	0	5	15	10	5	5	35	35	15	15	30	30	30	25	45	45	35	25	15	10	5	45
Sisseton	10	15	30	25	15	10	40	40	15	15	25	30	30	30	35	35	20	15	10	10	0	38
Watertown	5	10	30	25	10	15	50	50	15	15	30	30	25	30	50	50	25	25	20	20	5	50
Webster	5	10	25	20	10	10	45	45	20	20	35	35	30	30	45	45	25	20	15	15	5	46
Wheaton	10	15	35	30	20	20	35	35	10	10	25	25	25	25	35	35	15	15	15	15	0	37



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Chances for showers and thunderstorms continue each afternoon for the next several days. A more widespread chance of storms look possible Friday into Saturday. Temps continue above average with cool temps expected for the weekend.

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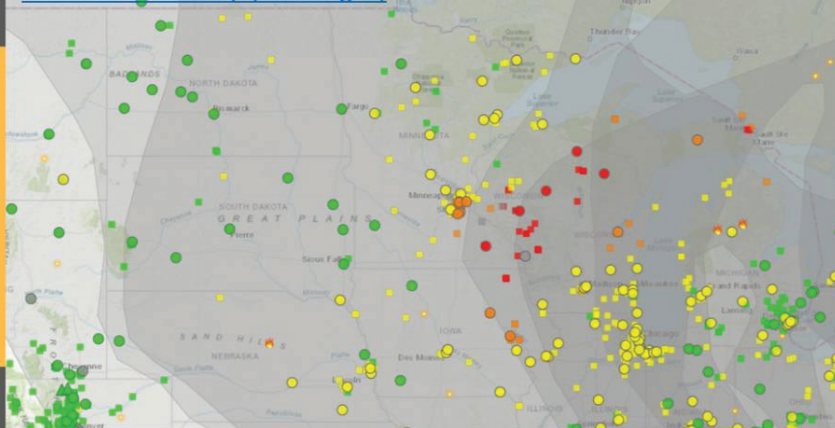
## Wildfire Smoke Returning from Canada



Smoke mainly from fires across eastern Canada (Ontario).

Most smoke to remain elevated, but don't be surprised if you notice some changes to surface air quality through Tuesday

[Fire and Smoke Map \(airnow.gov\)](https://airnow.gov)



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Here's a snapshot of the extent of smoke across the Northern Plains to Upper Great Lakes Monday morning. Expect smoke to remain over the next few days. While the main result will be a hazy sky, don't be surprised if you notice some changes to surface air quality. Check out the latest conditions a... fire. [airnow.gov](https://airnow.gov)



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 90 °F at 1:36 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:03 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 3:03 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 36 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1950

Record Low: 30 in 1897

Average High: 78

Average Low: 53

Average Precip in June.: 0.66

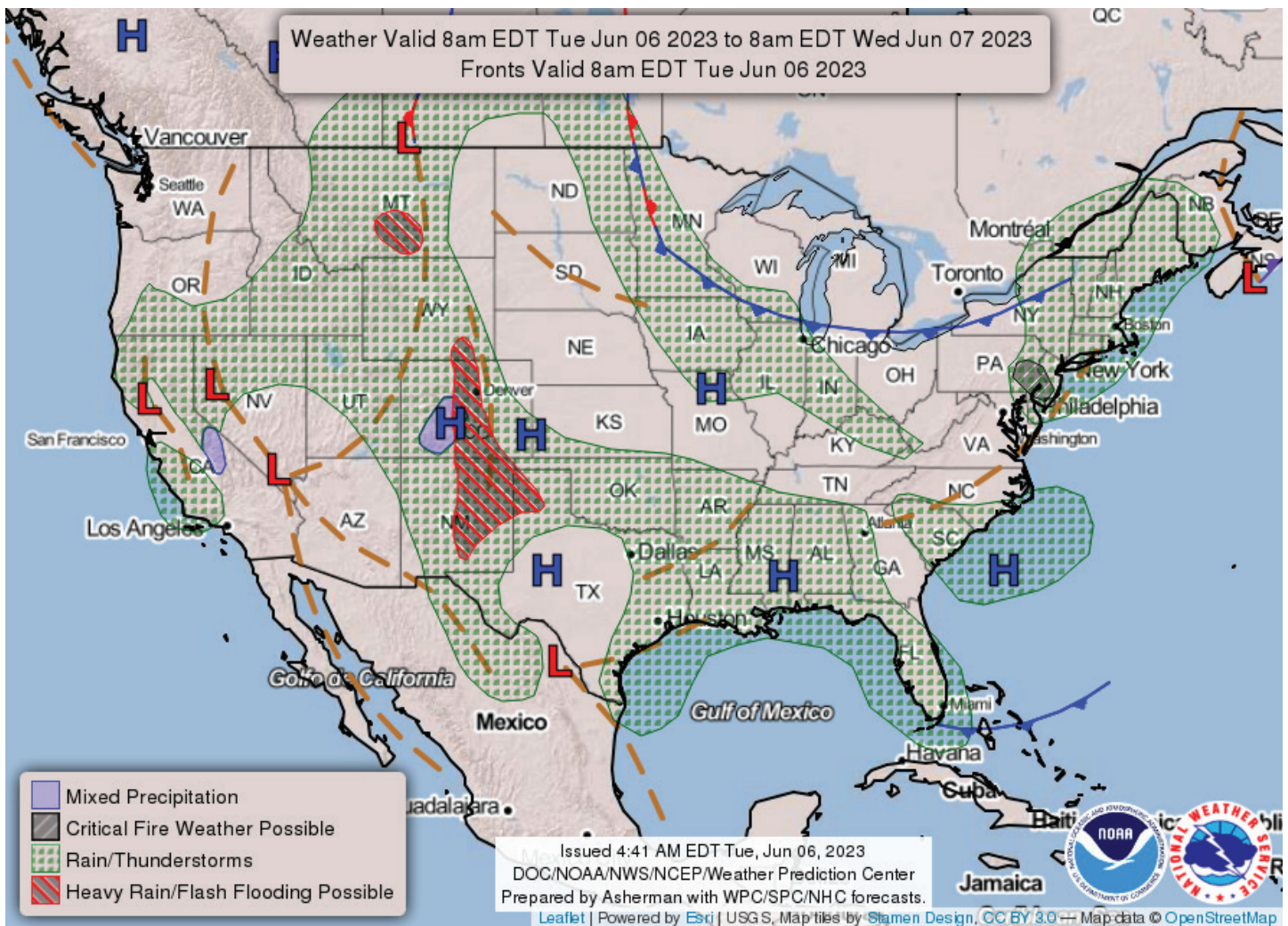
Precip to date in June.: 0.04

Average Precip to date: 7.91

Precip Year to Date: 7.95

Sunset Tonight: 9:19:07 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:42:44 AM



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## Today in Weather History

June 6, 1895: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast from 6 miles west of Summit, passing 3 miles northwest of Summit. Buildings were damaged on eight farms.

June 6, 1897: Light to heavy frost, and in some localities, killing frost occurred on the 6th and 7th. These cold temperatures along with last season frost in May and wet conditions several hampered the planting season. Luckily growing conditions changed towards the middle and end of the month. Some low temperatures on the 6th include 26 degrees in Castlewood and Watertown, 29 in Mellette, 30 in Aberdeen and Milbank, and 32 in Highmore. Some low temperatures on the 7th include; 24 degrees in Castlewood, 25 in Watertown, and 30 degrees in Milbank.

June 6, 1999: Heavy rains of 2 to 4 inches caused flash flooding on a creek feeding into the Grand River. At a ranch southwest of Bullhead, a bunkhouse wall moved off the foundation by a wall of water coming down the creek. All of the contents in the bunkhouse were destroyed. A machine shop was washed away along with several pieces of equipment and many tools. Some tools and equipment were found more than a mile down the creek. A pump house and a grain bin were also destroyed. A pickup was washed down the stream, and a propane tank near home was rolled over. A colt was picked up by the water but managed to escape. The powerful flow of water took out several dead trees and washed them downstream. Finally, a road and a culvert were washed out by the flash flood.

1816: The temperature reached 92 degrees at Salem, Massachusetts during an early heat wave, but then plunged 49 degrees in 24 hours to commence the famous "year without a summer." Snow fell near Quebec City, Quebec Canada from the 6th through the 10th and accumulated up to a foot with "drifts reaching the axle trees of carriages."

1894: One of the greatest floods in U.S. history occurred as the Willamette River overflowed to inundate half of the business district of Portland, Oregon. The river crested at 33.5 feet, the worst flood ever recorded in the city.

1975 - A tornado, reportedly spinning backwards (spinning clockwise), was sighted near Alva, OK. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - Severe thunderstorms with large hail and winds to 100 mph caused one million dollars damage around Norfolk, VA. A forty-two foot fishing boat capsized near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel drowning 13 of the 27 persons on board. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in southern California produced one inch hail at Mount Pinos, and marble size hail at Palmdale. Thunderstorms in southeastern Arizona produced heavy rain leaving some washes under four feet of water. Six cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the upper 90s. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Seventeen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Williston ND with a reading of 104 degrees. Thunderstorms in Florida produced wind gusts to 65 mph which damaged two mobile homes northwest of Melbourne injuring six people. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing during the late morning hours produced severe weather through the afternoon and night. Thunderstorms spawned 13 tornadoes, and there were 154 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A strong (F-3) tornado injured six persons at Lorenzo, TX, and thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph killed one person at Glasscock City, TX. Softball size hail was reported at Lipscomb and Glen Cove TX. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

**START IMMEDIATELY!**

The great American novelist, Sinclair Lewis, was invited to give a lecture to a group of college students who wanted to become writers. As they sat quietly and waited expectantly, he opened his remarks by asking, "How many of you intend to become successful writers?"

Immediately, everyone in the audience held up a hand to declare their intentions. "In that case," said Lewis, "my advice to you is to go home immediately and write."

Shortly after creating Adam, God directed him to care for and tend to the Garden that He had created for him. And, ever since then, man has been responsible to work with God and take care of His creation. Each day we are to accept every task that comes our way and do it as "though we are working for the Lord." Why? Because He has tasked us to care for His creation!

"Remember," said Paul, "the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward" if we "work hard and cheerfully" for Him. We must accept every task and each responsibility He offers us and recognize it as an opportunity to worship and serve Him every day. "Whatever we do - in word or deed - we are to do it for the glory of God!" We work for the Creator of the universe!

Prayer: Father, may we always remember that whatever we do, we are to do as an act of worship. We do this from hearts full of love because of Your salvation. In Christ's Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. Colossians 3:23-24



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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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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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 15 Hrs 54 Mins 47  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.05.23

6 15 33 42 43 7

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$3,550,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 54  
DRAW: Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.05.23

15 20 23 33 46 17

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 24 Mins 47  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.03.23

7 8 9 14 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$85,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 54  
DRAW: Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.05.23

3 11 14 37 44 2

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 53  
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.05.23

2 31 45 46 49 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$285,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 53  
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Prince Harry gets his day in court against tabloids he accuses of blighting his life

By BRIAN MELLEY and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince Harry entered a courtroom witness box Tuesday, swearing to tell the truth in testimony against a tabloid publisher he accuses of phone hacking and other unlawful snooping.

Harry held a Bible in one hand as he was sworn in at the High Court in London, where he is suing the publisher of the Daily Mirror. Earlier, he'd arrived at court in a black SUV and entered a modern wing past dozens of photographers and TV cameras.

Harry accuses the publisher of the Mirror of using unlawful techniques on an "industrial scale" to get scoops. He faces hours of cross-examination by a lawyer for the defendant, Mirror Group Newspapers, which is contesting the claims.

Sitting in the witness box and dressed in a dark suit and tie, Harry told Mirror Group attorney Andrew Green that he had "experienced hostility from the press since I was born." The prince accused the tabloids of playing "a destructive role in my growing-up."

The 38-year-old son of King Charles III is the first senior British royal since the 19th century to face questioning in a court. An ancestor, the future King Edward VII, appeared as a witness in a trial over a gambling scandal in 1891.

Harry has made a mission of holding the U.K. press to account for what he sees as its hounding of him and his family.

Setting out the prince's case in court Monday, his lawyer, David Sherborne, said that from Harry's childhood, British newspapers used hacking and subterfuge to mine snippets of information that could be turned into front-page scoops.

He said stories about Harry were big sellers for the newspapers, and some 2,500 articles had covered all facets of his life during the time period of the case — 1996 to 2011 — from injuries at school to experimenting with marijuana and cocaine to ups and downs with girlfriends.

"Nothing was sacrosanct or out of bounds" for the tabloids, the lawyer said.

In a written witness statement published Tuesday, Harry said he felt "as though the tabloid press thought that they owned me absolutely."

"I genuinely feel that in every relationship that I've ever had — be that with friends, girlfriends, with family or with the army, there's always been a third party involved, namely the tabloid press," he said.

Hacking — the practice of guessing or using default security codes to listen to celebrities' cellphone 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. 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 the newspaper denies or has not admitted any of Harry's claims, which relate to 33 published articles.

Defense lawyer Green said Monday there was "simply no evidence capable of supporting the finding that the Duke of Sussex was hacked, let alone on a habitual basis."

Green said he plans to question Harry for a day and a half.

Harry had been expected in court Monday for the opening of the hacking case, the first of his several lawsuits against the media to go to a full trial.

He was absent because he'd taken a flight Sunday from Los Angeles after the birthday of his 2-year-old daughter Lilibet, Sherborne said — to the evident chagrin of the judge, Timothy Fancourt.

"I'm a little surprised," said Fancourt, noting he had directed Harry to be prepared to testify.

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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.

He 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.

While Harry's memoir and other recent media ventures have been an effort to reclaim his life's narrative, which has largely been shaped by the media, he has no such control during cross-examination in a courtroom full of reporters taking down every word.

## Normandy marks D-Day's 79th anniversary, honors WWII veterans

By SYLVIE CORBET and TARA COPP Associated Press

ON OMAHA BEACH, France (AP) — An overwhelming sound of gunfire and men's screams. That's how World War II veteran Marie Scott described D-Day, as Tuesday's ceremonies got underway in honor of those who fought for freedom in the largest naval, air and land operation in history.

This year's tribute to the young soldiers who died in Normandy also reminds veterans, officials and visitors what Ukraine faces today.

On Tuesday, the whistling sound of the wind accompanied many reenactors who came to Omaha Beach at dawn to mark the 79th anniversary of the assault that led to the liberation of France and Western Europe from Nazi control. Some brought bunches of flowers; others waved American flags.

Scott lived it all through her ears. She was just 17 when she was posted as communication operator in Portsmouth, Britain. Her job was to pass on messages between men on the ground and Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and senior officers who were supervising the operation.

"I was in the war. I could hear gunfire, machine guns, bombing aircraft, men screaming, shouting, men giving orders," she recalled.

"After a few moments of horror, I realized what was happening ... and I thought, well, you know, there's no time for horror. You've got a job to do. So get on with it. Which is what I did."

Now about to turn 97, Scott said D-Day was a "pivotal point" in her life.

"As a noncombatant, I was still in the war and I realized the enormity of war. People were dying in that moment."

Scott said she was "disgusted" that another war was now raging on the European continent following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"For me, war should only be undertaken if it's absolutely, if there's no other way of solving the problem. It's an atrocity. That's how I feel," she said.

British veteran Mervyn Kersh, who landed on D-Day on Gold Beach, said Western allies should send maximum military aid to Ukraine: "The only way to stay free is to be strong."

Kersh, 98, added with a sense of humor: "I'm still in the reserve, I'm waiting to go to Ukraine now. Next job."

On Tuesday, a ceremony took place at the American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, overlooking Omaha Beach, which is home to the graves of 9,386 United States soldiers, most of whom lost their lives in the D-Day landings and ensuing operations. On the Walls of the Missing are inscribed 1,557 names. Some of those named have since been recovered and identified.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Mark Milley took part in the commemoration alongside WWII veterans.

The Normandy celebrations were also a chance for Gen. Milley to linger with troops who consider him one of their own, as he winds down his own four-decade military career. The chairman held commands in both the 82nd Airborne Division and the 101st Airborne Division, and the Normandy fields, towns and causeways are these divisions' hallowed ground.

Hundreds of current soldiers from both units were there, some on leave with beers in hand, some jump-



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ing out of aircraft as their predecessors did 79 years before.

This was Milley's last Normandy visit as their top commander – and as he walked through Sainte-Mere-Eglise, known as the first town to be liberated from Nazi occupation, attended commemorative football games or spoke at ceremonies, it felt like the general stopped to talk to and give a commemorative coin to every last one of them.

An international ceremony was later scheduled at the nearby British Normandy Memorial in the presence of officials from Germany and the nine principal Allied nations: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Poland, Norway and the U.S. French Minister of Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu and British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace were expected to attend.

Many visitors came to the American Cemetery ahead of Tuesday's ceremonies to pay tribute to those who sacrificed their lives.

Jean-Philippe Bertrand, a visitor from the southern French city of Marseille, walked through the countless lines of white crosses Monday. "It's unimaginable to make such a sacrifice for my freedom, for my son's freedom," he said.

"You hear about it on the news and you see the pictures. But once you're here and you see the reality and the sacrifice that has been made for our beautiful country — I wanted to make the trip once in my life to thank all these people to whom we owe so much," he added.

German professor Andreas Fuchs, who is teaching French in Berlin, brought students ages 10 to 12 to Normandy via an exchange program.

"It's very important for children to have a moment in their lives to understand the liberation of Europe. And to know what peace has been for 80 years," he said.

Jeffrey Schaeffer, Nicolas Garriga and Thomas Padilla contributed to the story.

## Oakland Athletics move to Las Vegas in flux as Nevada Legislature adjourns

By GABE STERN Associated Press/Report for America

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — A plan to help build a stadium for the Oakland Athletics in Las Vegas is in flux after Nevada lawmakers adjourned their four-month legislative session.

The future of the contentious bill is now uncertain after the Democratic-controlled Legislature did not advance it before the midnight deadline as Monday turned to Tuesday. The proposal could potentially be considered in a special legislative session at a date to be determined later, where lawmakers would later vote on it.

Lawmakers also failed to pass one of the five major budget bills that included over \$1 billion to fund capital improvement projects that fund state public works and construction, which would also likely be considered for a special session. The measure faltered in the Senate as they ran out of time for a second vote after party disagreements lasted until the midnight deadline.

In a statement at 1 a.m., Republican Gov. Lombardo said he would call a special session later Tuesday morning, where he would set the agenda for legislative priorities.

Now, the timeline is murky for a bill that has revived the national debate over public funding for private sports stadiums — a measure that could add to Las Vegas' growing sports scene amid concerns and skepticism among economists about minimal benefits for a hefty public price tag.

The bulk of the public funding for the \$1.5 billion retractable roof stadium would come from \$380 million in public assistance, partly through \$180 million in transferable tax credits and \$120 million in county bonds — taxpayer-backed loans, to help finance projects and a special tax district around the stadium. Backers have pledged the district will generate enough money to pay off those bonds and interest.

The A's would not owe property taxes for the publicly owned stadium and Clark County, which includes Las Vegas, also would contribute \$25 million in credit toward infrastructure costs.

Also potentially under consideration in the special session is a major film tax credit bill that would involve

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up to \$190 million annually for at least 20 years to recruit major film studios to Las Vegas. Sony has announced it would commit a \$1 billion expansion in Las Vegas with a competitive deal.

Senate Minority Leader Heidi Seevers Gansert indicated a special session could come soon in a statement early Monday morning.

"The Senate Republicans fully support Governor Lombardo and await his call for a special session to find common ground solutions for Nevadans," she said.

The disagreements over the capital improvement project to the exclusion of charter schools from a handful of capital funds and pay initiatives that also went to public schools.

Democratic Speaker Steve Yeager's office canceled a scheduled press conference moments after midnight, when the Legislature failed to pass the fifth budget bill. In a statement, he said legislative Republicans "have once again put politics before policy" by not passing the capital improvements project.

The late-night conflicts came after lawmakers shuffled from room to room on Monday, hosting last-minute conference committees where they agreed on amendments to dozens of bills as the midnight deadline approached. Oftentimes committees would meet 10 minutes in advance and would last for as short as two minutes. The Legislature advanced dozens of bills to Lombardo's desk, who now has 10 days to sign or veto them.

For four months, Democratic leaders in the State and Assembly fought the new Republican governor on policy issues ranging from taxes and budgets to schools and crime.

Also on Monday, a widely-supported program that would allow the state to buy back and retire groundwater rights in diminished basins died after not receiving a hearing in the Senate finance committee. It comes after the state overallocated water rights decades ago, in-part leading to a scramble for how to save groundwater water quickly. The program would have been one of the most expansive among western states, and backers wanted at least \$5 million to start the program.

Lombardo also became the first governor in the nation to veto a medical aid in dying bill, which would have allowed patients with a terminal illness, under particular circumstances, to self-administer life-ending medication under certain circumstances. It would follow other states recently adopting this measure, including Oregon, Washington and California. The bill has now gone through the Legislature five times without passing.

Another bill that died in the state Senate was baby bonds legislation that would have established trust funds for children born into Medicaid, and parental leave for state workers. That was a top priority for Democratic treasurer Zach Conine.

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## **Ukraine accuses Russia of destroying major dam near Kherson, warns of ecological disaster**

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The wall of a major dam in a part of southern Ukraine that Moscow controls collapsed Tuesday after a reported explosion, sending water gushing downriver and prompting dire warnings of ecological damage as officials from both sides in the war ordered residents to evacuate.

Ukraine accused Russian forces of blowing up the dam and hydroelectric power station, while Russian officials blamed Ukrainian military strikes in the contested area.

The fallout could have far-reaching consequences: flooding homes, streets and businesses downstream; depleting water levels upstream that help cool Europe's largest nuclear power plant; and draining supplies of drinking water to the south in Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed.

The dam break added a stunning new dimension to Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, now in its 16th month. Ukrainian forces were widely seen to be moving forward with a long-anticipated counteroffensive

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in patches along more than 1,000 kilometers (621 miles) of frontline in the east and south of Ukraine.

It was not immediately clear whether either side benefits from the damage to the dam, since both Russian-controlled and Ukrainian-held lands are at risk of flooding. The damage could also potentially hinder Ukraine's counteroffensive in the south, while at the same time Russia depends on the dam to supply water to the Crimea region it annexed illegally in 2014.

Amid official outrage, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he convened an urgent meeting of the National Security Council. He alleged that Russian forces set off a blast inside the dam structure at 2.50 a.m. (2350 GMT) and said some 80 settlements were in danger.

Ukraine's nuclear operator Energoatom said in a Telegram statement that the damage to the dam "could have negative consequences" for the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is Europe's biggest, but wrote that for now the situation is "controllable."

The U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency said in a statement there was "no immediate risk to the safety of the plant," which requires water for its cooling system.

It said that IAEA staff on site have been told the dam level is falling by 5 centimeters (2 inches) an hour. At that rate, the supply from the reservoir should last a few days, it said.

The plant also has alternative sources of water, including a large cooling pond than can provide water "for some months," the statement said.

Ukrainian authorities have previously warned that the dam's failure could unleash 18 million cubic meters (4.8 billion gallons) of water and flood Kherson and dozens of other areas where hundreds of thousands of people live.

The World Data Center for Geoinformatics and Sustainable Development, a Ukrainian nongovernmental organization, estimated that nearly 100 villages and towns would be flooded. It also reckoned that the water level would start dropping only after five-seven days.

A total collapse in the dam would wash away much of the broad river's left bank, according to the Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Working Group, an organization of environmental activists and experts documenting the war's environmental effects.

Mykhailo Podolyak, a senior adviser to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said that "a global ecological disaster is playing out now, online, and thousands of animals and ecosystems will be destroyed in the next few hours."

Videos posted online began testifying to the spillover. One showed floodwaters inundating a long road-way; another showed a beaver scurrying for high ground from rising waters.

The Ukrainian Interior Ministry called for residents of 10 villages on the Dnipro's right bank and parts of the city of Kherson downriver to gather essential documents and pets, turn off appliances, and leave, while cautioning against possible disinformation.

The Russian-installed mayor of occupied Nova Kakhovka, Vladimir Leontyev, said it was being evacuated as water poured into the city.

Ukraine controls five of the six dams along the Dnipro, which runs from its northern border with Belarus down to the Black Sea and is crucial for the entire country's drinking water and power supply.

Oleksandr Prokudin, the head of the Kherson Regional Military Administration, said in a video posted to Telegram shortly before 7 a.m. that "the Russian army has committed yet another act of terror," and warned that water will reach "critical levels" within five hours.

Ukraine's state hydro power generating company wrote in a statement that "The station cannot be restored." Ukrhydroenergo also claimed that Russia blew up the station from inside the engine room.

Leontyev, the Russian-appointed mayor, said Tuesday that numerous Ukrainian strikes on the Kakhovka hydroelectric plant destroyed its valves, and "water from the Kakhovka reservoir began to uncontrollably flow downstream." Leontyev added that damage to the station was beyond repair, and it would have to be rebuilt.

Ukraine and Russia have previously accused each other of targeting the dam with attacks, and last October Zelenskyy predicted that Russia would destroy the dam in order to cause a flood.

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Authorities, experts and residents have for months expressed concerns about water flows through — and over — the Kakhovka dam.

In February, water levels were so low that many feared a meltdown at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, whose cooling systems are supplied with water from the Kakhovka reservoir held up by the dam.

By mid-May, after heavy rains and snow melt, water levels rose beyond normal levels, flooding nearby villages. Satellite images showed water washing over damaged sluice gates.

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

## Virginia plane crash investigators ask when pilot became unresponsive and why aircraft flew its path

By SARAH BRUMFIELD and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The pilot of a business jet that flew over Washington and crashed in a remote part of Virginia appeared to be slumped over and unresponsive, three U.S. officials said Monday, recounting observations by fighter pilots who intercepted the wayward flight.

The revelations came as federal investigators trudged through rugged terrain to reach the site where the plane slammed into a mountain Sunday, killing four people. The officials who said that the fighter pilots saw the civilian pilot slumped over had been briefed on the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss details of the military operation.

The plane's owner told news outlets that his daughter and 2-year-old granddaughter were aboard.

The New York-bound plane took an erratic flight path — inexplicably, turning around over Long Island to fly directly over the nation's capital — which prompted the military to scramble fighter jets. This caused a sonic boom heard in Washington, Maryland and Virginia.

Remote terrain around the crash site posed major challenges to the investigation. It took investigators several hours to hike into the rural area near the community of Montebello, about 60 miles (97 kilometers) southwest of Charlottesville, said NTSB spokesperson Eric Weiss. They expect to be on the scene for at least three to four days.

Speaking at a briefing Monday morning, NTSB investigator Adam Gerhardt said the wreckage is "highly fragmented" and investigators will examine the most delicate evidence at the site, after which the wreckage will be moved, perhaps by helicopter, to Delaware, where it can be further examined. The plane is not required to have a flight recorder but it is possible that there are other avionics equipment that will have data that they can examine, Gerhardt said.

The Virginia State Police issued a statement saying that because of the severity of the crash, human remains will be transported to the state medical examiner's office for autopsy and identification. The Federal Aviation Administration said that the victims included the pilot and three passengers but didn't release their names. There were no survivors.

Investigators will look at when the pilot became unresponsive and why aircraft flew the path that it did, Gerhardt said. They will consider several factors that are routinely examined in such probes including the plane, its engines, weather conditions, pilot qualifications and maintenance records, he said. A preliminary report will be released in 10 days.

According to a timetable released late Monday by NTSB spokesperson Jennifer Gabris, the plane took off from Elizabethton Municipal Airport in Tennessee at 1:13 p.m. Sunday, headed for MacArthur Airport in Long Island, N.Y. Air Traffic Control lost communication with the airplane during its ascent.

Preliminary information indicates the last ATC communication attempt with the airplane was at approximately 1:28 p.m., when the plane was at 31,000 feet (9,449 meters). The plane climbed to 34,000 feet (10,363 kilometers), where it remained for the rest of the flight until 3:23 p.m. when it began to descend and crashed about nine minutes later. The plane was flying at 34,000 feet (10,363 kilometers), when it flew over MacArthur Airport at 2:33 p.m., the NTSB said.

The White House expressed its "deepest condolences" on Monday to the family of those on board the

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plane.

"We need to keep them front and center," National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

Kirby deferred questions about a follow-up report on the security response over Washington airspace to the Pentagon and U.S. Secret Service. But he said, "What I saw was just a classic, textbook response."

The White House was continuously informed as the military jets tried to contact the pilot of the civilian plane and monitored the small aircraft's path from Washington airspace to rural Virginia, Kirby said.

Air Traffic Control audio from the half-hour before the plane crashed captures voices that identify themselves as military pilots trying to communicate with the pilot of the private plane, according to recordings on LiveATC.net.

"If you hear this transmission, contact us," said one pilot who identifies herself as being with the Air National Guard.

Several minutes later, a military pilot says: "You have been intercepted. Contact me."

The plane flew directly over the nation's capital. According to the Pentagon, six F-16 fighter jets were immediately deployed to intercept the plane. Two aircraft from the 113th Fighter Wing, out of Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, were the first to reach the Cessna Citation to begin attempts to contact the pilot. Two F-16 aircraft out of New Jersey and two from South Carolina also responded.

Flight tracking sites showed the plane suffered a rapid spiraling descent, dropping at one point at a rate of more than 30,000 feet (9,144 meters) per minute before crashing in the St. Mary's Wilderness.

In Fairfax, Virginia, Travis Thornton was settled on a couch next to his wife, Hannah, and had just begun recording himself playing guitar and harmonica when they were startled by a loud rumble and rattling that can be heard on the video. The couple jumped up to investigate. Thornton tweeted that they checked in with their kids upstairs and then he went outside to check the house and talk to neighbors.

The plane that crashed was registered to Encore Motors of Melbourne Inc, which is based in Florida. John Rumpel, a pilot who runs the company said his family was returning to their home in East Hampton, on Long Island, after visiting his house in North Carolina.

Rumpel told the New York Times he didn't have much information from authorities but suggested the plane could have lost pressurization.

"It descended at 20,000 feet a minute, and nobody could survive a crash from that speed," Rumpel told the newspaper.

In interviews with the Times and Newsday, Rumpel identified his daughter, Adina Azarian, and 2-year-old granddaughter Aria, as two of the victims.

Azarian, 49, was well-known in real estate circles both in New York City and Long Island, described by friends and relatives as a fiercely competitive entrepreneur who started her own brokerage and was raising her daughter as a single parent.

"Being a mom was everything to her," said Tara Brivic-Looper, a close friend who grew up with Azarian on the Upper East Side. "That they were together (at the end) is fitting."

Friends say Azarian moved to East Hampton fulltime to raise Aria, with the help of a nanny. But she made frequent trips back home, bringing both Aria and the nanny to meet her tight-knit extended family on multiple occasions in recent months.

"She seemed so happy out there," her cousin, Andrew Azarian, recalled. "Both of their lives hadn't even started."

"How could this happen?" he continued. "No one can explain it."

Brumfield reported from Silver Spring, Maryland. Associated Press reporter Jake Offenhartz and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York, and White House Correspondent Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

## Atlanta project decried as 'Cop City' gets funding approval from City Council

By R.J. RICO Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Atlanta City Council early Tuesday approved funding for the construction of a proposed police and firefighter training center, rejecting the pleas of hundreds of activists who packed City Hall and spoke for hours in fierce opposition to the project they decry as "Cop City."

The 11-4 vote just after 5 a.m. is a significant victory for Mayor Andre Dickens, who has made the \$90 million project a large part of his first term in office, despite significant pushback to the effort. The City Council also passed a resolution requesting two seats on the Atlanta Police Foundation's board. The decentralized "Stop Cop City" movement has galvanized protesters from across the country, especially in the wake of the January fatal police shooting of Manuel Paez Terán, a 26-year-old environmental activist known as "Tortugueta" who had been camping in the woods near the site of the proposed project in DeKalb County.

For about 14 hours, residents again and again took to the podium to slam the project, saying it would be a gross misuse of public funds to build the huge facility in a large urban forest in a poor, majority-Black area.

"We're here pleading our case to a government that has been unresponsive, if not hostile, to an unprecedented movement in our City Council's history," said Matthew Johnson, the executive director of Beloved Community Ministries, a local social justice nonprofit. "We're here to stop environmental racism and the militarization of the police. ... We need to go back to meeting the basic needs rather than using police as the sole solution to all of our social problems."

The training center was approved by the City Council in September 2021 but required an additional vote for more funding. City officials say the new 85-acre (34-hectare) campus would replace inadequate training facilities and would help address difficulties in hiring and retaining police officers that worsened after nationwide protests against police brutality and racial injustice three years ago.

But opponents, who have been joined by activists from around the country, say they fear it will lead to greater militarization of the police and that its construction will exacerbate environmental damage. Protesters had been camping at the site since at least last year, and police said they had caused damage and attacked law enforcement officers and others.

Though more than 220 people spoke publicly against the training center, a small handful voiced support, saying they trusted Dickens' judgment.

Councilmembers agreed to approve \$31 million in public funds for the site's construction, as well as a provision that requires the city to pay \$36 million — \$1.2 million a year over 30 years — for using the facility. The rest of the \$90 million project would come from private donations to the Atlanta Police Foundation, though city officials had, until recently, repeatedly said that the public obligation would only be \$31 million.

The highly scrutinized vote also comes in the wake of the arrests Wednesday of three organizers who lead the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, which has provided bail money and helped find attorneys for arrested protesters.

Prosecutors have accused the three activists of money laundering and charity fraud, saying they used some of the money to fund violent acts of "forest defenders." Warrants cite reimbursements for expenses including "gasoline, forest clean-up, totes, covid rapid tests, media, yard signs." But the charges have alarmed human rights groups and prompted both of Georgia's Democratic senators to issue statements over the weekend expressing their concerns.

U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock tweeted that bail funds held important roles during the civil rights movement and said that the images of the heavily armed police officers raiding the home where the activists lived "reinforce the very suspicions that help to animate the current conflict—namely, concerns Georgians have about over-policing, the quelling of dissent in a democracy, and the militarization of our police."

Devin Franklin, an attorney with the Southern Center For Human Rights, also invoked Wednesday's arrests while speaking before City Council.

"This is what we fear — the image of militarized forces being used to effectuate arrests for bookkeeping errors," Franklin said.

Numerous instances of violence and vandalism have been linked to the decentralized "Stop Cop City" movement, including a January protest in downtown Atlanta in which a police car was set alight as well as a March attack in which more than 150 masked protesters chased off police at the construction site and torched construction equipment before fleeing and blending in with a crowd at a nearby music festival. Those two instances have led to more than 40 people being charged with domestic terrorism, though prosecutors have had difficulty so far in proving that many of those arrested were in fact those who took part in the violence.

In a sign of the security concerns Monday, dozens of police officers were posted throughout City Hall and officials temporarily added "liquids, aerosols, gels, creams and pastes" to the list of things prohibited inside the building.

Six hours into the meeting, Emory University religion professor Sara McClintock took to the podium and pleaded with councilmembers to reject, or at least rethink, the training center.

"We don't want it," McClintock said. "We don't want it because it doesn't contribute to life. It's not an institution of peace. It's not a way forward for our city that we love."

## **A boat carrying 180 Rohingya refugees vanished. A frantic phone call helped untangle the mystery.**

By KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press

TEKNAF, Bangladesh (AP) — The wind had whipped the waves to nearly three times the woman's height when her panicked voice crackled over the phone.

"Our boat has sunk!" Setera Begum shouted, as a storm threatened to spill her and around 180 others into the inky black sea south of Bangladesh. "Only half of it is still afloat!"

On the other end of the line, hundreds of miles away in Malaysia, was her husband, Muhammed Rashid, who picked up the phone at 10:59 p.m. his time on Dec. 7, 2022. He had not seen his family in 11 years. And he had only learned days earlier that Setera and two of their daughters had fled surging violence in Bangladesh's camps for ethnic Rohingya refugees.

Now, Rashid feared, his family's frantic bid to escape would cost them the very thing they were trying to save — their lives. For despite Setera's pleas, no help would come, not for her or for the babies, the 3-year-old afraid of the sea or the pregnant women also on board.

Rashid listened to his wife's terrified voice with growing dread.

"Oh Allah, it's sunk by the waves!" Setera cried. "It's sunk by the storm!"

The call disconnected.

Rashid tried to call back. On board the boat, the satellite phone rang. But no one answered.

Rashid tried again. He tried more than 100 times.

The phone rang out.

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The Rohingya are a people nobody wants.

This stateless Muslim minority has suffered decades of persecution in their homeland of Myanmar, where they have long been viewed as interlopers by the Buddhist majority. Around one million have fled across the border to Bangladesh, only to find themselves trapped for years in a squalid camp and held hostage by migration policies that have given them almost no way out.

And so, in a bid to get somewhere — anywhere — safe, they are taking to the sea.

It is a life-or-death gamble. Last year, more than 3,500 Rohingya attempted to cross the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea — a 360 percent increase over the previous year, according to United Nations figures that are almost certainly an undercount. At least 348 people died or went missing, the highest death toll since 2014.

It's impossible to know whether any of those lives could have been saved, because almost no one was looking to save them in the first place. Instead, the Rohingya are often abandoned and left to die on the

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water, just as on land. Even when officials knew the boats' locations in recent months, the United Nations' refugee agency says its repeated pleas to maritime authorities to rescue some of them have gone ignored.

Governments ignore the Rohingya because they can. While multiple international laws mandate the rescue of vessels in distress, enforcement is difficult.

In the past, the region's coastal nations hunted for boats in trouble — only to push them into other countries' search and rescue zones, says Chris Lewa, director of the Arakan Project, which monitors the Rohingya crisis. But now, they rarely even bother to look.

The lucky ones are eventually towed to shore in Indonesia by local fishermen. Yet even rescue can be perilous — a Vietnamese oil company saved one boat, then promptly handed the Rohingya over to the same deadly regime in Myanmar from which they'd fled. And the Myanmar authorities themselves patrol for Rohingya migrants.

There is no reason why regional governments could not or cannot coordinate and rescue these boats, says John Quinley, director of human rights group Fortify Rights.

"It was a total lack of political will and extremely heartless," he says. "The accountability and the onus really lies on everyone."

Several countries in the region did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The reasons the Rohingya escape are written on face after gaunt face, in haunted eyes and across slumped shoulders. Any hope that once existed in the Bangladesh camps has long since died, replaced by a stoic sadness and a palpable fear. These are a people who have come to expect nothing, and often get that or worse.

Most of the Rohingya in these camps fled what the United States has declared a genocide in Myanmar in 2017. In recent years, however, brutal killings by gangs and warring militant groups — many in broad daylight — have become commonplace.

Fires are frequent, some of them acts of arson. One afternoon in March, a blaze that investigators say was set by criminals tore through thousands of shelters. The billowing smoke was so thick and black it blocked the view of the sun. Wide-eyed children huddled together, crying, as the inferno left 15,000 homeless.

Beyond fear is hunger. The Rohingya are banned from working and rely on food rations, which have been slashed due to a drop in global donations. Meanwhile, a military coup in 2021 in Myanmar has made any safe return home at best a distant dream.

And so, out of options, they do again what they have done before: They flee.

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Jutting up from the dust and the dirt of Nayapara camp in Bangladesh are bamboo, tarp and tin huts jammed along labyrinthine pathways.

This tight-knit warren is Block H, home to Setera and 64 other passengers, including the boat's captain, Jamal Hussein.

Virtually everyone in Block H was connected to the boat somehow. Many residents have spent most, or all, of their lives here, after fleeing Myanmar during earlier waves of violence. Their shelters now bake below sun-scorched mountains that are home to violent gangs.

Jamal himself was afraid for his life, says his sister, Bulbul. Inside her shadowy shelter, she weeps at the memories of her brother. "He was my heart," she says.

Back in Myanmar, Jamal was a rice farmer and a youth leader of their village. After his dad died, he became a father figure to his younger siblings, including Bulbul, who was 15 years his junior.

Their life in the camps was difficult, she says, but they managed. More recently, though, Jamal had received death threats, Bulbul says. He started making plans to get out.

He bought a boat and took a video of it to share with prospective passengers. In the video, obtained by the Associated Press, the wooden vessel sits docked in murky brown water. It appears old and shabby, with a cramped compartment below deck, and clearly too small to safely carry 180 people 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) to Indonesia, Jamal's target.

From there, most passengers planned to make their way to their ultimate destination, Malaysia.

Though Bulbul denies it, residents of Block H say Jamal was a seasoned captain who had successfully



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guided several other boats of Rohingya refugees across the sea. It was his experience, they say, along with his willingness to put 16 of his own relatives on the boat — including his wife, six children, five grandchildren and two pregnant daughters-in-law— that prompted so many to trust him. One mother said Jamal promised her he would watch over her teenage son and daughter along with his children.

In a shelter a short walk from Jamal's, Setera's father holds up a photo of his daughter, with her full lips and wide-set eyes so much like her mother's.

"She was the most beautiful person in our family," says Abdu Shukkur.

Shukkur had never heard anyone say a bad word about Setera, a warm and doting mother to her own daughters. She rarely complained, despite raising her girls on her own in the misery of the camps since 2012. That's the year her husband, Rashid, fled to Malaysia to support his family with the wages he sent from his restaurant job.

But the money had also made the family targets of kidnappers, Shukkur says, and Setera had begun to fear for their lives. The local gangs know which of the block's residents have relatives abroad who could afford a ransom.

Two years ago, they snatched Setera's 4-year-old nephew and took him to the mountains, Shukkur says. They held him there for 6 days, drugging him to keep him quiet. The family eventually paid a ransom of 300,000 taka (\$2,800) to get him back — a fortune in the camps.

In late November, Setera went to her father and asked his permission to go on Jamal's boat, along with her two younger daughters, aged 18 and 15. Her eldest daughter was married and would stay behind.

Shukkur forbade her to go.

"If you want to go to Malaysia by boat, just divorce your husband," he told her. "It's too dangerous."

His wife, Gul Faraz, intervened. "She's been living without her husband here for 11 years now," Faraz said. "Let her go."

Shukkur relented.

Grief steals his breath as he recounts his goodbye with his granddaughters, and he pauses to calm himself. They had a habit of stealing Shukkur's unripe guavas, plums and mangoes whenever they visited, prompting scoldings from their grandfather.

"Grandpa, you will not need to scold us anymore," one of the girls told Shukkur. "Everything will be all right."

Setera, angry that her father had tried to stop her, did not come to say goodbye.

In a nearby shelter, another family was in agony.

Jamal's cousin, Muhammed Ayub, was fighting to stop his daughter, Samira, and her children, aged 6 and nine months old, from getting on the boat. But his son-in-law, Kabir Ahmed, was resolute. Villagers outside the camps had beaten him with an iron rod, and he was afraid.

"It is not safe here. People are getting killed every day," Ahmed told his father-in-law. "If you stop me from leaving, I will not visit you anymore."

And so, powerless, Ayub hugged his daughter and son-in-law goodbye. Then, riddled with anxiety, he wrapped his grandsons in an embrace. His entire body ached as he watched them leave.

"They were my lovely ones," he says.

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At the southernmost tip of mainland Bangladesh lies a wild, wind-swept beach, fringed to the east by forest and mountains and to the west by the Bay of Bengal. This stretch of grey sand is barren but for a few wooden fishing boats and an army of bright red crabs that hide in their holes when any human comes near.

It was from here that a small fishing boat began ferrying passengers to Jamal's waiting vessel. The AP has reconstructed their journey based on interviews with 28 relatives of those on board, audio recordings of calls from the boat, interviews with three eyewitnesses, and photos and videos.

Late on the night of Dec. 1 and through around 4 a.m. the following day, many of those on Jamal's boat called their anxious families.

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he set off again, and Kafayet followed.

Four days later, the sky cracked open.

A powerful storm descended upon them. The boats thrashed in the merciless waves. Kafayet's terrified passengers sobbed as the rain pounded down and the tempest washed their supplies overboard.

The water in Kafayet's boat began to rise, and a man on board spotted sharks. The passengers prepared themselves to die.

Through the darkness, they could see a light shining on Jamal's boat. It was still above water.

But not for long.

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The recording of Setera's call to Rashid lasts 44 seconds.

"Oh Allah, our boat has sunk!" Setera shouts into the satellite phone. "Only half of it is still afloat! Please pray for us and tell my parents!"

"Where are you?" Rashid asks.

"We are about to reach Indonesia."

"Indonesia?" Rashid repeats.

"Please tell me the name of the place," Setera says to someone else on board, before replying to her husband: "Yes, it is India. Please try to send..."

"Are you in India?" Rashid asks, bewildered.

"Our boat has sunk! Our boat has sunk!"

"Who?" Rashid replies in a panic.

"Oh Allah, it's sunk by the waves, it's sunk by the storm!"

"Oh, is it sunk by the storm?" Rashid repeats. "Oh Allah..."

The call cut out.

Rashid began to pray.

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Not even the shrieking wind could drown out the screams of Jamal's passengers.

Kafayet could just make out the shape of Jamal's boat as it made a sharp turn in the waves, and then flipped over. Kafayet threw empty water drums overboard in case his niece or nephew or any of the others could grab onto them.

He says he couldn't see anyone in the water. But he could hear them screaming.

Then the screams stopped. The light on Jamal's boat blinked out.

"I saw with my own eyes," Kafayet says. "The boat sank."

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Within hours, the recording of Setera's call spread through Block H. In shelter after shelter came the wails of families cracking apart.

Jamal's cousin, Muhammed Ayub, was lying on his mat when he received the recording. As he listened, he began to howl in agony.

All he has left now of the grandsons he called his "lovely ones" are their clothing and his memories. He stares at a pair of little brown shoes with Velcro straps that 6-year-old Tasin once wore, and weeps. When he holds them, he says, he feels he is holding his grandson.

Crouched on the floor next to him, his wife, Minara Begum, inhales the scent from their daughter Samira's yellow dress. Then she presses a pair of 9-month-old Samir's tiny blue shorts to her face, the fabric growing damp with her tears.

"Oh, my grandson, why did you leave?" she moans. "Where have you gone?"

Families already pushed to breaking point are now broken. One man who lost four relatives tried to kill himself.

Momina Begum, whose young grandsons were on board, feels she is burning in a fire or sinking under water. She sits next to a plastic basket of her 4-year-old grandson's toys and searches for the will to live.

"It would be better to kill us by poison instead of taking away my family," she says.

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Hasina Khatun, whose pregnant daughter, Asma, and 13-year-old son were on the boat, now finds herself begging to hold other people's babies. She wasn't able to hold her daughter's stillborn baby, either, she says through tears.

Hasina, like some others, still holds out hope her loved ones are alive. Without their bodies, they say, their deaths are difficult to accept.

One man, Muhammed Rashid, believes he sees his teenage son, Saiful, in an online photo of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia. He had it laminated.

Muhammed cradles Saiful's backpack in his lap. He pulls down a sack of his boy's belongings and dumps it on the bed, a strangled sob erupting from his throat. Then he tenderly kisses his son's English book, on which Saiful had scrawled: "I love you."

"My son is everything," Muhammed murmurs. "We believe he is alive."

But the only known survivors from that night were Kafayet and his passengers.

After Jamal's boat sank, they drifted for another 10 days, their engine damaged, their food and water gone. Kafayet's brother could not stop crying, thinking about what must have happened to their niece and nephew.

Delirious with thirst and hunger, they suddenly spotted a speed boat in the distance and frantically waved their clothes in the air. The Sri Lankan navy towed Kafayet's boat to shore.

"Allah gave me a new life," Kafayet says from a Colombo shelter.

His brother, Muhammed, knows how close they came to death. He hopes no one else will attempt to do what they did.

Yet back in the camps, such plans are already underway. In early March, Jamal's sister, Bulbul, listened in horror as her 20-year-old son told her he was preparing to leave by boat.

Her heart stopped. "I will never allow you to go on this dangerous journey," she told him. "My brother died on a boat."

So he agreed to stay — for now. If he flees, she says, she will die of worry.

Rashid's eyes are ringed with black, a result, he says, of crying for months for Setera and their daughters. He accepts now that they drowned in the dark, screaming for help from a world gone deaf.

"I spent a long time here for my family. But now I've lost them," he says.

"I feel I am dead."

## Brother of gay American attacked on Sydney cliff in 1988 says killer deserves no leniency

SYDNEY (AP) — A man who admitted killing American mathematician Scott Johnson by punching him from a cliff top at a gay meeting place in Sydney in 1988 deserves no leniency and should face the longest time in jail, the victim's brother said Tuesday.

Scott Phillip White, 52, appeared in the New South Wales state Supreme Court for a sentencing hearing after pleading guilty to manslaughter. White had pleaded guilty to murder last year, but changed his mind and had that conviction overturned on appeal.

Johnson's Boston-based older brother Steve Johnson said White had lost the family's sympathy by withdrawing his confession to murder.

He and his wife Rosemary "felt some compassion because of his generous plea. Today I have no sympathy," Steve Johnson said in a victim impact statement read out to the court.

Any gratitude the family felt was undone after White's conviction and jail sentence were overturned on appeal, he told reporters after the hearing.

"So I am hoping the judge will give him the stiffest sentence he possibly can," Steve Johnson said.

Manslaughter carries a maximum sentence of 25 years.

White's decision to flee the scene without calling the police had prolonged the family's grief and loss for decades, Johnson said.

"He didn't check on Scott. He didn't call for help. He notified no one. He simply let Scott die," Johnson said.

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In her own statement, Rosemary Johnson spoke of her sweet, kind and gentle brother-in-law.

"You are loved, you are missed, your life mattered, and you have not been forgotten," she said.

In the heat of an argument on Dec. 10, 1988, White said he threw a punch at Scott Johnson, 27, causing him to stagger backward and fall to his death over a cliff at North Head that was known at the time to be a meeting place for gay men.

Los Angeles-born Scott Johnson's death was initially called a suicide, but his family pressed for further investigation. Almost three decades passed before New South Wales state police began investigating his death as a suspected gay hate crime.

Prosecutor Brett Hatfield conceded the judge overseeing the new sentence may find there was not enough evidence to show White was motivated to attack Johnson because of Johnson's sexuality. However, Hatfield still sought a higher jail sentence, saying it was an unprovoked attack on a vulnerable individual who was naked in a remote location.

"It's a serious example of manslaughter entailing a significant degree of criminality," Hatfield said.

White's lawyer Tim Game urged for leniency because of his client's cognitive difficulties at the time of the crime as well as his dysfunctional background.

"He had just become an adult and his life was chaotic and a terrible mess," Game said.

White will be sentenced Thursday. He had been sentenced to more than 12 years in prison for murder before that conviction was overturned.

## 'Stop Cop City' activists pack Atlanta City Hall ahead of crucial vote

By R.J. RICO Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Hundreds of activists gathered to speak Monday at Atlanta's City Hall ahead of a council vote over whether to approve tens of millions in public funding for the construction of a proposed police and firefighter training center that activists decry as "Cop City."

The meeting is a culmination of nearly two years of activism against the project — a movement that has galvanized protesters from across the country, especially in the wake of the January fatal police shooting of Manuel Paez Terán, a 26-year-old environmental activist known as "Tortuguita" who had been camping in the woods near the site of the proposed project in DeKalb County.

For more than 13 hours, residents again and again took to the podium to slam the project, saying it would be a gross misuse of public funds to build the huge facility in a large urban forest in a poor, majority-Black area. The testimony at times grew testy, with councilmembers struggling to quiet the rowdy crowd. As of 3 a.m. Tuesday, a dozen more remained in line to speak.

"We're here pleading our case to a government that has been unresponsive, if not hostile, to an unprecedented movement in our City Council's history," said Matthew Johnson, the executive director of Beloved Community Ministries, a local social justice nonprofit. "We're here to stop environmental racism and the militarization of the police. ... We need to go back to meeting the basic needs rather than using police as the sole solution to all of our social problems."

The training center was approved by the City Council in September 2021 but requires an additional vote for more funding. City officials say the new 85-acre (34-hectare) campus would replace inadequate training facilities and would help address difficulties in hiring and retaining police officers that worsened after nationwide protests against police brutality and racial injustice three years ago.

But opponents, who have been joined by activists from around the country, say they fear it will lead to greater militarization of the police and that its construction will exacerbate environmental damage. Protesters had been camping at the site since at least last year, and police said they had caused damage and attacked law enforcement officers and others.

Though more than 210 people who spoke during the City Council meeting were against the training center, a small handful voiced support, saying they trusted the judgment of Mayor Andre Dickens.

Councilmembers are considering whether to approve \$31 million in public funds for the site's construction, as well as a provision that requires the city to pay \$36 million — \$1.2 million a year over 30 years — for

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using the facility. The rest of the \$90 million project would come from private donations to the Atlanta Police Foundation, though city officials had, until recently, repeatedly said that the public obligation would only be \$31 million.

The highly scrutinized vote also comes in the wake of the arrests Wednesday of three organizers who lead the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, which has provided bail money and helped find attorneys for arrested protesters.

Prosecutors have accused the three activists of money laundering and charity fraud, saying they used some of the money to fund violent acts of "forest defenders." Warrants cite reimbursements for expenses including "gasoline, forest clean-up, totes, covid rapid tests, media, yard signs." But the charges have alarmed human rights groups and prompted both of Georgia's Democratic senators to issue statements over the weekend expressing their concerns.

U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock tweeted that bail funds held important roles during the civil rights movement and said that the images of the heavily armed police officers raiding the home where the activists lived "reinforce the very suspicions that help to animate the current conflict—namely, concerns Georgians have about over-policing, the quelling of dissent in a democracy, and the militarization of our police."

Devin Franklin, an attorney with the Southern Center For Human Rights, also invoked Wednesday's arrests while speaking before City Council.

"This is what we fear — the image of militarized forces being used to effectuate arrests for bookkeeping errors," Franklin said.

Numerous instances of violence and vandalism has been linked to the decentralized "Stop Cop City" movement, including a January protest in downtown Atlanta in which a police car was set alight as well as a March attack in which more than 150 masked protesters chased off police at the construction site and torched construction equipment before fleeing and blending in with a crowd at a nearby music festival. Those two instances have led to more than 40 people being charged with domestic terrorism, though prosecutors have had difficulty so far in proving that many of those arrested were in fact those who took part in the violence.

In a sign of the security concerns Monday, dozens of police officers were posted throughout City Hall and officials temporarily added "liquids, aerosols, gels, creams and pastes" to the list of things prohibited inside the building.

Six hours into the meeting, Emory University religion professor Sara McClintock took to the podium and pleaded with councilmembers to reject, or at least rethink, the training center.

"We don't want it," McClintock said. "We don't want it because it doesn't contribute to life. It's not an institution of peace. It's not a way forward for our city that we love."

## Golden Knights take 2-0 lead in Stanley Cup Final with 7-2 win over Panthers

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — No team in over 25 years has been more dominant than the Vegas Golden Knights through the first two games of a Stanley Cup Final.

They have outscored the Florida Panthers by eight goals, including Monday night's 7-2 victory in Game 2 that put the Knights two wins from the first championship in the franchise's short six-year history.

It will take a rare rally for the Panthers to come back as the series shifts to Florida for Game 3 on Thursday. Teams that took a 2-0 series lead in the Stanley Cup Final are 31-3 in the expansion era, but the Panthers opened the playoffs by storming back from 3-1 down to beat the heavily favored Boston Bruins.

Florida will have to significantly up its level of play to beat a Vegas team that won by three goals on Saturday and then five in this game. The last team to win the first two games of a Cup Final by more than eight combined goals was the 1996 Colorado Avalanche — who outscored the Panthers by nine.

"I think our depth has been a strength all year," Vegas coach Bruce Cassidy said. "It is the biggest reason

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we are still here, why we beat Winnipeg, Edmonton, Dallas. I just feel that we have the best team from player one through 20."

Jonathan Marchessault scored twice for the Knights and started an early blitz that chased Sergei Bobrovsky, the NHL's hottest postseason goalie.

Marchessault also had an assist to finish with three points. His 12 postseason goals set a Golden Knights record, with all of them coming after the first round. The only player with more following the opening round was Pavel Bure, who scored 13 for Vancouver in 1994.

"They want to set the tone with being undisciplined like Game 1 and we set the tone back," Marchessault said. "It was scoring that first goal there. But we're still pretty far from our goal here."

Brett Howden scored twice for the Knights, who also got goals from Alec Martinez, Nicolas Roy and Michael Amadio. Six players had at least two points for Vegas, all 18 Knights skaters were on the ice for even-strength goals and their nine goal scorers through the first two games are a Stanley Cup Final record. The Knights' seven goals tied a franchise mark for a playoff game.

It was too much for Bobrovsky, who was removed 7:10 into the second period down 4-0. It was the fifth time in 12 games the Knights have chased the opposing goalie.

Bobrovsky, a two-time Vezina Trophy winner, carried Florida through the Eastern Conference playoffs. Coming into the Stanley Cup Final, he had won 11 of his past 12 starts with a 1.95 goals-against average and .942 save percentage during that stretch. But he's given up eight goals in 87 minutes against Vegas, compiling a 5.52 GAA and .826 save percentage in the series.

"We can be a little better in front of our goaltender," Panthers coach Paul Maurice said. "I got him out to keep him rested."

Matthew Tkachuk and Anton Lundell scored for Florida.

Adin Hill continued his stellar play in net with 29 saves for the Knights. Hill once again brought his feistiness as well as his A-game. He stopped Carter Verhaeghe on a breakaway in the first, and later that period hit Tkachuk, who was in his net, with his blocker and then slashed him with his stick.

"He's been unreal for us," Vegas forward William Carrier said. "He's been unbelievable."

A group of four fans behind one of the nets wore sweaters that spelled out his last name, and Hill has often received the loudest cheers from Knights fans, reminiscent of when Marc-Andre Fleury was in goal for Vegas in its first three seasons.

"It's probably the most fun I've ever had playing hockey," Hill said. "I'm just enjoying it, cherishing every day. It's been awesome to be part of the journey with this team."

The Knights were dominant early, taking a 2-0 lead in the first period on goals from Marchessault and Martinez. It was Vegas' third game in a row with a power-play goal, its first such stretch since Christmas week.

The Panthers lost their biggest, toughest defenseman early in the game when Radko Gudas was injured on a hit by Vegas forward Ivan Barbashev. Gudas left 6:39 in and did not return.

That was one of several big hits by Barbashev, the Golden Knights' biggest trade-deadline acquisition, a Stanley Cup champion with St. Louis in 2019. Barbashev broke the sternum of Colorado defenseman Samuel Girard during the playoffs last year, also on a clean hit.

Vegas had its own scare late in the second period when Jack Eichel was nailed in the right shoulder by Tkachuk. Eichel returned in the third and set up Marchessault's second goal for his second assist of the game.

"We did a good job managing momentum tonight," Eichel said. "And we got some timely goals."

AP NHL playoffs: <https://apnews.com/hub/stanley-cup> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

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It was only then that Setera told her husband she and two daughters were headed his way.

Rashid had told them countless times never to get on a boat. But this time, Setera would not be stopped. She told him she'd sold her jewelry to help pay for their passage, a total of 360,000 taka (\$3,400).

Rashid was stunned. He apologized to Setera for any mistakes he'd made in their 20 years of marriage. And then, he says, he heard Jamal tell Setera to get off the phone. She hung up.

Rashid began to cry with excitement and fear. He couldn't believe he might soon see his girls.

Setera made at least one more call, to her father, Shukkur.

"The boat is waiting for fuel," Setera said. "We're leaving soon, and we'll be out of service."

Shukkur was too angry to speak. He couldn't believe she hadn't even come to say goodbye. So he passed her mobile number onto his nephew in Malaysia, and told him to ring Setera and order her to come home.

Meanwhile, Jamal's daughter-in-law, Bibi Ayesha, called her parents to say she and her family had also made it on board. Alongside Bibi was her 17-year-old brother, her husband, and her 3-year-old son, Abu.

The little boy was frightened of the water. Bibi and her husband passed him back and forth, trying to comfort him, as they spoke with her parents. "Pray for us," they said.

Jamal got on the phone with the parents to reassure them. "The boat is big," Jamal said, according to the couple. "We have enough food for 15 days."

Asma Bibi, who was married to another of Jamal's sons, also made a call to her mother, Hasina Khatun. Eighteen-year-old Asma was 9 months pregnant, and excited to meet her child after a stillbirth with her first baby one year earlier.

Asma hadn't wanted to go on the boat, says Hasina. But Asma's husband did.

"How can I stay here without my husband? I'm pregnant," Asma had told her nervous mother days earlier. "How can my child survive without a father?"

And so, Hasina gave her daughter two sets of baby clothes — one pink, and one white, since they didn't know the baby's gender. She also gave her daughter medicine, towels and a green blanket to wrap the newborn in after birth.

Asma packed them along with snacks from her father's shop, plus three sets of clothes to fit her pregnant and postpartum body. Then Asma reluctantly followed her husband onto Jamal's boat, along with her 13-year-old brother.

At 4:04 a.m., back in Block H, Jannat Ara's phone rang. It was her aunt, Kurshida Begum, who said she'd boarded with her husband and two sons, aged 3 and 4.

In the recorded call, shared with the AP, Kurshida recites a prayer, then asks her niece to do the same.

"The journey has begun," Kurshida told her niece.

News of the call quickly reached Kurshida's mother-in-law, Momina Begum, who became hysterical. She had no idea Kurshida and the boys were on the boat.

"Where are you going with these children?" Momina screamed. "Why are you crossing the dangerous sea with these children?"

But it was too late. Jamal's boat was headed into the Bay of Bengal.

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What happened next is best told through the eyes of the refugees on yet another boat that set out for Indonesia one day later.

On board were 104 people, including a man named Kafayet Ullah. According to Kafayet, he was merely a passenger. According to others, he was the captain.

Not long into the journey, Kafayet spotted a boat in the distance. As they moved closer, they realized the boat was Jamal's. And it was in trouble.

Jamal called out that his engine was having problems. He borrowed some electrical wire from Kafayet's boat and went to work repairing the fault.

Kafayet was worried. His own niece and nephew were aboard Jamal's vessel, which looked old and overloaded, the passengers packed in tight like animals.

But unlike Kafayet, Jamal had experience and a satellite phone. So when Jamal finished fixing the engine,

## California investigating whether DeSantis involved in flying asylum-seekers from Texas to Sacramento

By TRÂN NGUYỄN and OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Officials were investigating Tuesday whether Florida's Gov. Ron DeSantis was behind a flight that picked up asylum-seekers on the Texas border and flew them — apparently without their knowledge — to California's capital, even as faith-based groups scrambled to find housing and food for them.

About 20 people ranging in age from 21 to 30 were flown by private jet to Sacramento on Monday, California Attorney General Rob Bonta said. It was the second such flight in four days.

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg and faith-based groups who have been assisting the migrants scheduled a news conference Tuesday morning.

Meanwhile, California Gov. Gavin Newsom lashed out at DeSantis as a "small, pathetic man" and suggested the state could pursue kidnapping charges.

DeSantis and other Florida state officials were mum, as they were initially last year when they flew 49 Venezuelan migrants to the upscale Massachusetts enclave of Martha's Vineyard, luring them onto private jets from a shelter in San Antonio.

DeSantis, who is seeking the Republican nomination to run for president, has been a fierce critic of federal immigration policy under President Joe Biden and has heavily publicized Florida's role in past instances in which migrants were transported to Democratic-led states.

He has made the migrant relocation program one of his signature political priorities, using the state legislative process to direct millions of dollars to it and working with multiple contractors to carry out the flights. Vertol Systems Co., which was paid by Florida to fly migrants to Martha's Vineyard, appears to be behind the flights to Sacramento on Monday and last Friday, Bonta said, adding that the migrants were carrying "an official document from the state of Florida" that mentions the company. The company didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

Altogether, more than three dozen migrants arrived in Sacramento on flights last Friday and on Monday. Most are from Colombia and Venezuela. California had not been their intended destination and shelters and aid workers were taken by surprise, authorities said.

Friday's group was dropped off at the Roman Catholic Church diocese's headquarters in Sacramento. U.S. immigration officials had already processed them in Texas and given them court dates for their asylum cases, and none had planned to arrive in California, said Eddie Carmona, campaign director at PICO California, a faith-based group helping the migrants in Sacramento.

Asylum seekers can change the location of their court appearances, but many are reluctant to try and instead prefer sticking with a firm date, at least for their initial appearances. They figure it is a guarantee, even if horribly inconvenient.

The Republican governors of Texas and Arizona have previously sent thousands of migrants on buses to New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C., but the rare charter flights by DeSantis mark an escalation in tactics. The two groups sent to Sacramento never went through Florida. Instead, they were approached in El Paso by people with Florida-linked paperwork, sent to New Mexico, then put on private flights to California's capital, California officials and advocates said.

Bonta, who met with some of the migrants who arrived Friday, said they told him they were approached by two women who spoke broken Spanish and promised them jobs. The women traveled with them by land from El Paso to Deming, New Mexico, where two men then accompanied them on the flight to Sacramento. The same men were on the flight Monday, Bonta said.

"To see leaders and governments of other states and the state of Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis, acting with cruelty and inhumanity and moral bankruptcy and being petty and small and hurtful and harmful to those vulnerable asylum seekers is blood-boiling," Bonta said in a Monday interview.

Some of the migrants who arrived Friday told Bonta they met on their nearly three-month journey to the United States and decided to stick together to keep each other safe as they slept on the streets in



several countries, he said.

As the migrants arrived in California Monday, a Texas sheriff's office announced it has recommended criminal charges over the two flights to Martha's Vineyard last year.

Johnny Garcia, a spokesman for the Bexar County Sheriff's Office, said that at this time the office is not naming suspects. It's not clear whether the local district attorney will pursue the charges, which include misdemeanor and felony counts of unlawful restraint, according to the sheriff's office.

The office of New Mexico Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham had no specifics as to why the immigrants were taken from Texas to New Mexico before being flown to California.

"Gov. Lujan Grisham stresses, yet again, the urgent need for comprehensive, thoughtful federal immigration reform which is rooted in a humanitarian response that keeps border communities in mind," the governor's spokesperson, Caroline Sweeney, said Monday.

Last year, DeSantis directed Republican lawmakers in Florida to create a program in his office dedicated to migrant relocations. It specified that the state could transport migrants from locations anywhere in the country. The law was designed to get around questions about the legality of transporting people on a flight that originated in Texas.

Florida's alleged role in the arrival of the two groups in Sacramento is sure to escalate the political feud between DeSantis and Newsom, who have offered conflicting visions on immigration, abortion and a host of other issues. \_\_\_\_\_

Rodriguez reported from San Francisco. Associated Press writers Anthony Izaguirre in Tallahassee, Fla., Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas, Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed.

Find more AP coverage of immigration: <https://apnews.com/hub/immigration>

## 'Jerry Maguire' star Cuba Gooding Jr. faces start of civil trial in rape case

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. faces the start of a civil trial Tuesday on accusations that he raped a woman in a New York City hotel a decade ago, an encounter that he contends was consensual after the two met at a nearby restaurant.

The trial was scheduled to begin with jury selection in Manhattan federal court as the Oscar-winning "Jerry Maguire" star confronts allegations that he met the woman in Manhattan, persuaded her to join him at a hotel, and convinced her to stop at his room so he could change clothing.

The woman, who has proceeded anonymously but has been told she must reveal her name at trial, said in her lawsuit that Gooding raped her in his room. His lawyers, though, insist that it was consensual sex and that she bragged afterward to others that she had sex with a celebrity.

The lawsuit seeks \$6 million in damages. It was filed against a man who authorities say has been accused of committing sexual misconduct against more than 30 other women, including groping, unwanted kissing and other inappropriate behavior.

Late last week, Judge Paul A. Crotty ruled that he will let three women testify that they also were subjected to sudden sexual assaults or attempted sexual assaults after meeting Gooding in social settings such as festivals, bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

One of the women planning to testify at the trial is Kelsey Harbert, who told police Gooding fondled her without her consent at Magic Hour Rooftop Bar & Lounge near Times Square in 2019.

Harbert said last year after Gooding pleaded guilty in New York state court to a charge that spared him from jail or a criminal history that never getting her day in court was "more disappointing than words can say."

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted un-

less they grant permission, as Harbert has done.

Gooding, a star in films including "Boyz n the Hood" and "Radio," was permitted to plead guilty in April 2022 to a misdemeanor, admitting that he forcibly kissed a worker at a New York nightclub in 2018.

By staying out of trouble and completing six months of alcohol and behavioral counseling, Gooding was permitted to withdraw his guilty plea and plead guilty to a non-criminal harassment violation, eliminating his criminal record and preventing further penalties.

## **Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie set to launch 2024 presidential bid at New Hampshire town hall**

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is set to launch his bid for the Republican nomination for president at a town hall in New Hampshire on Tuesday evening.

The campaign will be the second for Christie, who lost to Trump in 2016 and went on to become a close on-and-off adviser before breaking with the former president over his refusal to accept the results of the 2020 election. He has cast himself as the only candidate willing to directly take on former President Donald Trump.

Christie will enter a growing primary field that already includes Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley and U.S. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina. Former Vice President Mike Pence will be formally launching his own campaign in Iowa on Wednesday.

Christie, who during his time as New Jersey's governor established a reputation as a fighter with a knack for creating viral moments of confrontation, faces an uphill battle to the nomination in a party that remains closely aligned with the former president, despite Trump's reelection loss in 2020 and Republicans' poorer-than-expected showing in the 2022 midterm elections.

Christie has cast himself as the only person with the guts to take on Trump directly and has warned of a repeat of 2016 if candidates fail to confront him.

"I'm not dumb. The way to win is to beat the guy who's ahead. And so what would a campaign look like? A campaign would look like a direct frontal challenge to Donald Trump trying to return to the presidency," Christie recently said in a podcast interview.

Anti-Trump Republicans are particularly eager to see Christie spar with Trump on a debate stage — if, of course, Trump agrees to participate in primary debates and Christie meets the stringent fundraising criteria set by the Republican National Committee for participation.

But Christie has also said he would not run as a kamikaze candidate to take down Trump if he didn't believe there was a viable path to his own victory. "I'm not a paid assassin," he recently told Politico.

His campaign will test the appetite among Republican voters for someone who has expressed support for many of Trump's policies but has criticized the former president's conduct.

Christie has rejected Trump's lies that the 2020 election was stolen and has urged the party to move on or risk future losses.

Other Republicans with similar views, including former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan and New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, have opted against their own campaigns, expressing concerns that having more candidates in the race will only benefit Trump.

## Soccer players demand change for rampant online racist abuse, turn to AI for protection

By STEVE DOUGLAS and JEROME PUGMIRE AP Sports Writers

LONDON (AP) — Missing penalties in a major international soccer final was bad enough for three Black players on England's national team. Being subjected to a torrent of racial abuse on social media in the aftermath made it even worse.

Monkey emojis. Being told to go home. The N-word.

The even sadder part? Everyone knew it was coming.

"It's stupid," said Nedum Onuoha, a retired Black player who was in the top divisions of English and U.S. soccer for 16 years. "But are we surprised?"

It's the latest form of racism: technology-fueled, visual, permanently intrusive and 24/7 — a haunting reminder of the 1980s-style monkey chants and banana-throwing in a social media era.

And it is spiraling out of control on platforms where anonymity is the golden ticket for racists.

"Every time it happens, it knocks you back and floors you," Onuoha told The Associated Press. "Just when you think everything is OK, it's a reminder that it's not. It's a reminder of how some people actually see you."

Racism is the predominant form of abuse on social media reported to Kick It Out, an anti-discrimination campaigner in soccer, according to statistics compiled over the past three seasons in English soccer.

A report last year from FIFA, the governing body of world soccer, showed that more than 50% of players competing in two international tournaments in 2021 — the African Cup of Nations and the European Championship — received some form of discriminatory abuse in more than 400,000 posts on social media. More than a third were of a racist nature.

The problem is, there's barely any accountability and it's so easy. Pull out your phone, find the handle of the player you want to abuse, and fire off a racist message.

Former Premier League striker Mark Bright, who is Black and regularly suffered racial abuse inside stadiums in the 1980s, was exchanging messages with friends on a WhatsApp group when those three Black players for England — Bukayo Saka, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho — missed penalties in a shootout loss to Italy in the 2020 European Championship final.

"We all messaged each other and said, 'Oh God, here we go.' Because we know what's around the corner," Bright told the AP. "That's what we expected and this is where, once again, you say 'What can be done about it?'"

Largely speaking, the abuse hasn't stopped Black players from using social media. It is an essential tool for marketing, leading to the paradox of soccer players using the same platforms on which they are abused.

Kylian Mbappe, who has 104 million followers on Instagram and more than 12 million followers on Twitter, was subjected to racial abuse along with fellow Black teammate Kingsley Coman after their French national team lost in the 2022 World Cup final to Argentina.

Real Madrid winger Vinícius Júnior, who has repeatedly been the target of racial insults, is followed by 38 million people on Instagram and nearly 7 million on Twitter.

Saka, who has more than 1 million followers on Twitter, remains on social media despite the abuse after England's Euro 2020 loss and more just a few weeks ago, when a message posted on Twitter showed the Arsenal winger with his face made to look like a monkey, alongside the words: "This clown has cost us the league." Minutes before the message, Saka had missed a penalty in an important Premier League game.

With social media continuing to fuel abuse, players and teams are coming up with ways to both raise awareness and reduce their exposure to offensive users.

GoBubble is a company that configures AI software to act as a filter to stop discriminatory comments from being seen by a social media user. It has customers from the Premier League down to the fourth division in English soccer, around Europe and in Australia.

"Yes, tech has caused the issue," GoBubble founder Henry Platten told the AP, "but tech can actually solve the issue and this is what we are seeing as one of those pieces of the jigsaw."

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The company's AI technology is plugged into players' accounts and scans for toxic and potentially harmful words, images and other types of messages which can be filtered out using a traffic-light system.

"This isn't about censorship, about sportswashing, about creating that fuzzy world," Platten said. "This is about protection, not just for the players and their families but also the wider fan community."

Platten said some players who approached him had experienced mental health issues that impacted their performances. Indeed, in January, Liverpool became the first Premier League club to hire a mental health consultant tasked with protecting young players from online trolling.

Governing bodies are reacting, too. During last year's World Cup in Qatar, FIFA and players' union FIF-PRO had a dedicated in-tournament moderation service that prevented racist and other forms of hate speech from being seen online by players and their followers. This service will be offered for the upcoming Women's World Cup.

Soccer authorities in England, including the Premier League, led a four-day social media boycott in 2021 across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram in a protest against racist abuse. It ended up being adopted by many other sports in England, and by FIFA and UEFA, the governing body of European soccer.

Still, the abuse continues on the platforms, which have been accused of being too slow to block racist posts, remove offenders' accounts, and improve their verification process to ensure users provide accurate identification information and are barred from registering with a new account if banned.

"It needs to be regulated, you need to be accountable," Bright said. "Everyone's been complaining about this for a long time now. Some players have set up meetings with these social media companies. It seems to me that they're not serious enough about it."

So is there appetite for change within the big social media platforms?

"No one should have to experience racist abuse, and we don't want it on our apps," Meta, which owns Instagram and Facebook, said in a statement to the AP. "We take action whenever we find it and we've launched several ways to help protect people from having to see it in the first place."

That includes "Hidden Words," which filters offensive comments and direct messages and is on by default for creator accounts, and "Limits," which hides comments and DMs from people who don't follow you or only followed you recently, the statement said.

"We know no one thing will fix abusive behavior," Meta said, "but we're committed to continuing working closely with the football industry to help keep our apps a safe place for footballers and fans."

Twitter responded with an automated reply of a poop emoji when the AP reached out for comment.

For GoBubble founder Platten, platforms are striking a balance between keeping a large user base for revenue purposes while being seen to be tough on racism.

"There's always going to be a position where they may move closer to solving the problem," he said, "but are never going to go the full hog that we all want them to, in terms of really cracking down and solving it."

Some teams and athletes are choosing alternative platforms to promote not just themselves but also more ethical behavior online.

These include Striver, a user-generated content platform backed by Roberto Carlos and Gilberto Silva — both World Cup winners with Brazil in 2002. And PixStory, a platform with nearly 1 million users which ranks them according to the integrity of their posts and aims to create "clean social" by prioritizing safety in a way big tech companies are not doing.

England's Arsenal club, Italy's Juventus and Paris Saint-Germain's women's team are collaborating with PixStory, whose founder, Appu Esthose Suresh, says teams and athletes are in a "Catch-22 situation."

"They want to live in this space because it's a way to reach out and interact with their fans, but there's not enough safety," Suresh told the AP. "There is an alternative way — and that's change the business model."

Ultimately, the biggest change will likely come through legislation. Last month, the European Union clinched an agreement in principle on the Digital Services Act, which will force big tech companies to better protect European users from harmful online content or be punished with billions of dollars in fines for noncompliance. In Britain, the government has proposed the Online Safety Bill, with potential fines amounting to 10% of the platforms' annual global turnover.

Meanwhile, the number of perpetrators of online racial abuse facing criminal charges has increased. In March, a man who abused England striker Ivan Toney was banned from every soccer stadium in Britain for three years in what police described as a "landmark ruling."

Onuoha welcomed these developments but he's still keeping his social media accounts on a private setting. "There will be lots of good people who won't be able to connect with me but it's a consequence of not having enough trust and faith in enough good people being allowed to enter the account," he said. "It's the 1% who offset the entire experience."

Douglas reported from Sundsvall, Sweden.

This is part of an Associated Press series examining racism in soccer.

More AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/hub/soccer> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## **Mother fatally shot by neighbor after dispute over playing children, sheriff says**

OCALA, Fla. (AP) — A Florida mother was fatally shot through the front door of her neighbor's home while her 9-year-old son stood next to her, a violent culmination of what police said was a 2½-year feud.

Ajike Owens, 35, was fatally shot after going to the Ocala apartment of her neighbor, who earlier had yelled at Owens' children as they played nearby and threw a pair of skates that hit one of them, Marion County Sheriff Billy Woods said at a news conference Monday.

Deputies responding to a trespassing call at the apartment Friday night found Owens suffering from gunshot wounds. The mother of four was taken to a nearby hospital, where she died. Ocala is about 70 miles (110 kilometers) northwest of Orlando.

"I wish our shooter would have called us instead of taking actions into her own hands," Woods said. "I wish Ms. Owens would have called us in the hopes we could have never gotten to the point at which we are here today."

Since January 2021, Woods said, deputies responded at least a half-dozen times in connection with the feuding between Owens and the woman who shot her. The sheriff's office hasn't arrested or identified the shooter.

Woods said detectives are working with the State Attorney's Office and must investigate possible self-defense claims before they can move forward with any possible criminal charges.

The sheriff pointed out that because of Florida's "stand your ground" law, he can't legally make an arrest unless he can prove the shooter did not act in self-defense.

Before the shooting, Owens' children had been playing in a field near the shooter's apartment. When Owens later confronted the woman at her apartment, an argument ensued, and the woman shot Owens through the front door, according to police.

Civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, who is representing Owens' family, said in a statement that the shooter had been yelling racial slurs at the children before the confrontation with their mother. Owens and her children are Black.

The sheriff's office hasn't confirmed there were slurs uttered or said whether race was a factor in the shooting.

Woods also said they haven't interviewed Owens' children, who witnessed the shooting, because investigators first want child therapists to work with them. Most of the information the deputies have is coming from the shooter, Woods said.

"There was a lot of aggressiveness from both of them, back and forth," Wood said the shooter told investigators. "Whether it be banging on the doors, banging on the walls and threats being made. And then at that moment is when Ms. Owens was shot through the door."

Woods was joined at his news conference by community leaders and a local attorney retained by the

family, Anthony Thomas. Their singular message was a call for patience while the sheriff's office conducted its investigation.

During a vigil with the family later Monday, Thomas said the sheriff had promised him the most professional service that he and his deputies could provide, and Thomas plans to hold the agency to that.

During the same gathering, Owens' mother, Pamela Dias, said that she was seeking justice for her daughter and her grandchildren.

"My daughter, my grandchildren's mother, was shot and killed with her 9-year-old son standing next to her," Dias said. "She had no weapon. She posed no imminent threat to anyone."

## Oregon is invested in Fox Corp. and is investigating its board over bogus election fraud claims

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon's attorney general announced Monday she has begun investigating the board of directors of Fox Corp. for breaching its fiduciary duties by allowing Fox News to broadcast false claims about the 2020 presidential election — claims that cost the broadcaster almost \$800 million in a lawsuit.

Also joining the investigation is Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read, who oversees the Oregon Public Employees Retirement Fund, which owns more than 250,000 shares of Fox stock. Both Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and Read are Democrats.

"Treasurer Read and I believe that Fox's board of directors breached its fiduciary duties by allowing Fox News to broadcast false claims that Dominion and Smartmatic rigged the 2020 presidential election," Rosenblum said. "We hope to hold the board accountable and protect the long-term value of Oregon's investment in Fox Corp."

Brian Nick, chief communications officer and executive vice president of Fox Corp., declined to comment on Rosenblum's announcement.

In April, Fox News agreed to pay Dominion Voting Systems \$787.5 million to avert a trial in the voting machine company's lawsuit that would have exposed how the network promoted lies about the 2020 presidential election.

Dominion had argued that the news outlet owned by Fox Corp. damaged Dominion's reputation by peddling phony conspiracy theories that claimed its equipment switched votes from former President Donald Trump to Democrat Joe Biden.

Lachlan Murdoch, chair and CEO of Fox Corp., said when the settlement was announced that it avoids "the acrimony of a divisive trial and a multiyear appeal process, a decision clearly in the best interests of the company and its shareholders."

The Oregon Department of Justice said the investigation will explore leading a lawsuit against Fox's management on behalf of the company's harmed investors, which include Oregon's public employees.

"Fox directors and senior officers manage the company on behalf of its investors," the department said in a statement. "They have a duty to manage the company competently, honestly, and in a manner that prevents foreseeable and catastrophic financial harm like that inflicted upon company's shareholders by the Dominion and Smartmatic suits."

"We invest for Oregon's public servants and we aim to hold Fox's board of directors, including Rupert and Lachlan Murdoch, accountable for their decisions," said Read, who is a member of the Oregon Investment Council, which sets state investment policy. "Investigating Fox's books and records is a necessary and significant step in fulfilling our obligation to our beneficiaries."

As of May 26, the Oregon pension fund owned 168,075 Class A common stock shares and 92,850 Class B shares of Fox stock, said Roy Kaufmann, Rosenblum's spokesperson.

Another voting machine company, Smartmatic USA, has also sued Fox News over Fox News' bogus election claims. Dominion had sued Fox for \$1.6 billion.

## Lawyer says Rep. George Santos would go to jail to keep identities of bond cosigners secret

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rep. George Santos' lawyer said Monday the indicted New York Republican would risk going to jail to protect the identities of the people who cosigned the \$500,000 bond enabling his pretrial release.

The lawyer, Joseph Murray, urged a judge to deny a request by news outlets to unseal the names of Santos' bond suretors, or guarantors, suggesting they could "suffer great distress," including possible job losses and physical harm, if they're identified publicly.

"My client would rather surrender to pretrial detention than subject these suretors to what will inevitably come," Murray wrote in a letter to U.S. Magistrate Judge Anne Shields.

Murray asked that she give them time to withdraw as cosigners if she decides to unseal their names, which Shields kept off the public court docket at the lawyer's request.

Murray said he, Santos and Santos' staff have been receiving threatening and harassing calls and messages, including death threats. The lawyer said he received a call Friday from someone shouting, "Who paid Santos' bond?" and said he worries Santos' critics "are just waiting to pounce" on the people backing his release.

"We truly fear for their health, safety and well being," Murray wrote.

Santos pleaded not guilty on May 10 to a 13-count indictment charging that he duped donors, stole from his campaign, lied to Congress about being a millionaire and cheated to collect unemployment benefits he didn't deserve. He is due back in court on June 30.

The 34-year-old, who represents parts of Queens and Long Island, has defied calls to resign and has said he won't drop his bid for a second term.

Prosecutors have not taken a position on the unsealing request.

In a letter last week, a lawyer for news outlets urged the judge to the release the names of Santos' bond suretors, citing a "compelling public interest in maintaining the greatest transparency possible in these proceedings."

The New York Times first wrote to Shields on May 23 asking to unseal the names. Other news outlets, including The Associated Press, joined the fight a few days later.

Separately, the House Ethics Committee wrote to Santos on May 16 asking him to identify the people who cosigned his bond.

Murray said Santos originally lined up three financially responsible cosigners as suretors, but one backed out and the other two didn't show up to his arraignment.

That forced them to make "other confidential arrangements" to ensure Santos' release, Murray said.

Santos' bond is unsecured. That means his cosigners didn't have put up any money up front, but could be forced to pay the full amount if he doesn't comply with his release conditions or fails to show up for court.

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

## Phillies' Nola loses no-hit bid on homer in 7th against Tigers

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Philadelphia Phillies pitcher Aaron Nola lost his no-hit bid against the Detroit Tigers on Nick Maton's three-run homer into the second deck with two outs in the seventh inning on Monday night.

Nola had faced the minimum through six innings and struck out 10 with two walks. He ran into trouble in the seventh when two batters reached on a walk and fielding error. But the righty still had two outs when he hung an 0-2 breaking ball to Maton and the third baseman crushed one into right to make it a 5-3 game.

Nola walked Jake Marisnick with two outs in the third inning but the outfielder was out at first base on a caught stealing by catcher J.T. Realmuto. Nola walked Maton with one out in the fifth but the baserunner

was erased after Eric Haase hit into an inning-ending double play.

Nola threw 68 of 108 pitches for strikes. Nola, who record two strikeouts on automatic strike three calls, has now pitched at least six innings in each of his last 10 starts.

He entered 82-66 in a career spent all with the Phillies since his debut in 2015. The right-handed ace is a free agent at the end of the season. Nola pitched two complete games in 2022 and has five in his career.

There have been no no-hitters in the majors this season, the first since Major League Baseball introduced a pitch clock. There were a record nine in 2021 and four last year.

Nola is trying to throw Philadelphia's first no-hitter since Cole Hamels threw one in his final start for the Phillies in a July 15, 2015, win against the Chicago Cubs.

Nola had a no-hitter broken up in the seventh inning of a 2018 start against Toronto.

Trea Turner hit two solo home runs and had an RBI single, and Bryce Harper and Nick Castellanos added run-scoring hits to stake Nola to a 5-0 lead against the Tigers.

AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/hub/MLB> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## **As India grieves train crash that killed 275, relatives try to identify 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 try to identify the bodies of relatives, as railway officials recommended a criminal probe of 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 are still trying to make sense of the horrific disaster.

Outside the hospital, two large screens cycled through photos of the bodies, the 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 for details like clothing for clues.

Many of the people said they spent days on desperate journeys from neighboring states, traveling on multiple trains, buses or rented cars to identify and claim bodies, a process that stretched into a third day.

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.

"It's the first time I have dealt with something like this," said Dr. Utkal Keshari Suna, a senior resident at the Bhubaneswar hospital. "It's been a very difficult experience. I am in forensics, so I am used to dealing with dead bodies, but nothing like this," he said, standing inside the mortuary, where the air was thick with the smell of the dead.

"It's horrific. Time has also passed, so many bodies have started decomposing, so it's becoming more and more difficult to identify them," he said.

Upendra Ram began searching for his son, Retul Ram, on Sunday after traveling about 850 kilometers (520 miles) from neighboring Bihar state. The day-long journey in a rented car, which cost him 35,000 rupees (\$423), was exhausting for Ram. Retul, 17, had been on his way to Chennai to find work, Ram said.

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 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 crash was one of the worst rail disasters in India's history. Investigators said a signaling failure



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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.

At least 123 trains scheduled to pass through Odisha were either canceled or delayed after the accident. The disruption led air fares to Odisha to spike, prompting India's civil aviation ministry to warn airlines over pricing surges.

Usman Ansari, who came from Bihar to collect the body of his brother-in-law, Kasim Mia, said he spent 24 hours on the road along with two friends. After reaching the site of the crash, they were told the bodies had been moved to Bhubaneswar.

They rented a car to drive to the hospital, where Ansari was finally able to identify and collect his brother-in-law's body.

"Kasim used to say he wanted to do everything for his children," he said, adding that compensation promised by the federal government would help take care of the man's four young children.

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

Some train traffic was restored Sunday evening on the tracks where the crash happened, after two days of repair work in which hundreds of workers with excavators removed the mangled debris of the trains.

The crash 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.

## **Approval for Idaho phosphate mine reversed after judge rules US didn't assess prairie bird impact**

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

A federal judge has yanked approval for a phosphate mining project in southeastern Idaho, saying federal land managers in the Trump administration didn't in part properly consider the mine's impact on sage grouse, a bird species that has seen an 80% decline in population since 1965.

U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill's Friday decision came five months after he found fault with the way the U.S. Bureau of Land Management approved the Caldwell Canyon Mine in 2019.

The mine has been proposed by P4 Production LLC, a subsidiary of German pharmaceutical giant Bayer AG. Three environmental groups — the Center for Biological Diversity, Western Watersheds Project and WildEarth Guardians — sued.

In January, Winmill agreed with the conservation groups that the federal agency violated the National Environmental Policy Act and other laws on several counts when it approved the mine, including failing to consider the indirect effects of processing ore at a nearby plant and the cumulative impacts on sage grouse, whose population has dramatically declined over its habitat in 11 Western states, according to the

U.S. Geological Survey.

His Friday decision issued remedies for those violations: Vacating both the mine's approval and the environmental analysis of the project, as well as any other decision that relied on those documents.

"We believe the court's decision to vacate the BLM's approvals is excessive," Bayer AG said in a statement. The company is assessing its next steps, which could include an appeal.

"We believe the few specific deficiencies the court identified in the BLM's assessment can and should be fully addressed expeditiously," the statement said. Bayer said it plans to have the mine operational in the next few years.

An email sent to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management seeking comment was not immediately returned.

The proposed venture would have included two new open mine pits to extract phosphate ore, according to court documents. It would have resulted in the disturbance of about 1,550 acres (627 hectares) of previously undeveloped land nearly 300 miles (483 kilometers) southeast of Boise.

The mine was projected to last for 40 years, with ore taken by truck or rail to a nearby processing plant.

There, the ore would be processed to produce glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, the most widely used herbicide in the world. Bayer, which acquired the herbicide's original producer Monsanto in 2018, is facing thousands of claims from people who say Roundup exposure caused their cancer.

"This strip mine would've cut through the heart of crucial habitat for greater sage grouse and other species" just to produce an herbicide, Hannah Connor, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement.

"Now sage grouse have a fighting chance at continuing to dance their age-old dances in this place. And the government can't go on arbitrarily ignoring the environmental harms of phosphate mining," Connor said.

Bayer this year began transitioning glyphosate out of its U.S. residential lawn and garden products and using other ingredients as a way to reduce future litigation risks. Agriculture and professional products will not be changed, and the company said it stands behind the safety of its glyphosate products.

Thiessen reported from Anchorage, Alaska.

## **Commission: Florida judge should be reprimanded for conduct during Parkland school shooting trial**

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — The Florida judge who oversaw the penalty trial of Parkland school shooter Nikolas Cruz should be publicly reprimanded for showing bias toward the prosecution, failing to curtail "vitriolic statements" directed at Cruz's attorneys by the victims' families and sometimes allowing "her emotions to overcome her judgement," a state commission concluded Monday.

The Judicial Qualifications Commission found that Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer violated several rules governing judicial conduct during last year's trial in her actions toward Cruz's public defenders. The six-month trial ended with Cruz receiving a receiving a life sentence for the 2018 murder of 14 students and three staff members at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School after the jury could not unanimously agree that he deserved a death sentence.

The 15-member commission found that Scherer "unduly chastised" lead public defender Melisa McNeill and her team, wrongly accused one Cruz attorney of threatening her child, and improperly embraced members of the prosecution in the courtroom after the trial's conclusion.

The commission, composed of judges, lawyers and citizens, acknowledged that "the worldwide publicity surrounding the case created stress and tension for all participants."

Regardless, the commission said, judges are expected to "ensure due process, order and decorum, and act always with dignity and respect to promote the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary."

"In limited instances during this unique and lengthy case, Judge Scherer allowed her emotions to overcome her judgement," the commission said in its report to the Florida Supreme Court, which will make the final decision.

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Scherer announced last month that she would be retiring from the bench on June 30. The commission said the resignation was not part of any deal struck with the judge. The commission report said that Scherer acknowledged during her testimony that her conduct during the trial “fell short” of what’s expected of judges and that “her treatment of members of the defense team was at times not patient, dignified or courteous.”

Scherer, a 46-year-old former prosecutor, was appointed to the bench in 2012 and the Cruz case was her first capital murder trial. Broward County’s computerized system randomly assigned her Cruz’s case shortly after the shooting.

Her attorney, Thomas Panza, did not immediately respond to a call or email seeking comment.

Broward County Public Defender Gordon Weekes declined comment.

Scherer’s handling of the case drew frequent praise from the parents and spouses of the victims, who said she treated them with professionalism and kindness, but her clashes with Cruz’s attorneys and others sometimes drew criticism from legal observers.

Before the trial she criticized two reporters from the Sun Sentinel newspaper for publishing a sealed Cruz educational record that they obtained legally. She threatened to tell the paper what it could and couldn’t print, but never did; legal experts say such a move would have been unconstitutional.

Scherer also had frequent heated arguments with McNeill. Those boiled over for the first time when McNeill and her team suddenly rested their case after calling only a small fraction of their expected witnesses. Scherer called it “the most uncalled for, unprofessional way to try a case,” though the defense has no obligation to call all of its witnesses or announce its plans in advance.

McNeill countered angrily, “You are insulting me on the record in front of my client,” before Scherer told her to stop. She then laid into her.

“You’ve been insulting me the entire trial,” Scherer barked at McNeill. “Arguing with me, storming out, coming late intentionally if you don’t like my rulings. So, quite frankly, this has been long overdue. So please be seated.”

The two clashed again during Cruz’s sentencing hearing in November over the verbal attacks some victims’ family members made against the defense team during their courtroom statements. Scherer refused to curtail the statements and ejected one of McNeill’s assistants, David Wheeler, after she wrongly interpreted one of his comments as a threat against her daughter.

After sentencing Cruz, 24, to life without parole as required, Scherer left the bench and hugged members of the prosecution and the victims’ families. She told the commission she offered to also hug the defense team.

That action led the Supreme Court in April to remove her from overseeing post-conviction motions of another defendant, Randy Tundidor, who was sentenced to death for murder in the 2019 killing of his landlord. One of the prosecutors in that case had also been on the Cruz team, and during a hearing in the Tundidor case a few days after the Cruz sentencing, Scherer asked the prosecutor how he was holding up.

The court said Scherer’s actions gave at least the appearance that she could not be fair to Tundidor.

## **Brazil’s Lula lays out plan to halt Amazon deforestation, make country “global reference” on climate**

By CARLA BRIDI and FABIANO MAISONNAVE undefined

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva unveiled a plan on Monday to end illegal deforestation in the Amazon, a major campaign pledge that is a critical step in addressing the country’s significant carbon emissions from the region.

This strategy, set to be implemented over four years, provides a roadmap to achieve the ambitious goal of halting illegal deforestation by 2030. Lula’s term ends Jan. 1, 2027, so full implementation would depend on the willingness of whoever comes after him to continue the work.

On Monday, Lula’s administration also pledged to achieve net zero deforestation, that is, replanting as much as is cut down, by restoring native vegetation stocks as compensation for legal vegetation removal.

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Brazil is the world's fifth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, with almost 3% of global emissions, according to Climate Watch, an online platform managed by World Resources Institute. Almost half of Brazil's carbon emissions come from deforestation.

Lula announced his government would readjust Brazil's international commitments to cut emissions, called Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs, back to what was promised in 2015 during the Paris Agreement. Brazil committed to reduce carbon emission by 37% by 2025 and 43% by 2030. Lula's predecessor, far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, had scaled back the commitments.

As part of the announcement, Lula increased a conservation unit in the Amazon by 1,800 hectares (4,400 acres), which frustrated environmentalists. His government has pledged to prioritize the allocation of 57,000,000 hectares of public lands without special protection, an area roughly equivalent to the size of France.

In a speech, Environment Minister Marina Silva said the federal government would create more conservation units, pending further studies and agreements with state governments.

These areas have shown increased vulnerability to deforestation, as land invaders displace traditional communities and clear the land with the hope of gaining ownership recognition from the government.

"Brazil will once again become a global reference in sustainability, tackling climate change, and achieving targets for carbon emission reduction and zero deforestation," Lula said.

During the event, there was a tribute to British journalist Dom Phillips and Indigenous affairs specialist Bruno Pereira, who were killed a year ago during a trip in the Amazon. Several people have been arrested.

The new measures mark the fifth phase of a large initiative called the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon. Created 20 years ago, during Lula's first term, the plan was largely responsible for curbing deforestation by 83% between 2004 and 2012. The plan was suspended during Bolsonaro's time in office.

One of the main goals is to stimulate the so-called bio-economy, such as the managed fishing of pirarucu, Amazon's largest fish, and acai production, as an alternative to cattle-raising, which is responsible for most of deforestation. The action plan also establishes measures to increase monitoring and law enforcement and pledges to create new conservation units.

These measures are also a response to recent limitations Congress placed on Silva, the environment minister, particularly influenced by the so-called beef caucus representing agribusiness interests.

Lula vetoed the legislation passed by Congress, which aimed to allow the cutting of remaining areas of the Atlantic Forest, a coastal rainforest that has suffered significant destruction.

"The agribusiness group is a well-organized political group that defends interests in Congress, with many affiliated lawmakers," Creomar de Souza, political analyst and CEO at Dharma Politics consultancy, told The Associated Press. "And this creates room for what happened last week: the capacity this group has within Congress to shape and impose its agenda."

According to Suely Araújo, a senior policy advisor at the Climate Observatory, the action plan is crucial for the reconstruction of Brazil's environmental governance. For her, remarkable aspects of the plan include the integration of data and systems for remote monitoring and accountability, the alignment of infrastructure projects with deforestation reduction goals and rural credit policies tied to achieving zero deforestation.

However, it is still unclear how the compensation for legal deforestation will be carried out, including the instruments and the level of responsibility of the private sector.

"It will also be necessary to fight against the serious setbacks looming in the Congress agenda," said Araújo. "There will be no zero deforestation if it approves destructive measures."

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Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## California insurance market rattled by withdrawal of major companies

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Two insurance industry giants have pulled back from California's home insurance marketplace, saying that increasing wildfire risk and soaring construction costs have prompted them to stop writing new policies in the nation's most populous state.

State Farm announced last week it would stop accepting applications for all business and personal lines of property and casualty insurance, citing inflation, a challenging reinsurance market and "rapidly growing catastrophe exposure." The decision did not impact personal auto insurance.

"We take seriously our responsibility to manage risk," State Farm said. "It's necessary to take these actions now to improve the company's financial strength."

Allstate, another insurance powerhouse, announced in November it would pause new homeowners, condo and commercial insurance policies in California to protect current customers.

"The cost to insure new home customers in California is far higher than the price they would pay for policies due to wildfires, higher costs for repairing homes and higher reinsurance premiums," Allstate said in a statement.

California's unsettled market aligns with trends across the country in which companies are boosting rates, limiting coverage or pulling out completely from regions susceptible to wildfires and other natural disasters in the era of climate change. Florida and Louisiana have struggled to keep healthy insurance markets following extensive damage from hurricanes. Premiums are rising in Colorado amid wildfire threats, and an Oregon effort to map wildfire risk was rejected last year because of fears it would cause premiums to skyrocket.

Scientists say climate change has made the West warmer and drier over the last three decades and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive. In recent years, California has experienced the largest and most destructive fires in state history.

Some California homeowners already are going without coverage, and a shortage of new policies could make it more difficult to buy a home. A state-run pool that serves as the insurer of last resort for many could face pressure as enrollments surge.

The state pool — the California Fair Access to Insurance Requirements Plan — provides basic fire insurance coverage for properties in high-risk areas when traditional insurance companies will not. Enrollments have jumped in recent years to 272,846 homes in 2022.

"We just don't have a stable insurance market," said state Sen. Bill Dodd, a Democrat from Napa, whose Northern California district has been charred by wildfires. "What's happening is a lot of people in my district and frankly other districts are ... going naked — they have no insurance."

According to data compiled by the industry-supported Insurance Information Institute, California has more than 1.2 million homes at risk for extreme wildfire, far more than any other state.

"The number of acres burned in California has grown steadily in recent years, as more people are moving into fire-prone areas of the state," the institute said in a statement on the company departures from California. "More homes in harm's way — combined with rising costs of repairing or replacing houses either damaged or lost to fire — leads to increased insured losses."

In Colorado, which has been hit by devastating wildfires, insurance premiums have been rising significantly, and some smaller insurance companies have been pulling back from covering properties. A study commissioned by state lawmakers found that 76% of carriers decreased their exposures in Colorado in 2022, leaving the five largest insurance companies to dominate the market.

Florida has struggled to keep the insurance market healthy since 1992, when Hurricane Andrew flattened Homestead, wiped out some insurance carriers and left many remaining companies fearful to write or renew policies in Florida. Risks for carriers also have been growing as climate change increases the strength of hurricanes and intensity of rainstorms.

Louisiana is in the midst of an insurance crisis, exacerbated by hurricanes Delta, Laura, Zeta and Ida in

2020 and 2021. As claims piled up, companies that wrote homeowners policies in the state went insolvent or left, canceling or refusing to renew existing policies.

In California, the loss of large insurers could create more pressure to loosen consumer-minded policies that have held down rates in the state for years. Voters approved Proposition 103 in 1988, which allows the state insurance commissioner to reject proposed rate increases and order refunds. It has been credited with saving consumers billions of dollars, but the industry says it places constraints on accurate underwriting and pricing risk.

Last year, Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara advanced regulations requiring insurers to give discounts to customers if they followed new standards like building fire-resistance roofs and creating defensible space around their homes.

Before their announcements, State Farm and Allstate both had been seeking significant rate increases.

Consumer Watchdog, a nonpartisan advocacy group, said State Farm's decision was unlawful.

"Insurance companies can't just stop selling insurance to consumers in order to make more money for themselves," Harvey Rosenfield, the author of Proposition 103 and the founder of the group, said in a statement. "They have to open their books and get the (state) insurance commissioner's approval."

Lara's office didn't respond to an email request for comment.

A state website lists more than 100 companies selling residential insurance, though some offer only limited lines of coverage, such as earthquake or renter insurance.

Associated Press writer Coleen Slevin in Denver contributed.

## Permit-to-purchase: Oregon's tough new gun law faces federal court test

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A federal trial over Oregon's voter-approved gun control measure opened Monday in Portland, marking a critical next step for one of the toughest gun control laws in the nation after months of being tied up in the courts.

The trial, which is being held before a judge and not a jury, will determine whether the law violates the U.S. Constitution.

It comes after a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision on the Second Amendment that has upended gun laws across the country, dividing judges and sowing confusion over what firearm restrictions can remain on the books. It changed the test that lower courts had long used for evaluating challenges to firearm restrictions, telling judges that gun laws must be consistent with the "historical tradition of firearm regulation."

The Oregon measure's fate is being carefully watched as one of the first new gun restrictions passed since the Supreme Court ruling last June.

The legal battle over in Oregon could well last beyond the trial. Whatever the judge decides, the ruling is likely to be appealed, potentially moving all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Oregon voters in November narrowly passed Measure 114, which requires residents to undergo safety training and a background check to obtain a permit to buy a gun.

The legislation also bans the sale, transfer or import of gun magazines with more than 10 rounds unless they are owned by law enforcement or a military member or were owned before the measure's passage. Those who already own high-capacity magazines can only possess them at home or use them at a firing range, in shooting competitions or for hunting as allowed by state law after the measure takes effect.

The Oregon Firearms Federation and a county sheriff filed the federal lawsuit in November, contending it violated the right to bear arms under the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Democratic Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and former Democratic Gov. Kate Brown were named as defendants.

Daniel Nichols, an attorney for the plaintiffs, contended in opening statements Monday that the law violates the right to bear arms under the Second Amendment and the due process clause under the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

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"This case is about constitutional rights," he said. "The right to keep and bear arms ... as well as the right to be free from the taking of property."

The defense said it would argue that large-capacity magazines should not be considered "bearable arms" and represent a "dramatic technological change" from the firearms that existed when the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution was written in the 18th century.

"Gun violence in Oregon and the U.S. results in horrific deaths," said Scott Ferron, an attorney for the Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety, adding that the availability of firearms and large-capacity magazines "pose immediate risks to the health, safety and well-being of citizens of this state, especially our youth." The advocacy group joined the lawsuit as a third party after it was filed as an intervenor defendant.

Plaintiffs called multiple witnesses, including people linked with firearms manufacturing and sales as well as plaintiff Brad Lohrey, sheriff of Sherman County in northern Oregon. The trial is expected to last about five days.

The federal lawsuit was one of several filed over the measure.

In a separate suit, filed in state court in rural and sparsely populated Harney County in southeastern Oregon, Gun Owners of America Inc., the Gun Owners Foundation and several individual gun owners claimed the law violates the Oregon Constitution.

The judge presiding over that case, Harney County Judge Robert S. Raschio, in December ordered the law to be put on hold. Because the lawsuit challenged Measure 114 under the state constitution and not the U.S. Constitution, it held precedence in the state, legal experts said. A trial is scheduled for September.

Supporters of the law say it would reduce mass shootings and other forms of gun violence as well as suicides, which the Oregon Health Authority said accounts for 82% of gun deaths in the state.

## Oklahoma school board approves what would be the 1st taxpayer-funded religious school in US

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A state school board in Oklahoma voted Monday to approve what would be the first publicly funded religious school in the nation, despite a warning from the state's attorney general that the decision was unconstitutional.

The Statewide Virtual Charter School Board voted 3-2 to approve the application by the Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma to establish the St. Isidore of Seville Virtual Charter School. The online public charter school would be open to students across the state in kindergarten through grade 12.

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond had warned the board that such a decision clearly violated the Oklahoma Constitution.

"The approval of any publicly funded religious school is contrary to Oklahoma law and not in the best interest of taxpayers," Drummond said in a statement shortly after the board's vote. "It's extremely disappointing that board members violated their oath in order to fund religious schools with our tax dollars. In doing so, these members have exposed themselves and the state to potential legal action that could be costly."

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma said in the "vision and purpose of the organization" section of its application that: "The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out."

Brett Farley, the executive director of the Catholic Conference of Oklahoma, said: "We are elated that the board agreed with our argument and application for the nation's first religious charter school."

Americans United for Separation of Church and State denounced the board's approval.

"It's hard to think of a clearer violation of the religious freedom of Oklahoma taxpayers and public-school families than the state establishing the nation's first religious public charter school," the group's president and CEO Rachel Laser said in a statement. "This is a sea change for American democracy. Americans United will work with our Oklahoma and national partners to take all possible legal action to fight this decision and defend the separation of church and state that's promised in both the Oklahoma and U.S. Constitutions."

Oklahoma's Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt, who earlier this year signed a bill that would give parents in the state a tax incentive to send their children to private schools, including religious schools, praised the board's vote.

"This is a win for religious liberty and education freedom in our great state, and I am encouraged by these efforts to give parents more options when it comes to their child's education," Stitt said in a statement.

This story has been corrected to show the name of the virtual charter is St. Isidore of Seville, not St. Isodore.

## **Small-brained ancient human cousins may have buried their dead, according to a surprising study**

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — An ancient human cousin may have buried its dead and carved symbols into cave walls, surprising findings for a creature with a small brain.

Fossil remains of the species — named *Homo naledi* — were uncovered in underground caves in South Africa a decade ago. Now, researchers say they've found evidence that the species was capable of complex behavior that so far has only been seen in those with bigger brains.

"We are facing a remarkable discovery here" for a species with brains one-third the size of humans, said anthropologist Lee Berger, who led the research funded by the National Geographic Society, where he now works.

Berger and colleagues describe their findings in studies posted online Monday. The research has not been peer-reviewed yet and some outside scientists think more evidence is needed to challenge what we know about how humans evolved their complex thinking.

"There's still a lot to uncover," said Rick Potts, director of the Smithsonian's Human Origins Program who was not involved in the research.

*H. naledi* is a pretty new addition to the family tree of hominins, which includes our direct ancestors and other extinct relatives who walked on two legs. Berger and his team announced the species in 2015, after a tip from local spelunkers led them to the Rising Star cave system near Johannesburg where they uncovered fossils from at least 15 individuals who lived around 300,000 years ago.

These creatures had some traits in common with modern humans, like legs made for walking upright and hands that could work with objects, said University of Wisconsin-Madison anthropologist John Hawks, a member of the research team. But other features looked more ancient, including their small brains.

In recent years, team members have ventured back into the caves, a tricky descent through tight underground spaces. What's down there shows the species in a new light, they reported.

One of the new studies describes what researchers say were intentional burial sites. The team uncovered fossil remains of adults and children in shallow holes in the ground, their bodies in a fetal position.

Another study describes a series of marks carved into the cave walls, including geometric patterns and cross-hatched lines.

"This is something that takes a lot of time and effort to do," said Berger, who led the initial research while at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

All of this behavior would be surprising for a creature whose brain was closer in size to an ape's than a human's, experts said.

Decades ago, we thought *Homo sapiens* were the only ones who could figure out how to use fire, bury their dead or create art, said Chris Stringer, a human evolution expert at London's Natural History Museum who was not involved in the research.

Since then, we've learned that other groups like Neanderthals also lived complex lives. But those species still had big brains — unlike *H. naledi*, whose burials would raise further questions about human evolution, Stringer said.

Scientists haven't yet been able to identify how old the engravings are. So Potts said the current evidence



can't say for sure whether *H. naledi* was truly the one to create the symbols, or if some other creature — maybe even *H. sapiens* — made its way down there at some point.

For study author Agustin Fuentes, an anthropologist at Princeton University, the *H. naledi* evidence takes the focus off brain size.

"Big brains are still important," Fuentes said. "They just don't explain what we thought they explained."

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Missouri governor denies clemency for man facing execution on Tuesday

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson on Monday declined clemency for a man who faces execution Tuesday evening for killing two jailers in an ill-fated effort to free someone else from a county jail.

Michael Tisius, 42, would be the third person in Missouri, and the 12th person nationally, to be executed in 2023. He's accused of killing officers Leon Egley and Jason Acton in June 2000.

"It's despicable that two dedicated public servants were murdered in a failed attempt to help another criminal evade the law," Parson, a Republican, said in a statement. "The state of Missouri will carry out Mr. Tisius's sentences according to the Court's order and deliver justice."

Tisius has at least one pending court appeal. His appeals and his clemency request have focused on several issues. Among them: Tisius was just 19 at the time of the killings; he had been neglected as a child; and a juror at his 2010 resentencing may have been illiterate — in violation of Missouri law.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday declined to halt the execution based on Tisius' age when the crime occurred. A federal judge last week stayed the execution over the claim that a juror was illiterate, but an appeals panel reinstated it. The Supreme Court hasn't yet ruled on that issue.

Elizabeth Unger Carlyle, an attorney for Tisius, said the ups and downs of the appeals are taking a toll on him.

"I think he's sort of, frankly, on an emotional roller coaster," Carlyle said. "He's pretty anxious. He doesn't want to die. I think he's angry and frightened."

A 2005 Supreme Court ruling prohibits executions for those who were under 18 at the time of the crime. But Carlyle said "emerging science plus information about Mr. Tisius' own brain dictates that they should now change that rule to apply to Mr. Tisius."

A court filing from the Missouri attorney general's office noted that both the original trial jury and the jury at resentencing considered Tisius' age and mental health, "yet both juries still decided to impose the death penalty." The Supreme Court turned aside the appeal without comment.

Advocates for Tisius say he was largely neglected as a child and was homeless by his early teens. In 1999, as an 18-year-old, he was jailed on a misdemeanor charge for pawning a rented stereo system.

In June 2000, Tisius was housed at the small Randolph County Jail in Huntsville with Roy Vance. Tisius was about to be released, and court records show the men discussed a plan in which Tisius would help Vance escape.

Just after midnight on June 22, Tisius went to the jail accompanied by Vance's girlfriend, Tracie Bulington. They told Egley and Acton that they were delivering cigarettes to Vance. The jailers didn't know that Tisius had a pistol.

At trial, Bulington testified that she looked up and saw Tisius with the gun drawn, then watched as he shot and killed Acton. When Egley approached, Tisius shot him, too. Both officers were unarmed.

Tisius found keys at the dispatch area and tried to open Vance's cell, but couldn't. When Egley grabbed Bulington's leg, Tisius shot him several more times.

Tisius and Bulington fled but their car broke down in Kansas. They were arrested in Wathena, Kansas, about 130 miles (209 kilometers) west of Huntsville. Tisius confessed to the crimes.

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Burlington and Vance are serving life sentences.

Defense attorneys have argued that the killings were not premeditated. Tisius, they said, intended to order the jailers into a holding cell and free Vance and other inmates. Tisius' defense team issued a video last week in which Vance said he planned the escape attempt and manipulated Tisius into participating.

The people executed in Missouri this year included Amber McLaughlin, who killed a woman and dumped the body near the Mississippi River in St. Louis. The execution was believed to be the first of a transgender woman in the U.S.

Raheem Taylor, 58, was put to death in February for killing his live-in girlfriend and her three children in 2004 in St. Louis County.

Four of the U.S. executions this year have been in Texas, and three in Florida.

## **Former FBI agent Robert Hanssen, who was convicted of spying for Russia, dies in prison**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Robert Hanssen, a former FBI agent who took more than \$1.4 million in cash and diamonds to trade secrets with Moscow in one of the most notorious spying cases in American history, died in prison Monday.

Hanssen, 79, was found unresponsive in his cell at a federal prison in Florence, Colorado, and later pronounced dead, prison officials said. He is believed to have died of natural causes, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. The person was not authorized to publicly discuss details of Hanssen's death and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

He had been serving a sentence of life in prison without possibility of parole since 2002, after pleading guilty to 15 counts of espionage and other charges.

Hanssen had divulged a wealth of information about American intelligence-gathering, including extensive detail about how U.S. officials had tapped into Russian spy operations, since at least 1985.

He was believed to have been partly responsible for the deaths of at least three Soviet officers who were working for U.S. intelligence and executed after being exposed.

He got more than \$1.4 million in cash, bank funds, diamonds and Rolex watches in exchange for providing highly classified national security information to the Soviet Union and later Russia.

He didn't adopt an obviously lavish lifestyle, instead living in a modest suburban home in Virginia with his family of six children and driving a Taurus and minivan.

Hanssen would later say he was motivated by money rather than ideology, but a letter written to his Soviet handlers in 1985 explains a large payoff could have caused complications because he could not spend it without setting off warning bells.

Using the alias "Ramon Garcia," he passed some 6,000 documents and 26 computer disks to his handlers, authorities said. They detailed eavesdropping techniques, helped to confirm the identity of Russian double agents, and spilled other secrets. Officials also believed he tipped off Moscow to a secret tunnel the Americans built under the Soviet Embassy in Washington for eavesdropping.

He went undetected for years, but later investigations found missed red flags. After he became the focus of a hunt for a Russian mole, Hanssen was caught taping a garbage bag full of secrets to the underside of a footbridge in a park in a "dead drop" for Russian handlers.

The story was made into a movie titled "Breach" in 2007, starring Chris Cooper as Hanssen and Ryan Phillippe as a young bureau operative who helps bring him down.

The FBI has been notified of Hanssen's death, according to the Bureau of Prisons.

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Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo contributed to this report.

## Hundreds of journalists strike to demand leadership change at biggest US newspaper chain

By ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Journalists at two dozen local newspapers across the U.S. walked off the job Monday to demand an end to painful cost-cutting measures and a change of leadership at Gannett, the country's biggest newspaper chain.

The strike involves hundreds of journalists at newspapers in eight states, including the Arizona Republic, the Austin American-Statesman, the Bergen Record, the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, and the Palm Beach Post, according to the NewsGuild, which represents workers at more than 50 Gannett newsrooms. Gannett has said there would be no disruption to its news coverage during the strike, which will last for two days at two of the newspapers and one day for the rest.

The walkouts coincided with Gannett's annual shareholder meeting, during which the company's board was duly elected despite the NewsGuild-CWA union urging shareholders to withhold their votes from CEO and board chairman Mike Reed as an expression of no confidence in his leadership. Reed has overseen the company since its 2019 merger with GateHouse Media, a tumultuous period that has included layoffs and the shuttering of newsrooms. Gannett shares have dropped more than 60% since the deal closed.

Susan DeCarava, president of the The NewsGuild of New York, called the shareholder meeting "a slap in the face to the hundreds of Gannett journalists who are on strike today."

"Gannett CEO Mike Reed didn't have a word to say to the scores of journalists whose livelihoods he's destroyed, nor to the communities who have lost their primary news source thanks to his mismanagement," DeCarava said in a statement.

In legal filing, the NewsGuild said Gannett's leadership has gutted newsrooms and cut back on coverage to service a massive debt load. Cost-cutting has also included forced furloughs and suspension of 401-K contributions.

"We want people in our local community to know what this company is doing to local news, and we want Gannett shareholders to know what Gannett is doing to local news," said Chris Damien, a criminal justice reporter and unit guild chair the Desert Sun, which covers Palm Springs and the surrounding Coachella Valley in Southern California.

Gannett Chief Communications Officer Lark-Marie Anton said the company disagreed with union's recommendation to vote against Reed.

"During a very challenging time for our industry and economy, Gannett strives to provide competitive wages, benefits, and meaningful opportunities for all our valued employees," Anton said in a statement.

The Gannett strike coincided with an open-ended strike being staged by 250 unionized U.S. employees at Insider Inc., a global company that publishes Business Insider. Members of the Insider Union, which formed in April 2021 and is represented by The NewsGuild of New York, called the strike after failing to reach a first contract agreement with the company.

Some of Gannett's striking newsrooms are negotiating contracts and accuse the company of dragging its feet, but Anton said the company continues to negotiate fairly.

Among the contract demands are a base annual salary of \$60,000. The median pay for Gannett employee in 2022 was \$51,035, according to the company's proxy filing. Reed's total annual compensation was valued at nearly \$3.4 million, down from \$7.7 million in 2021.

At the shareholder meeting, NewsGuild-CWA President Jon Schleuss said the union proposed lowering Gannett's median CEO-to-employee ratio from 66:1 to 20:1. But Schleuss said the meeting last just eight minutes and Reed didn't address any questions. In a series of tweets, Schleuss called the meeting a "complete joke."

Gannett, which owns USA Today and more than 200 other daily U.S. newspapers with print editions, announced last August that it would lay off newsroom staff to lower costs as it struggles with declining revenue amid a downturn in ad sales and customer subscriptions.

The newspaper industry has struggled for years with such challenges, as advertising shifts from print to digital, and readers abandon local newspapers for online sources of information and entertainment. Major

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newspapers such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post have gained substantial digital audiences for coverage of broad topics, but regional and local papers have struggled to replicate that success in narrower markets.

In its first quarter earnings report this year, Gannett said its digital subscriptions had grown 15% year-over-year, and revenue from digital circulation grew 20%. The company reported a \$10.3 million profit versus a \$3 million loss in the same period last year, although revenue fell by 10.6%. The company also reported repaying \$37 million in debt.

According to the NewsGuild, Gannett's workforce has shrunk 47% in the last three years due to layoffs and attrition. At some newspapers, the union said the headcount has fallen by as much as 90%.

The Arizona Republic, for example, has gone from 140 newsroom employees in 2018 to 89 this year, the NewsGuild said. The Austin American-Statesman's newsroom shrunk during that period from 110 employees in 2018 to 41 this year.

Some newspapers have forsaken coverage of local sports or business, the union said. Reporters have had to take on several unrelated beats. Some publications have dropped local news coverage altogether to focus on regional news.

Rick Edmonds, a media business analyst for the Poynter Institute, said that while the union isn't powerful enough to prevent layoffs, the strike shows it has gained momentum.

Schleuss said 18 Gannett newsrooms have unionized in the last five years. Two more newsrooms voted to unionize Monday: the Athens Banner-Herald and the Savannah Morning News, both in Georgia.

## **CNN chief apologizes to employees for distracting from work**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Chris Licht, the embattled chief executive of CNN, apologized to network employees on Monday for distracting from their work and promised to "fight like hell" to earn their trust amid criticism of his year at the helm.

Licht's tenure hit a low point last week with publication of a lengthy, damaging profile of him in Atlantic magazine and the appointment of a new executive from parent company Warner Bros. Discovery to help manage CNN.

Licht said on an editorial conference call that he was sorry that his role in the news cycle overshadowed the work of CNN's journalists, according to a transcript of the call. He described it as a humbling experience.

Licht said he would work to win their trust, "because you deserve a leader who will be in the trenches, fighting to ensure CNN remains the world's most trusted name in news."

"CNN is not about me," he said. "I should not be in the news."

A CNN spokesperson had no further comment on Monday.

Licht replaced a popular leader, Jeff Zucker, with a mandate to win back some of the viewers alienated from CNN by former President Donald Trump's attacks. That has caused some internal resentment and, for many, Trump's town hall meeting last month was a misstep.

The executive's revamp of CNN's morning show fell flat, leading to the firing of longtime personality Don Lemon. Licht's plans to restructure the network's prime-time lineup have moved slowly. Kaitlan Collins is to begin a new show later this month, and CNN has signed Charles Barkley and Gayle King to host a once-a-week program.

In his Atlantic profile, writer Tim Alberta wrote that Licht had "swaggered" into his new job, telling employees their hostility toward Trump had alienated viewers who saw CNN as the safe center. This put him in the position of fighting to win over Republicans as well as some CNN journalists who believed they were being made scapegoats by Licht's efforts to please his boss, Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav.

"One year into the job, Licht was losing both battles," Alberta wrote.

CNN's prime-time viewership averaged 494,000 in May, the Nielsen company said. That's less than half of what MSNBC gets, and down 16% from April. An accelerating trend of cord-cutting isn't helping cable networks hold viewers, either.

CNN reached 3.3 million people for its Trump town hall on May 10, yet two nights later its prime-time viewership plunged to 335,000 people, Nielsen said.

One of Zaslav's top aides at Warner Discovery, David Leavy, was appointed last week as chief operating officer of CNN Worldwide, reporting to Licht. Leavy will be responsible for commercial, operational and promotional activities at CNN, the network said.

## **Young, wild and free: Wolverine spotted in California for only second time in last 100 years**

BISHOP, Calif. (AP) — A wolverine was spotted three times last month in the eastern Sierra Nevada, a rare occurrence for an animal that's only been seen one other time in California over the last 100 years, state wildlife officials said.

While wolverines are native to California, they've been essentially extinct from the state since the 1920s — likely the result of hunting and fur trapping in the decades following the gold rush, though records from the time don't indicate what exactly caused the population to decline.

One wolverine was spotted in the state from 2008 to 2018, beginning in the Tahoe National Forest, officials said. Last month's wolverine is likely a different one because the animal's lifespan is usually 12 to 13 years.

The latest wolverine appears to be a young male seeking a mate. The animal has been spotted twice in the Inyo National Forest and once in Yosemite National Park.

"It's just really exciting and surprising," said Daniel Gammons, a senior environmental scientist in California's Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Male wolverines walk through huge territories — easily several hundred square kilometers — and this winter's heavy snowfall in the West may have created "habitat bridges" for the wolverine, Gammons said. The animal could have traveled from the Rocky and Cascade mountain ranges, or from as far away as Canada or Alaska.

Wildlife officials are trying to get a specimen of the wolverine's hair or scat for genetic testing. The species — the largest terrestrial member of the weasel family — is listed as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act.

## **Counteroffensive? Probing defenses? A look at the fighting in Ukraine**

By The Associated Press undefined

While Kyiv is keeping silent about the start of any counteroffensive, fighting is raging in several sections of the front line, signaling that the long-expected campaign could be getting underway.

A video, released over the weekend by Ukraine, shows several of its soldiers in full combat gear raising a finger to their lips. "Plans love silence. There will be no start announcement," say the words flashing on the screen afterward, followed by warplanes in flight.

Moscow claims it successfully fended off a Ukrainian attempt to ram through Russia's defenses, but some pro-Kremlin military bloggers paint a different picture, acknowledging that Kyiv's troops made some quick gains.

'SHAPING OPERATIONS'

In recent weeks, Ukraine has intensified the shelling of Russian positions and successfully pushed back against Russia's attempts to extend its gains outside the eastern city of Bakhmut that it reclaimed last month in the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

Pro-Kyiv paramilitary groups of Russians who have been fighting alongside Ukrainian armed forces also launched forays over the border into Russian territory, attacking the Belgorod region.

The Ukrainian shelling and the cross-border incursions ravaged several towns and villages near the

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frontier and forced the evacuation of thousands of residents, angering Russian hawks who criticized the Kremlin for failing to strike back resolutely.

And on May 30, a rare drone attack targeted Moscow, causing only minor damage but exposing glaring breaches in the capital's air defenses and underlining its vulnerability.

Military analysts describe the attacks as part of "shaping operations," a series of moves intended to probe Russian defenses, force Moscow to spread its forces thin and draw attention from areas where Ukraine might focus its counteroffensive.

The Russian military, in turn, has intensified strikes deep inside Ukraine, launching a barrage of near-daily drone and missile attacks against high-value military facilities.

Russia declared it destroyed the U.S.-made Patriot missile defense systems in Kyiv, successfully struck the military intelligence headquarters, also in the Ukrainian capital, and hit air bases and weapons stockpiles in several regions. These claims couldn't be independently verified. Ukrainian officials acknowledged some of the strikes but have remained cryptic about the damage.

Russian military bloggers described them as part of Moscow's efforts to derail the counteroffensive by softening Ukraine's air defenses and destroying Western weapons and ammunition intended for the campaign.

In Washington, a U.S. official speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, said: "We have no reason to believe any Russian action has had any spoiling effect on pending or ongoing Ukraine operations."

## HYBRID WARFARE

Both sides have sought to mislead and weaken each other through propaganda and disinformation.

On Sunday, Ukraine hacked into some TV broadcasts in Crimea to air a menacing Ukrainian military statement about the counteroffensive.

In an unprecedented move intended to undermine morale, broadcasts in several Russian regions were hacked Monday to carry a fake address by President Vladimir Putin in which a voice resembling his was heard declaring martial law, a nationwide mobilization and a massive evacuation of three border regions.

Kyiv, in turn, accused Moscow of hybrid warfare. It said Russian claims of a major Ukrainian attempt to pierce Russian defenses was part of "information and psychological operations" intended to "demoralize Ukrainians and mislead the community."

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak mocked the Russian claims as "virtual reality," saying sardonically: "Moscow is already actively involved in repelling ... a global offensive that does not yet exist."

## THE MAIN STRIKE

Military analysts say Ukraine has tried to hide its intentions by launching multiple attacks on several sectors of the front line to force Russia to scatter its resources and distract them from where the main strike would be launched.

"The attacks in the Zaporizhzhia and the Donetsk regions, the developments in Russia's Belgorod region, and increasingly frequent strikes on Russian military depots in the rear are all part of preparations to the Ukrainian counteroffensive," said Ukrainian military analyst Roman Svitan. "Kyiv is looking for Russia's weak spots and trying to spread the front as wider as possible."

Many military experts expect Ukraine to try to ram through Russian defenses toward the Sea of Azov coast to break the land corridor to Crimea that Moscow created after capturing the key port of Mariupol in May 2022.

Russian officials and military bloggers suggested the latest attacks in the southern part of the Donetsk region and the neighboring Zaporizhzhia region that began Sunday could herald the start of that big push.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Ukraine on Sunday sent several battalions to try to ram through the Russian defensive positions, which were pushed back after suffering significant losses.

Some Russian military bloggers offered a less-optimistic view, saying Ukrainian troops managed to make some gains Sunday and were pouring more resources to exploit that success. Some said that, for the first time, German-made Leopard tanks were seen in significant numbers in the area.

## TASKS AND CHALLENGES

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Whether or not the latest fighting marks the start of Ukraine's counteroffensive, many observers warned against expectations of a quick breakthrough that could end the war quickly.

"We need to understand that what we're calling the Ukraine counteroffensive is not like a football match," said General Sir Richard Barrons, the former Commander of the U.K. Joint Forces Command. "You know, it's not going to be done and dusted in 90 minutes with a halftime on an appointed day. It's been nine months at least in the preparation in the sense that they've had to gather weapons and ammunition from NATO. Not enough, I think, so far."

Barrons, who is co-chair of the consulting group Universal Defence & Security Solutions, noted Russia has bolstered its forces, replenished some of its ammunition stockpiles and built complex defensive lines.

"Russia has had time to lay out a textbook fixed defense," he said, with three lines of trenches and held-down positions allowing tanks to come forward to fire at the attackers.

"They will have rehearsed the artillery fire plan in support of defending those lines, and they will have rehearsed the crucial rapid counterattacks, which are so vital when you are trying to restore a line that's being attacked," Barrons added.

He predicted Ukraine will try to focus its nine newly formed brigades armed with Western weapons to ram through Russian defenses in just one, two or three places, trying to concentrate their forces to have a significant numerical superiority "in order to smash their way through and then exploit and hold on to the ground that they've taken."

The offensive "is going to be, in a land sense, quite a narrow frontage," he said.

"I'd be surprised if it's more than 20 miles, to be honest," Barrons added. "The battlefield success has to be enough to show hope and prospect to bind in further strategic support."

He emphasized the Russian army has learned from its setbacks last fall when it retreated from large areas in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions under the brunt of a Ukrainian counteroffensive, noting it could be more challenging this time for Ukraine to push the Russians out.

"The thing that is most important about this offensive is whenever it comes, however successful it is, it is simply not possible for it to throw every Russian out of Ukraine unless the Russians decided to give up and go," Barrons said. "And they are not going to do that."

The West must mobilize its military industries to ramp up support for Ukraine to allow it to win, he said.

"The key to this counteroffensive is to show enough battlefield success to show to the West that the right and reasonable thing to do is to get on with industrial mobilization," Barrons said, estimating that Europe must spend about 100 billion euros (\$107 billion) a year for the next three years.

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Associated Press writers Danica Kirka in London, Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, and Tara Copp in Washington contributed.

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

## Ukraine trying to end battlefield stalemate in what may be start of counteroffensive

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces were making a major effort to end a battlefield stalemate and punch through Russian defensive lines in southeast Ukraine for a second day Monday, in what may herald the start of a long-anticipated counteroffensive after 15 months of war.

Russian officials seemed to be trying to portray the Ukrainian attacks as the start of the counteroffensive, saying that Moscow's forces foiled at least one assault. While not explicitly confirming such a large-scale effort, Kyiv authorities said their forces were indeed increasing offensive operations and making gains, but suggested some of the Russian announcements were misinformation.

Vladimir Rogov, an official in the Russia-backed administration of Ukraine's partly occupied Zaporizhzhia

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province, said fighting resumed on its border with the eastern Donetsk province on Monday after Russian defenses beat back a Ukrainian advance the previous day.

"The enemy threw an even bigger force into the attack than yesterday (Sunday)," and the new attempt to break through the front line was "more large-scale and organized," Rogov said, adding: "A battle is underway."

Rogov interpreted the Ukrainian military movements as part of an effort to reach the Sea of Azov coast and sever the land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014. Analysts have long viewed that strategy as likely because it would cut the Russian forces in two and severely strain supplies to Crimea, which has served as a key Russian military hub in the war that started Feb. 24, 2022.

Rogov's comments came after Moscow also said its forces thwarted large Ukrainian attacks in Donetsk province, near its border with the Zaporizhzhia province.

Reacting to Russia's declarations that it repelled Ukrainian offensives, a U.S. official said on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters: "We have no reason to believe any Russian action has had any spoiling effect on pending or ongoing Ukraine operations."

Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Malyar said the Ukrainian military has scored gains.

"Despite fierce resistance and attempts of the enemy to hold the occupied lines and positions, our units moved forward in several directions during the fighting," she said.

Malyar drew no distinctions between phases of the war, insisting that Ukraine's defense against Russia's invasion "contains everything, including counter-offensive actions." She acknowledged that Kyiv's forces "in some areas ... are shifting to offensive operations."

Sir Richard Barrons, a general who is a former commander of the U.K. Joint Forces Command, said that Ukraine was "clearly in the preliminary phase" of its counteroffensive and would probe Russian defenses to find weak spots, then focus its resources to ram through them and hold ground. Barrons, now co-chair of the U.K.-based strategic consulting firm Universal Defence & Security Solutions, told The Associated Press the Ukrainians are "trying to increase the chances of surprise about when you do it, where you do it and how you do it."

Commenting on the Russian military's assertion that it thwarted a big Ukrainian attack, he said it could be part of Ukrainian efforts to probe Russian defenses and test its units in combat. He added that Moscow could have exaggerated the scale of the fighting and claimed victory to assuage its domestic Russian audience.

Barrons predicted that the Ukrainian counteroffensive would involve a series of moves and take weeks. "It's a process, not an event," he said.

Ukraine often waits until the completion of its military operations to confirm its actions.

A Ukrainian Defense Ministry video showed soldiers putting a finger to their lips in a sign to keep quiet. "Plans love silence," it said on the screen. "There will be no announcement of the start."

Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk are two of the four provinces that President Vladimir Putin claimed as Russian territory last fall and which Moscow partially controls.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it had pushed back a "large-scale" assault Sunday at five places in Donetsk province. The announcement couldn't be independently verified, and while Ukrainian officials reported fighting in that area, they didn't confirm a retreat.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said in an unusual overnight video that 250 Ukrainian personnel were killed in the fighting in Donetsk province, and 16 Ukrainian tanks, three infantry fighting vehicles and 21 armored combat vehicles were destroyed.

In response, the Center for Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said Russian forces were "stepping up their information and psychological operations."

"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.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that the Russians overreacted to its latest push.

"We see how hysterically Russia perceives every step we take there, every position we take," Zelenskyy



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said in his nightly address.

Ukrainian officials have said for months that a spring campaign with advanced weapons supplied by Western allies to reclaim territory seized by Russia during the war was planned, but they have kept quiet about when, how and where it might start, or whether it had already been launched.

Recent military activity, including drone attacks on Moscow, cross-border raids into Russia and sabotage and drone attacks on infrastructure behind Russian lines, has unnerved Russians. Analysts say those actions may represent the start of the counteroffensive.

In other disruption, TV and radio broadcasts in several regions of Russia were hacked Monday, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. A fake broadcast featured a voice impersonating Putin and stated that Ukrainian forces had invaded the Belgorod, Bryansk and Kursk regions of Russia.

Those Russian regions have occasionally been targeted in cross-border strikes during the war.

The impersonator announced that martial law was declared in those regions, where people were urged to evacuate, and all Russians eligible for military duty were being mobilized.

The Russian military said Monday it repelled the latest Ukrainian incursion into the Belgorod region, on the border in Ukraine. Russians who purport to be fighting alongside Ukrainian forces said they attacked on Sunday. They were driven back by airstrikes and artillery fire, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

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

Ukraine's Western allies have sent the country more than 65 billion euros (\$70 billion) in military aid to help its defense. Driving out the Kremlin's forces is a daunting challenge for Kyiv's planners. Russia has built extensive defensive lines, including trenches, minefields and anti-tank obstacles.

After months of a battlefield stalemate, with neither side making significant gains and suffering losses of personnel and weapons, Ukraine could launch simultaneous pushes in different areas of the front line that stretches for around 1,100 kilometers (nearly 700 miles), analysts say.

In the devastated eastern city of Bakhmut, the site of the war's longest and bloodiest battle, Malyar, the deputy defense minister, said Ukrainian forces are advancing and "occupy dominating heights." Zelenskyy said in his nightly address, "Bakhmut direction — well done, warriors!"

The leader of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin — a frequent critic of his country's military brass whose statements are sometimes unreliable — said that Russian forces lost control of part of the village of Berkhovka outside Bakhmut. Prigozhin said last month that his forces had seized all of the city of Bakhmut, with Ukrainian forces remaining in control of many surrounding areas.

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Danica Kirka contributed to this story from London.

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## 'Cheers' bar sells for \$675,000 at Dallas auction of items from classic TV shows

DALLAS (AP) — The bar from the television series "Cheers" sold for \$675,000 at auction over the weekend, garnering the highest bid among the nearly 1,000 props, costumes and sets from classic TV shows offered up from a collection amassed by one man over more than three decades.

Heritage Auctions said that the items sold during its three-day event that wrapped up Sunday in Dallas brought in over \$5 million. James Comisar has said that after his dream of creating a museum to house his collection failed to come together, it was time for the pieces to go to fans to enjoy.

"The auction's success confirmed what I have always known: that television characters are cherished members of our extended family and that their stories and our own are inseparable," Comisar said in a news release from the auction house.

The Batman and Robin costumes worn by Adam West and Burt Ward in the 1960s television series

went for \$615,000, while the set where Johnny Carson hosted guests on "The Tonight Show" went for \$275,000, Heritage Auctions said.

The set from "All in the Family" — which included Archie and Edith Bunker's living and dining rooms and stairwell — sold for \$125,000, and the auction house said the same buyer also made the winning bid of \$250,000 for the chairs used by the TV couple in the show's ninth season.

The couple's original two chairs from the show reside in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Comisar said that those thrift shop chairs were given to the museum when it was thought that the show would end after its eighth season, but when it continued for a ninth, replicas were made at great cost. Those replicas — which were the chairs offered at auction — were then used in the show's last season and in its continuation, "Archie Bunker's Place."

## **A man wants to trademark 'Trump too small' for T-shirts. Now the Supreme Court will hear the case.**

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court said Monday it will hear a case in which a man tried to trademark a phrase mocking former President Donald Trump as "too small."

The Justice Department is supporting President Joe Biden's once and possibly future rival in urging the court to deny a trademark for the suggestive phrase "Trump too small" that a California man wants to put on T-shirts.

The case will be argued in the fall, one of two disputes on the court's upcoming agenda that involve Trump or one of his businesses. Government officials said the phrase "Trump too small" could still be used, just not trademarked because Trump had not consented to its use. But a federal appeals court said refusing trademark registration violated free speech rights.

The high court has considered a raft of Trump-related cases in recent years. The justices have dealt with cases about Trump's claims of fraud in the 2000 election and with his efforts to shield his tax records from Congress and to keep other tax records from prosecutors in New York, among other things.

If the justices are tired of Trump-related cases, however, they aren't letting on. Just last month, the high court agreed to hear a different Trump-related lawsuit stemming from disputes over what was the Trump International Hotel in Washington. Democratic members of the House Oversight Committee sued over the Trump administration's refusal to turn over information about the Trump Organization's lease of the hotel.

The latest case is unusual in that it has the Biden administration on Trump's side. The administration is defending government officials' decision to reject the trademark request from Steve Elster, who tried to register the "Trump too small" phrase.

The phrase is a reference to a memorable exchange Trump had during the 2016 presidential campaign with Florida senator and GOP presidential rival Marco Rubio.

Rubio began the verbal jousting when he told supporters at a rally that Trump was always calling him "little Marco" but that Trump — who says he is 6-feet-3-inches tall — has disproportionately small hands. "Have you seen his hands? ... And you know what they say about men with small hands," Rubio said. "You can't trust them."

Trump then brought up the comment at a televised debate on March 3, 2016.

"Look at those hands. Are they small hands? And he referred to my hands — if they're small, something else must be small. I guarantee you there's no problem. I guarantee you," he said.

Federal law says that a trademark request should be refused if it involves a name, portrait or signature "identifying a particular living individual" unless the person has given "written consent." But Elster says refusing to register a political slogan criticizing Trump without Trump's consent violates the First Amendment's Free Speech clause. Federal law, Elster's lawyers say, "makes it virtually impossible to register a mark that expresses an opinion about a public figure."

"We look forward to defending the right to convey core political messages on trademarks," Elster's lawyer Jon Taylor wrote in an email. "The government's attempt to burden political speech — by granting public

figures a monopoly over speech about them in the marketplace — is indefensible.”

## Lawyer says ‘nothing was out of bounds’ for reporters seeking scoops on young Prince Harry

By BRIAN MELLEY and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A broken thumb, a back injury, dabbling with drugs and dating girls.

No event in the life of a young Prince Harry was too trivial or private for the journalists of Mirror Group Newspapers to resist, and the demand for such scoops led to the use of illegal means to dig up dirt, his lawyer said Monday in the opening of his phone hacking lawsuit.

“Nothing was sacrosanct or out of bounds and there was no protection from these unlawful information-gathering methods,” attorney David Sherborne said.

But a defense lawyer said it would have been foolish to spy on a figure like Harry with such tight security, and he rejected allegations that Mirror Group reporters ever eavesdropped on his phone’s voice messages.

“There is simply no evidence capable of supporting the finding that the Duke of Sussex was hacked, let alone on a habitual basis,” attorney Anthony Green said. “Zilch, zero, nil, nada, niente, nothing.”

Harry’s highly anticipated showdown with the publisher of the Daily Mirror in his battles with the British press got off to an anticlimactic start when the star failed to show up — to the chagrin of the judge and defense lawyer.

Harry was unavailable to testify that afternoon because he’d taken a flight Sunday from Los Angeles after the birthday of his 2-year-old daughter, Lilibet, Sherborne said.

“I’m a little surprised,” said Justice Timothy Fancourt, noting he had directed Harry to be prepared to testify.

Green said he was “deeply troubled” by Harry’s absence.

The case against Mirror Group is the first of the prince’s several lawsuits against the media to go to trial, and one of three alleging tabloid publishers unlawfully snooped on him in their cutthroat competition for scoops on the royal family.

When he enters the witness box, Harry, 38, 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’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.

He 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.

While Harry’s memoir and other recent media ventures have been an effort to reclaim his life’s narrative, which had largely been shaped by the media, he will have no such control when he faces cross-examination in a courtroom full of reporters taking down every word.

Green said he plans to question the Duke for a day and a half.

Stories about Harry were big sellers for the newspapers, and some 2,500 articles had covered all facets of his life during the time period of the case — 1996 to 2011 — from injuries at school to experimenting with marijuana and cocaine to the ups and downs with girlfriends, Sherborne said.

Harry said in court documents that he suffered “huge bouts of depression and paranoia” over concerns friends and associates were betraying him by leaking information to the newspapers. Relationships fell apart as the women in his life — and even their family members — were “dragged into the chaos.”

He says he later realized 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.

Sherborne suggested that a 2003 article about row with older brother, Prince William, heir to the throne,

about confronting their mother's former butler about spilling secrets, had planted the seeds of discord between the two.

"Brothers can sometimes disagree," Sherborne said. "But once it is made public in this way and their inside feelings revealed in the way that they are, trust begins to be eroded."

Mirror Group said it used documents, public statements and sources to legally report on the prince — with one exception.

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 the trial.

Sherborne, however, said phone hacking and unlawful information-gathering were carried out on such a widespread scale by Mirror Group that it was implausible it was only used once against Harry.

In the absence of concrete evidence, Sherborne said the judge to make inferences of skullduggery based on the type of information being reported, the murkiness of the sourcing, and whether the writer of an article was known to have relied on unlawful means in the past.

But Green said there was little to no evidence to support Harry's case.

Hacking that involved guessing or using default security codes to listen to celebrities' cellphone 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.

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.

Judges are 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.

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

## **DNA sucked into air filters can reveal what plants and animals are nearby**

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — DNA is all around us — even in the air we breathe. Now scientists have found that air quality monitoring stations — which pull in air to test for pollution — also pick up lots of DNA that can reveal what plants and animals have been in the area.

The method could help solve the tricky challenge of keeping tabs on biodiversity, according to a study published Monday in the journal *Current Biology*.

The findings suggest that biodiversity data has been collected "on massive scales literally for decades — and nobody's noticed," said study author Elizabeth Clare, a biologist at Canada's York University.

As animals and plants go through their life cycles, they leave little bits of themselves in the environment — scales, fur, feathers, pollen — which carry their genetic signature.

Scientists have long known that this kind of environmental DNA floats around in water, and have used it to track what species are swimming in lakes and rivers. But it's been harder to get a genetic picture of what's roaming around on land, said Kristine Bohmann, who studies environmental DNA at the University of Copenhagen and was not involved with the latest study.

In 2021, both Bohmann and Clare worked on similar projects to see whether they could pull animal DNA from thin air. After setting up vacuum pumps in local zoos, the teams were able to sequence DNA from dozens of species.

"You can actually, in a Ghostbuster kind of way, vacuum DNA out of the air," Bohmann said.

Then researchers wanted to try that on a bigger scale.

For this latest study, Clare and her team tested air filters from two monitoring stations, one in London and one in Scotland, which are part of a national network to test for pollution.

After extracting DNA from pieces of the filter disks, the scientists were able to identify more than 180 different kinds of plants and animals, said study author Joanne Littlefair, a biologist at Queen Mary University of London.

The filters picked up on a wide range of wildlife, including grasses, fungi, deer, hedgehogs and songbirds — along with “the ubiquitous pigeon,” Littlefair said.

Now, the team hopes that this method could track ecosystems all over the world. Even though biodiversity decline is a global issue, it’s hard to test for on a large scale, Clare said.

And it’s an easy lift to use systems that are already in place, pointed out James Allerton, an air quality scientist at the UK’s National Physical Laboratory. Many countries have networks set up to monitor air quality, and some of them store their old filters for years or even decades — an archive that could help show how ecosystems have changed over time.

More research is needed to see if the data from these filters can show real biodiversity trends over time, said Fabian Roger, who has been working on a similar project at ETH Zurich in Switzerland. But it’s exciting that an existing system could be “co-opted” to monitor wildlife, he wrote in an email.

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## **Miami Heat are on a comeback run like few others in this year’s NBA playoffs**

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — The easiest way to explain what the Miami Heat are doing in the comeback department during these playoffs is simply to put up their numbers against the rest of the league.

When facing a deficit of at least 12 points this postseason:

— The Heat are 7-6.

— The rest of the NBA is 6-59. Combined.

“Biggest thing for us, we had the will and we had the belief,” Heat center Bam Adebayo said. “And we keep finding ways to win.”

Doesn’t matter the opponent, either. Milwaukee, New York, Boston and now Denver in the NBA Finals all have found themselves on the wrong end of a Heat rally.

Miami rallied from 15 points down to beat top-seeded Milwaukee in Game 4 and then from 16 down to win the clinching Game 5; from 12 down to win Game 1 over New York and from 14 down in Game 6 to eliminate the Knicks; erased a 13-point deficit in Game 1 at Boston and then a 12-point deficit to win Game 2 over the Celtics — and now, a 15-point comeback to win Game 2 of the NBA Finals over Denver.

Sunday night’s rally matched the fifth-largest in a finals game in the last 25 years. The Heat trailed the Nuggets 50-35 with 5 minutes left in the second quarter and outscored Denver 76-58 the rest of the way to even the series. The series now shifts to Miami, with both teams practicing there Tuesday before Game 3 on Wednesday night.

This improbable story — a team that trailed in the final minutes of an elimination game of the play-in tournament somehow getting to the NBA Finals — now has an even wackier plot twist. The eighth-seeded Heat have home-court advantage in the title series over Denver, the No. 1 seed out of the Western Conference.

“We’ve won on the road before,” Nuggets veteran Jeff Green said after Game 2 in Denver. “I think we understand what’s at stake. They did what they were supposed to do. They came in here, got a split. Now they’re going home, and I think we have to go in there worried about Game 3. We can’t worry about Game 4. We have to worry about Game 3.”

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What Miami is doing is simultaneously historic and completely on brand for the Heat. There have been four teams in the last 25 years to have seven postseason wins after trailing by double digits in a game; Golden State did it last year on the way to the NBA title.

The other three teams on that list? The 2011 Heat, the 2012 Heat and now the 2023 Heat — all coached by Erik Spoelstra.

“We faced a lot of adversity during the season,” Spoelstra said. “We handled it the right way. ... It steeled us and we developed some grit, which is what we all want. We want to be able to have that privilege of having adversity and being able to overcome it. You gain strength from that.”

The effect of all that adversity — like 44 games decided by five points or fewer, the Heat going 28-16 so far in those — is this: They just never think they’re out of a game. Sure, there’s the axiom that in the NBA every team eventually makes a run, and that’s largely true, but the Heat didn’t even raise the surrender flag in Game 1 when trailing by 21 points in the fourth quarter. They got the lead down to nine with 2:34 left.

And in Game 2, the comeback wasn’t in vain.

Down eight going into the fourth, Duncan Robinson and Gabe Vincent — two undrafted guards who were forged from the Heat player development program — scored Miami’s first 15 points of the final quarter. They gave Miami the lead, and the Heat didn’t give it away.

“We just needed to come out with a sense of urgency in that fourth,” Robinson said afterward. “It was kind of like a now or never sort of thing. Started with the defense, obviously, and we were able to do some things from there.”

What made the Game 2 comeback even more improbable — even for a team that is making rallies seem like an everyday thing in the playoffs — is that the Nuggets were 45-3 this season in games where they led by at least 15 points. And in games at home where they led by more than 10 points, they were 38-0.

The Comeback Heat weren’t deterred. Heat forward Jimmy Butler says it’s the “I don’t give a damn factor” that kicks in at those moments.

“I just think nobody cares on our team. We’re not worried about what anybody thinks,” Butler said. “We’re so focused in on what we do well and who we are as a group that at the end of the day, that’s what we fall back on. 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.”

AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/hub/NBA> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Britain’s Princess Eugenie gives birth to second son

LONDON (AP) — Britain’s Princess Eugenie has given birth to a baby boy, Buckingham Palace announced Monday.

Eugenie, the niece of King Charles III, and her husband, Jack Brooksbank, welcomed their son, Ernest George Ronnie Brooksbank, on May 30th. The baby, who weighed 7 pounds 1 ounce, is the couple’s second child.

The couple’s eldest child, two-year-old August, is now a big brother.

“He is named after his great great great Grandfather George, his Grandpa George and my Grandpa Ronald,” the princess said on her Instagram page. “Augie is loving being a big brother already.”

Eugenie, 33, is the younger daughter of Prince Andrew and Sarah, Duchess of York.

The child is 13th in line to the throne.

The new parents uploaded one photo of the infant wearing a blue and white stocking cap and another of August gently touching his brother’s head.

## Is it real or made by AI? Europe wants a label for that as it fights disinformation

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — The European Union is pushing online platforms like Google and Meta to step up the fight against false information by adding labels to text, photos and other content generated by artificial intelligence, a top official said Monday.

EU Commission Vice President Vera Jourova said the ability of a new generation of AI chatbots to create complex content and visuals in seconds raises “fresh challenges for the fight against disinformation.”

She said she asked Google, Meta, Microsoft, TikTok and other tech companies that have signed up to the 27-nation bloc’s voluntary agreement on combating disinformation to work to tackle the AI problem.

Online platforms that have integrated generative AI into their services, such as Microsoft’s Bing search engine and Google’s Bard chatbot, should build safeguards to prevent “malicious actors” from generating disinformation, Jourova said at a briefing in Brussels.

Companies offering services that have the potential to spread AI-generated disinformation should roll out technology to “recognize such content and clearly label this to users,” she said.

Google, Microsoft, Meta and TikTok did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

Jourova said EU regulations are aimed at protecting free speech, but when it comes to AI, “I don’t see any right for the machines to have the freedom of speech.”

The swift rise of generative AI technology, which has the capability to produce human-like text, images and video, has amazed many and alarmed others with its potential to transform many aspects of daily life. Europe has taken a lead role in the global movement to regulate artificial intelligence with its AI Act, but the legislation still needs final approval and won’t take effect for several years.

Officials in the EU, which also is bringing in a separate set of rules this year to safeguard people from harmful online content, are worried that they need to act faster to keep up with the rapid development of generative AI.

Recent examples of debunked deepfakes include a realistic picture of Pope Francis in a white puffy jacket and an image of billowing black smoke next to a building accompanied with a claim that it showed an explosion near the Pentagon.

Politicians have even enlisted AI to warn about its dangers. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen used OpenAI’s ChatGPT to craft the opening of a speech to Parliament last week, saying it was written “with such conviction that few of us would believe that it was a robot — and not a human — behind it.”

European and U.S. officials said last week that they’re drawing up a voluntary code of conduct for artificial intelligence that could be ready within weeks as a way to bridge the gap before the EU’s AI rules take effect.

Similar voluntary commitments in the bloc’s disinformation code will become legal obligations by the end of August under the EU’s Digital Services Act, which will force the biggest tech companies to better police their platforms to protect users from hate speech, disinformation and other harmful material.

Jourova said, however, that those companies should start labeling AI-generated content immediately.

Most digital giants are already signed up to the EU disinformation code, which requires companies to measure their work on combating false information and issue regular reports on their progress.

Twitter dropped out last month in what appeared to be the latest move by Elon Musk to loosen restrictions at the social media company after he bought it last year.

The exit drew a stern rebuke, with Jourova calling it a mistake.

“Twitter has chosen the hard way. They chose confrontation,” she said. “Make no mistake, by leaving the code, Twitter has attracted a lot of attention, and its actions and compliance with EU law will be scrutinized vigorously and urgently.”

Twitter will face a major test later this month when European Commissioner Thierry Breton heads to its San Francisco headquarters with a team to carry out a “stress test,” meant to measure the platform’s ability to comply with the Digital Services Act.

Breton, who's in charge of digital policy, told reporters Monday that he also will visit other Silicon Valley tech companies including OpenAI, chipmaker Nvidia and Meta.

AP reporter Jan M. Olsen contributed from Copenhagen, Denmark.

## After missteps with some Hispanic voters in 2020, Biden faces pressure to get 2024 outreach right

By WILL WEISSERT and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

KISSIMMEE, Fla. (AP) — Joe Biden vowed in 2020 to work "like the devil" to energize Hispanic voters, and flew to Florida seven weeks before Election Day to do just that. But as he stepped to the podium at a Hispanic Heritage Month event near Disney World, Biden declared, "I just have one thing to say" and used his phone to play part of "Despacito."

It was meant as a salute to the singer of the reggaeton hit, Luis Fonsi, who had introduced Biden and cried, "Dance a little bit, Joe." Still, the gesture triggered swift online backlash from some Hispanics, who saw it as playing to belittling stereotypes — proof that while outreach is important, failing to strike the right cultural tone can undermine such efforts.

"The details actually matter for people because it's respecting their background, respecting their history, respecting their culture," said Grecia Lima, national political director of Community Change Action. "It's not an insignificant portion of what campaigns are going to have to wrestle with in the '24 cycle."

Biden is hardly the first politician to strike a sour note trying to connect across cultural lines, but the blowback he encountered illustrates a bigger challenge facing the president and his party as he seeks a second term next year.

Hispanic voters, long a core constituency for Democrats, have reliably supported them based on substantive matters of policy, from health care to managing the economy, according to Pew Research Center surveys. But recent signs that Republicans have made inroads with those voters are adding to the sense that Democrats have work to do to maintain their advantage.

Democratic candidates won 57% of Hispanic voters during last year's midterms, a smaller percentage than the 63% of Hispanic voters Biden won in 2020 and the 66% of Hispanic voters supporting the party in 2018, when Democrats took control of the House, according to AP VoteCast, a sweeping survey of the national electorate.

Meanwhile, 39% of Hispanic voters backed Republicans last year, a tick up from the 35% who supported former President Donald Trump's reelection bid.

Miami Mayor Francis Suarez, a Republican considering a White House run, said Democrats have failed to connect with Hispanic voters and hurt themselves by adopting terms like Latinx, a gender-neutral alternative to "Latino" and "Latina."

"They've created a tremendous opportunity for Republicans," Suarez said. "A lot of the issues that Hispanics care about are issues that are being touted by the Republican Party."

Democrats say they maintain the upper hand on policy, but party leaders had expected another boost in electoral support from recent demographic shifts in the Hispanic population. A growing share were English-speaking and U.S. born, and they came from a wider array of backgrounds.

Many Democrats also believed harsh rhetoric from Republicans before, during and after the presidency of Trump — who famously used his campaign launch in 2015 to declare immigrants from Mexico to be rapists and criminals — would work in their favor.

Yet even modest swings toward Republicans could mean millions more 2024 GOP votes since Hispanics made up 62% of total growth in the nation's eligible voters between 2018 and last year's election, according to Pew. And that makes engaging in effective Hispanic outreach critical, activists say.

"Are they behind?" asked Javier Palomarez CEO of the United States Hispanic Business Council. "Yes."

Hispanic support for Republicans has risen in places like New Mexico and New York, said Palomarez, who noted that such trends could continue — especially since word-of-mouth is crucial to influencing Hispanic



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voting — unless Democrats change the way they work to mobilize Hispanic voters.

“What they need to do immediately is really start talking to the Hispanic community in a genuine fashion,” said Palomarez, a fierce Trump critic who once joined the Trump administration’s council on diversity in hopes of finding consensus. “We’re no less important than any other community, but we’ve been left behind.”

Democratic strategist Maria Cardona countered that nearly every cycle features “activists with their hair on fire: ‘The campaign’s not doing enough, we’re not hearing from enough people.’”

She said Biden’s campaign is neutralizing those perceptions with “historic strides and investments” in Hispanic voter mobilization, especially important since a new Hispanic American turns 18 years old nationwide about every 30 seconds. That helps account for around 4 million more eligible Hispanic voters ahead of 2024 than there were in 2020.

Biden supporters also say incidents like playing “Despacito” don’t resonate with Hispanic voters who are more interested in concrete policy achievements, especially when leading Republican candidates feed racially charged fear-mongering about immigrants and the U.S.-Mexico border.

“President Biden has spent his first two years in office focusing on the issues facing many Latino families — lowering health care costs, creating good-paying jobs, getting our small businesses and schools reopened, and fighting gun violence in our communities,” Kevin Munoz, a spokesperson for Biden’s reelection campaign, said in a statement.

Of course, cultural gaffes are bipartisan, going back to 1976, when President Gerald Ford bit into a Texas tamale without removing the corn husk. And Trump and other top Republicans have long used language such as “illegal alien,” regarded by many Latinos as dehumanizing.

In the long run, the anti-immigration policies enacted by the Trump administration, including separating children from their parents at the border with no plans to reunite them, could matter more than Hispanic voter outreach efforts. Still, Hispanic voter support for Republican candidates held steady between 2018 and 2020 at 35% nationally, according to Vote Cast.

And “Despacito” wasn’t the Biden camp’s only misstep since then.

During a visit to Puerto Rico last fall, the president sought help pronouncing Caño Martín Peña while promoting federal funding to improve that canal. First lady Jill Biden flubbed the pronunciation of “Si Se Puede,” the old farmworkers union slogan that later became an Obama-era rallying cry, during a speech in California last spring. Then, in Texas last summer, she said the Hispanic community was as “unique as breakfast tacos here in San Antonio.” “We are not tacos,” the National Association of Hispanic Journalists tweeted in response, prompting an apology from the first lady’s office.

Matt Barreto, who does polling for the White House and the Democratic National Committee, said some of the shift toward Republicans occurred among those who cited the economy as their chief concern.

Barreto said the Democratic Party and its allies have intensified Hispanic outreach programs for the past two-plus years and found ways to make sure their message resonates.

“We’ve been learning our lessons, and constantly improving, and not taking the community for granted,” Barreto said. “That doesn’t mean some of the people who want us to do more are wrong.”

Democrats were also hindered in 2020 by the pandemic, which severely limited on-the-ground organizing and door-knocking. But when those efforts resumed in 2022, Democrats nonetheless lost House races in heavily Hispanic parts of Southern California and Florida, even as they exceeded expectations nationally.

Indeed, the shift toward Republicans was particularly pronounced in Florida, where over half of Hispanic voters backed Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is now running for president. He champions hard-line immigration stances that included using state funds to send asylum seekers from Texas to Martha’s Vineyard because, he said, Democrats in northern cities were ignoring problems on the U.S.-Mexico border.

GOP messages portraying Democrats as too far left and anti-capitalist also resonated with Hispanic voters in South Florida, particularly recent immigrants from struggling socialist countries like Venezuela and Cuba.

In Florida’s Broward County, one of the state’s few remaining Democratic strongholds, Richard Ramunno, a 31-year-old business owner of Argentine and Chilean background, remembered Biden’s “Despacito”

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episode but laughed it off. He said he worries more about policy decisions Republicans are making at the state level, including the Parental Rights in Education law signed by DeSantis, which makes it easier to challenge a book over its content.

"The laws they are passing are very conservative right now," he said. "Books are being removed from schools."

But Ramunno also said Democrats should be doing more to reach out to voters ahead of the 2024 election.

A brighter spot for Democrats last year was Nevada, where the first Latina elected to the Senate, Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto, won reelection despite Republicans flipping the governorship. Melissa Morales, founder of Somos PAC, which supported Cortez Masto, said the midterms showed the importance of focusing on economic policies like affordable housing and health care — not GOP-led culture war issues.

"The thing that really emerged for us in 2022 was that Latinos were so solutions-oriented," Morales said.

Lima, whose progressive group mobilizes voters for races up and down the ballot, said that the economy is a top motivator for Hispanics and that Biden and top Democratic candidates can point to legislative accomplishments, including a major public works package and increased federal spending on health care, social services and green energy.

But Lima also called those "down payments" and said Hispanic voters will expect Biden and Democrats "to make good" on policies that help the economy work better for them — even with Republicans controlling the House.

"We can't come back to them without progress in 2024," she said.

Many of the same activists who have criticized Biden and Democrats, however, praised the president for selecting Julie Chavez Rodriguez, granddaughter of civil rights icon Cesar Chavez, to manage his reelection campaign. Texas Rep. Veronica Escobar is a campaign co-chair.

Morales said choosing Rodriguez was not only symbolically important but also encouraging given her organizing background.

"It's so clear that she is the right person for the job," Morales said.

In a memo detailing 2024 strategy, which the Biden campaign produced in English and Spanish, Rodriguez promised that the campaign would "engage early and often" with Hispanic and other voters the campaign is counting on. The DNC also plans to build on Adelante, or "Forward," a seven-figure outreach plan that last year featured bilingual radio and print ads in Florida, Nevada, Arizona, Wisconsin, Georgia, North Carolina, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Texas.

The ads began last May, earlier before a midterm election than the DNC says it has ever started Spanish-language media. The committee is also helping fund Hispanic coalition and organizing staff in battleground states and planning to resume "boot camps" it used during the midterms. They train bilingual campaign staff in key states.

"I believe that now the Democratic Party is in a position where, when I go and tell people, 'I want you to do more, I have willing partners,'" said Barreto, who worked closely with Rodriguez on Hispanic outreach during Biden's 2020 campaign. "That gives me more optimism that I'm not going to be spending the next 12 months trying to hit people over the head and saying, 'Don't forget, Latinos are important.'"

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Associated Press writer Hannah Fingerhut contributed to this report from Washington.

## Remembering D-Day: Key facts and figures about epochal World War II invasion

OMAHA BEACH, France (AP) — The D-Day invasion that helped change the course of World War II was unprecedented in scale and audacity. As veterans and world dignitaries commemorate the 79th anniversary of the operation, here's a look at some details about what happened:

### WHO TOOK PART

Nearly 160,000 Allied troops landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944. Of those, 73,000 were from the United

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States, 83,000 from Britain and Canada. Forces from several other countries were also involved, including French troops fighting with Gen. Charles de Gaulle against the Nazi occupation.

They faced around 50,000 German forces.

More than 2 million Allied soldiers, sailors, pilots, medics and other people from a dozen countries were involved in the overall Operation Overlord, the battle to wrest western France from Nazi control that started on D-Day.

## WHERE AND WHEN

The sea landings started at 6:30 a.m. local time, just after dawn, targeting five code-named beaches, one after the other: Omaha, Utah, Gold, Sword, Juno.

The operation also included actions inland, including overnight parachute landings on strategic German sites and U.S. Army Rangers scaling cliffs to take out German gun positions.

Around 11,000 Allied aircraft, 7,000 ships and boats, and thousands of other vehicles were involved in the invasion.

## VICTIMS ON ALL SIDES

A total of 4,414 Allied troops were killed on D-Day itself, including 2,501 Americans. More than 5,000 were wounded.

In the ensuing Battle of Normandy, 73,000 Allied forces were killed and 153,000 wounded. The battle — and especially Allied bombings of French villages and cities — killed around 20,000 French civilians.

The exact German casualties aren't known, but historians estimate between 4,000 and 9,000 men were killed, wounded or missing during the D-Day invasion alone. About 22,000 German soldiers are among the many buried around Normandy.

## SURVIVORS

A few thousand D-Day veterans may be still alive; the youngest are in their late 90s. A few dozen are in Normandy for the 79th anniversary. Charity organizations and local French residents helped organize their trip back to the beaches of D-Day, including providing travel and housing to ensure they could make the journey.

Next year, world leaders are expected for major commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of the invasion.

## The Miami Heat roar back in Game 2 to tie the Denver Nuggets in 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."

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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."

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."

AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/hub/NBA> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## **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 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.

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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."

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

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## What to stream this week: Janelle Monáe, a Cheetos origin story, Diablo IV and 'Avatar'

By The Associated Press undefined

Albums from Janelle Monáe and Niall Horan, as well as a TV movie about a Frito-Lay janitor who claims to have invented Flamin' Hot Cheetos are among the new television, movies, music and games headed to a device near you.

Among the offerings worth your time as selected by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists are the streaming debut of "Avatar: The Way of Water" and the celebrity-stuffed "Stars on Mars," where the likes of Lance Armstrong and Ariel Winter are put in a Mars simulation and presented with a series of challenges to colonize their version of the Red Planet.

### NEW MOVIES TO STREAM

— "Avatar: The Way of Water" finally washes onto streaming shores Wednesday. James Cameron's sci-fi sequel will begin streaming on Disney+ and HBO Max after becoming the third highest-grossing movie of all time in theaters. "The Way of Water" has made \$2.32 billion at the box office, trailing only the \$2.9 billion of the original "Avatar" and the \$2.79 billion of "Avengers: Endgame." In her review, AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr called "The Way of Water," "a truly dazzling cinematic experience that will have you floating on a blockbuster high."

— Nike, Tetris and Blackberry have all gotten the big-screen treatment this year. Now, it's Cheetos' turn. "Flamin' Hot," which debuts Friday, June 9, on Hulu, is about Richard Montañez, a Frito-Lay janitor who claims to have invented the spicier Flamin' Hot Cheetos. Directed by Eva Longoria, the movie is based on Montañez's memoir, "Flamin' Hot: The Incredible True Story of One Man's Rise from Janitor to Top Executive." Though reports have cast doubt on the veracity of his claims, "Flamin' Hot" abides by the old movie maxim: Print the Frito-Legend.

— As "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" hits theaters, Disney+ is streaming all four previous "Indiana Jones" movies, plus the series "The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones." Since May 31, subscribers have been able to watch "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom," "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" and "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull." And, yes, "Raiders" is still No. 1.

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

### NEW MUSIC TO STREAM

— Niall Horan shows back up with "The Show," his third solo album and first since 2020's chart-topping "Heartbreak Weather." A coach for "The Voice" and former member of One Direction, Horan has released two singles from the new collection — the sweeping and driving "Heaven" and the catchy "Meltdown," a musical promise that "when it all melts down/I'll be there." He's also announced his first headlining shows in six years as well as his biggest venues to date across Europe, Oceania and North America.

— Sensuality will be on tap when Janelle Monáe releases "The Age of Pleasure," her first album since 2018. "Cause for your love, I'll take my time/Just wanna feel your hips on mine," Monáe sings in the single "Lipstick Lover." Another offering is "Float" featuring Seun Kuti and Egypt 80, which has been used by the NBA and contains the line "It's hard to look at my resume and not find a reason to toast." The album packaging and fold-out sleeve contains a hidden surprise for listeners: a close-up painting of Monáe's chest.

— It's back to his day job for Jason Isbell. The singer-songwriter has already been the subject of the HBO documentary "Running With Our Eyes Closed" and got a role in Martin Scorsese's movie "Killers of the Flower Moon." Now comes the album "Weathervanes" with his band the 400 Unit. The 13-tracks include the powerful anti-gun violence song "Save The World" and the intimate "Death Wish," with a partner struggling to help the other cope with their self-destructive behavior. "Who's left to pray to/What's the difference in breakdown and a breakthrough?" he sings.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

### NEW SERIES TO STREAM

— Twelve celebrities, including former cyclist Lance Armstrong, Ariel Winter of "Modern Family" and Tom

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Schwartz of "Vanderpump Rules," are put in a Mars simulation and presented with a series of challenges to colonize their version of the Red Planet. William Shatner, Captain Kirk from "Star Trek" and the oldest person to fly to space, serves as host from mission control. "If you need anything, anything at all, you're on your own," says Shatner in the trailer. "Stars on Mars" debuts Monday on Fox.

— When "Cruel Summer" debuted its first season in 2021 on Freeform, it was an immediate hit for the network. Season two features a new cast and new mystery but, like its predecessor, takes place over alternate timelines. Lexi Underwood of "Little Fires Everywhere" stars alongside Sadie Stanley, and Griffin Gluck with Jessica Biel as a co-executive producer. The story is set in the Pacific Northwest against the backdrop of the Y2K time period, when the tech world feared computers and government systems would malfunction over programming when the calendar flipped to the year 2000. Fans of the Shonda Rhimes series "Private Practice" may also be tickled to see KaDee Strickland, Paul Adelstein and Gluck reunite in "Cruel Summer" after working together on the former ABC series.

— Netflix's "Never Have I Ever" drops its fourth and final season on Thursday. The series stars Maitreyi Ramakrishnan in a coming-of-age story about an Indian American high school teen coping with the sudden death of her father, first loves and lusts, friendship, and self-identity. Even better, it's narrated by John McEnroe. In season four, Ramakrishnan's Devi is in her senior year of high school and getting ready to go to college. The show, co-created by Mindy Kaling and Lang Fisher is whip smart (as is Kaling's trademark), up to date on pop culture, funny and touching.

— Alicia Rancilio

## NEW VIDEO GAMES TO PLAY

— Fans of Blizzard Entertainment's Diablo series have been to hell and back waiting for a new chapter — the last one came out more than a decade ago — but Diablo IV has finally arrived. The conflict between the High Heavens and the Burning Hells is still raging, and some knuckleheads have decided now would be a good time to reawaken the superpowerful demon queen Lilith. Your character — rogue, sorcerer, necromancer, barbarian or druid — has the thankless job of trying to prevent Lilith from wreaking too much havoc in the mortal plane called Sanctuary. Blizzard has turned Sanctuary into a sprawling open world with a beefy solo campaign, plenty of side missions, player vs. player arenas and the promise of many quests to come. The war resumes Tuesday on PC, Xbox X/S/One and PlayStation 5/4, although early access has already opened for deluxe and ultimate edition buyers.

— Sweden's Frictional Games has been building an eerie alternate world since 2010, when it launched the surprise indie hit Amnesia: The Dark Descent. The nightmare continues in Amnesia: The Bunker, in which battle-scarred World War I soldier Henri Clement finds himself trapped underground with a beast that may be even more dangerous than the chaos ravaging the surface. Frictional says the bunker is more expansive than previous Amnesia settings, and Henri can at least fight back with his revolver — though ammunition may be hard to come by. The horror sets in Tuesday on PC, Xbox X/S/One and PlayStation 5/4.

— Lou Kesten

Catch up on AP's entertainment coverage here: <https://apnews.com/apf-entertainment>.

## Today in History: June 6, D-Day in Normandy

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, June 6, the 157th day of 2023. There are 208 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 6, 1944, during World War II, Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy, France, on "D-Day" as they began the liberation of German-occupied Western Europe.

On this date:

In 1844, the Young Men's Christian Association was founded in London.

In 1912, Novarupta, a volcano on the Alaska peninsula, began a three-day eruption, sending ash as high



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as 100,000 feet; it was the most powerful volcanic eruption of the 20th century and ranks among the largest in recorded history.

In 1934, the Securities and Exchange Commission was established.

In 1939, the first Little League baseball game was played as Lundy Lumber defeated Lycoming Dairy 23-8 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

In 1968, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy died at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles, 25 1/2 hours after he was shot by Sirhan Bishara Sirhan.

In 1977, a sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Louisiana law imposing an automatic death sentence on defendants convicted of the first-degree murder of a police officer.

In 1982, Israeli forces invaded Lebanon to drive Palestine Liberation Organization fighters out of the country. (The Israelis withdrew in June 1985.)

In 1989, burial services were held for Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In 2001, Democrats assumed control of the U.S. Senate after the decision of Vermont Republican James Jeffords to become an independent.

In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled, 6-3, that people who smoked marijuana because their doctors recommended it to ease pain could be prosecuted for violating federal drug laws.

In 2006, soul musician Billy Preston died in Scottsdale, Arizona, at age 59.

In 2020, tens of thousands rallied in cities from Australia to Europe to honor George Floyd and voice support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Massive, peaceful protests took place nationwide to demand police reform.

Ten years ago: Director of National Intelligence James Clapper moved to tamp down a public uproar spurred by the disclosure of secret surveillance programs involving phone and Internet records, declassifying key details about one of the programs while insisting the efforts were legal, limited in scope and necessary to detect terrorist threats. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his wife, Lyudmila Putina, announced they were divorcing after nearly 30 years of marriage. Esther Williams, 91, the swimming champion turned actress, died in Los Angeles. Longtime soap opera actress Maxine Stuart, 94, died in Beverly Hills, California.

Five years ago: Breaking with President Donald Trump, House Speaker Paul Ryan said there was no evidence that the FBI had planted a "spy" in Trump's 2016 presidential campaign in an effort to hurt his chances at the polls. Trump commuted the life sentence of Alice Marie Johnson, who had spent more than two decades behind bars for drug offenses; her cause had been championed by reality TV star Kim Kardashian West. Carrie Underwood continued to make history as the most decorated act at the CMT Music Awards as a new award for female video of the year gave her 18 wins overall; Blake Shelton walked away with the night's top prize, video of the year. Hall of Fame second baseman Red Schoendienst, who also managed the St. Louis Cardinals to two pennants and a World Series championship in the 1960s, died at the age of 95.

One year ago: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson survived a no-confidence vote, securing enough support from his Conservative Party to remain in office despite a substantial rebellion that left him a weakened leader with an uncertain future. (Johnson would resign on July 7.) Russia began turning over the bodies of Ukrainian fighters killed at the Azovstal steelworks, the fortress-like plant in the destroyed city of Mariupol where their last stand became a symbol of resistance against Moscow's invasion. The former top leader of the far-right Proud Boys extremist group and other members were charged with seditious conspiracy for what federal prosecutors said was a coordinated attack on the U.S. Capitol to stop Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's 2020 electoral victory.

Today's Birthdays: Singer-songwriter Gary "U.S." Bonds is 84. Country singer Joe Stampley is 80. Jazz musician Monty Alexander is 79. Actor Robert Englund is 76. Folk singer Holly Near is 74. Singer Dwight Twilley is 72. Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., is 71. Playwright-actor Harvey Fierstein (FY'-ur-steen) is 71. Comedian Sandra Bernhard is 68. International Tennis Hall of Famer Bjorn Borg is 67. Actor Amanda Pays is 64. Comedian Colin Quinn is 64. Record producer Jimmy Jam is 64. Rock musician Steve Vai is 63. Rock singer-musician Tom Araya (Slayer) is 62. Actor Jason Isaacs is 60. Actor Anthony Starke is 60. Rock musician Sean Yseult (White Zombie) is 57. Actor Max Casella is 56. Actor Paul Giamatti is 56. R&B singer

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Damion Hall (Guy) is 55. Rock musician James "Munky" Shaffer (Korn) is 53. TV correspondent Natalie Morales is 51. Country singer Lisa Brokop is 50. Rapper-rocker Uncle Kracker is 49. Actor Sonya Walger is 49. Former actor Staci Keanan is 48. Jazz singer Somi is 47. Actor Amber Borycki is 40. Actor Aubrey Anderson-Emmons is 16.