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Groton Community Calendar

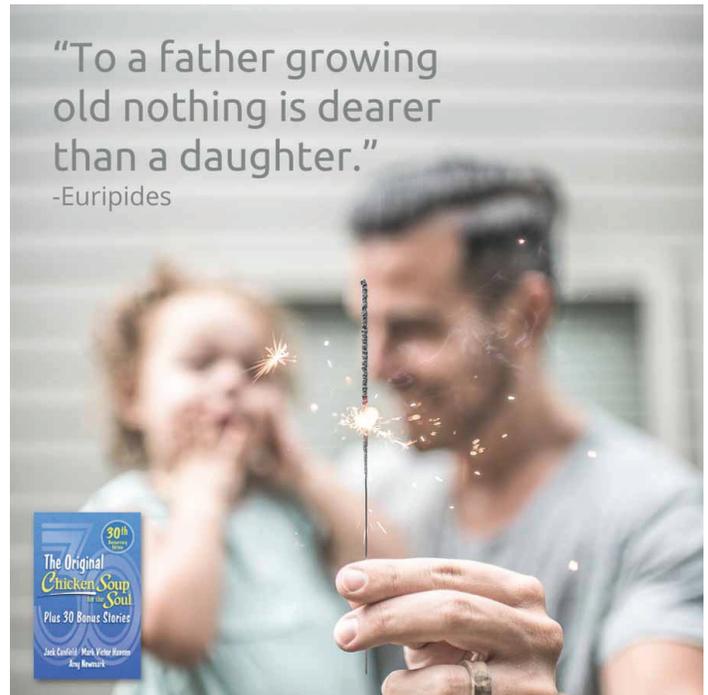
Friday, June 16

Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice, breadstick,
Lemmon tart bar.
Olive Grove: SDSU Tournament

Saturday, June 17

Groton Triathlon
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m.
ago 1 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court,
10 a.m.

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



Sunday, June 18

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Cof-
fee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Wor-
ship Service at 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS
Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45
a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9
a.m.; Worship at Avantara, 3 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran with communion at 9 a.m.;
Zion worship with communion, 11 a.m.
Amateurs host Northville, 5 p.m.
Legion at Milbank, 2 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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The Bulletin by Newsweek

JUNE 12, 2023

World in Brief

law below.

At least 15 people have died, and several others were injured after a semi-trailer truck collided with a small bus carrying mostly elderly people in Canada's Manitoba province in one of the most lethal road accidents in the country's recent history.

Former UFC champion Conor McGregor has been accused of sexually assaulting a woman inside an arena bathroom after an NBA Finals basketball game in Miami.

The College Board won't be making changes to Advanced Placement courses for Florida students impacted by the state's new rules limiting teachers' ability to cover topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

At least two people have been killed, and 22 were injured after Cyclone Biparjoy made landfall in India's western state of Gujarat.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia does not intend to budge on its decision to suspend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty unless the U.S. changes its "fundamentally hostile policy" toward Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry said..

TALKING POINTS

"There are still strong communities out there, and I think people do long for a sense of connection. I think they still want to believe in something. What, I think, current leaders, younger leaders have to figure out is, how do we rebuild a political culture, a media culture, a business culture that is worthy of trust and can win people over," former President Barack Obama said during an interview with CNN's The Axe Files podcast.

"What I would tell him is, you know what? Stop pussyfooting around. Are you gonna throw your hat in the ring and challenge [President] Joe [Biden]? Are you gonna get in and do it, or are you just gonna sit on the sidelines and chirp? So why don't you throw your hat in the ring, and then we'll go ahead and talk about what's happening," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said of California Gov. Gavin Newsom.

"I was, and still am, a bit of a fan of [former British Prime Minister] Boris [Johnson], because I think he's got wonderful charisma. But, you know, you knew what you were getting with Boris, you know? So it's not unusual. He's told a few porkies over the years, so I'm not surprised he's in big trouble now. But how's he going to make a comeback? I don't know. Maybe he should talk to me. I've been making comebacks for years," musician Rod Stewart told Sky News..

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

The U.S. Open continues at the Los Angeles Country Club through Sunday.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is traveling to China to meet with senior officials about the importance of open communication and other issues of global importance to the two countries.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa is leading a delegation of African leaders to Kyiv to "find a peaceful solution" to the Russia-Ukraine war. The delegation will meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky today.

Air National Guardsman Jack Teixeira, the man accused of leaking classified Pentagon documents online, has been indicted on six counts of willful retention and transmission of sensitive information related to national defense.

Three people have been killed and at least 75 injured after a series of tornadoes hit the north Texas town of Perryton. The storms have also left 50,000 people without electricity during a massive heatwave.

Japan has passed laws that refine rape and raise the age of consent from 13 to 16 years in a major overhaul of sex crime laws. Read more about the country's watered-down LGBTQ+

Quality Habitat Means Abundant Birds in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) today announced the pheasant harvest total from the 2022-2023 season. The traditional season ran from October 15, 2022, to January 31, 2023. During this season, hunters harvested an estimated 1,158,000 birds.

“South Dakota is the greatest state in the country to pheasant hunt,” said Kevin Robling, GFP Secretary. “The harvest numbers show exactly why: hunters are going to find abundant birds across the state all season long.”

Hunter reports throughout the 2022 season spoke to this abundance of birds, and the harvest numbers support their claims. The 2022 season saw the highest harvest since 2016 and was 10% higher than the past 10-year average. These numbers translate to excellent bags for hunters, with averages at 9 pheasants per hunter for the 2022 season.

South Dakota’s claim to the greatest state to pheasant hunt is supported by these pheasants per hunter numbers. While surrounding states generally see harvest rates of 3 to 6 birds per hunter, South Dakota routinely sees harvest rates around 9 pheasants per hunter, such as in 2022.

South Dakota’s focus on habitat and public access have led to a high quantity of birds across the state, ample areas to target them, and overall good hunting conditions.

“Quality habitat is key for abundant wildlife populations, which is why this is the number one priority for our department,” continued Robling. “Hunters also need to have access to these areas to be able to enjoy these populations.”

GFP has 12 private lands habitat biologists that work directly with landowners to identify both habitat projects and access programs that will benefit the landowners, hunters, and wildlife. Working alongside landowners and on state Game Production Areas, GFP is focused on planting and improving all types of habitat including perennial grasses, woody vegetation, and pollinator plots across the state.

Providing access to these areas for hunters to enjoy is critical. In 2022, there was 1.48 million acres of private land enrolled in GFP’s public access programs. These lands are enrolled in GFP’s Walk-in Area, James River Watershed Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Controlled Hunting Access Program, Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Area, Elk Hunting Access Area, and Aquatic Access programs.

“Our largest program for private land access is our Walk-In Area program,” said Mark Norton, Hunting Access and Farm Bill Coordinator. “This year, we celebrate its 35th anniversary and look forward to continuing to build upon one of the most successful programs ever for public hunting access.”

Approximately 80% of land in South Dakota is privately owned, which makes these access programs critical for ample public hunting opportunities. The various programs accommodate the different hunting opportunities across the state and various needs of the landowner themselves.

“Our most popular programs for pheasant hunting are the CREP programs, both in the James River Watershed and now in the Big Sioux River Watershed, and of course the Walk-In Area program as well,” continued Norton.

The purchase of both hunting and fishing licenses, as well as the habitat stamp, directly supports these programs.

“The best investment a hunter can make is their license purchase,” stated Robling. “Conservation is a user-pay, public-benefit system, and the habitat stamp in particular is a perfect example of this.”

After celebrating another successful pheasant season, GFP is focused on the season to come. Habitat improvement projects are taking place throughout the spring and summer, and biologists continue to contact landowners about enrolling their land in public hunting programs. GFP’s goal for 2023 is to exceed 1.5 million acres of private land enrolled for public hunting, increasing from the 1.48 million acres enrolled in 2022. Hunters will be able to enjoy the results of these efforts when the next season begins.

“Our pheasant hunting traditions are strong in South Dakota,” concluded Robling. “We’re going to continue to build off these traditions and ensure the next generation is able to enjoy the same pheasant hunting success that we enjoy today.”

The 2023 traditional pheasant season runs from October 21, 2023, to January 31, 2024.

Harding County principal to lead activities association board

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — Kelly Messmer, the principal of the Harding County School District, will be the next chairman of the South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors. He was elected at the association's board meeting Thursday.

Elected vice chairman was Groton School Board member Marty Weismantel. Messmer and Weismantel will start their leadership of the association board at its July meeting.

Messmer's board will have some new faces. Replacing current board chairman Mark Murphy of Aberdeen, who represented school boards from large schools, will be Pierre School Board member Randy Hartmann. Hartmann was the only candidate for that position on the board.

The association will need to hold a run-off election to see who will represent the board from Division III schools. None of the three candidates received 50% of the vote in the first election. The run-off election will be between principals Adam Shaw of Madison and Jeff Sheehan of Hamlin.

The association will also hold an election to replace board member Mike Talley of the Rapid City School District. Talley was elected as a principal, but now has a different job in education. Nominated for the position are principal Daniel Conrad of Sioux Falls Jefferson, principal Ryan Rollinger of Harrisburg and assistant principal Krista Inman of Rapid City Stevens.

If there is no run-off to replace Talley, the election winners may take their positions on the board at its July meeting.

At Thursday's meeting, board member Dani Walking Eagle, whose term was ending, was appointed to fill out the last year of the term of board member Barry Mann of Wakpala who retired. Walking Eagle will serve as the Native American at-large member of the board.

After the association's annual meeting in April, member schools voted on two amendments to its constitution, both of which passed handily. One dealt with recruitment violations and the other with ejections from contests.

—30—

Policy formalized for introducing new high school sports, activities

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — The South Dakota High School Activities Association now has a formal procedure for sanctioning new sports or activities. The policy was endorsed by the SDHSAA board at its meeting Thursday.

In the past, there was no formalized procedure for adding a new sport. "Schools came to us and asked us for it," said SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos.

The informal procedure led to the association recently sanctioning girls' wrestling and softball. Plans are in the works to add E-sports.

The new procedure starts with a formal written request from a member school or from the association itself. A proposal is then made that includes the history of the sport or activity; gauging interest from member schools through a survey; recommending season length, number of contests and the post-season format; and projected start-up costs for member schools.

After the proposal has been made, the SDHSAA staff or a steering committee will study post-season finances and venues and study the impact on current programs.

The next step is action by the board of directors. If the board approves, an advisory committee must be appointed and a handbook created before full implementation of the new sport or activity.

Swartos said he estimated that the entire process may take as long as two years to complete.

—30—

SDHSAA board grapples with wrestling dual format

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — South Dakota's high school wrestling tournament has grown so large that the duals tournament portion will be moved to a separate date. That decision was made Thursday by the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

"Something had to give," said SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos, explaining that with the addition of girls' wrestling, the tournament has gotten unwieldy. Athletic directors, Swartos said, were hesitant to move girls' wrestling to its own tournament.

The duals tournament was added to the state wrestling tournament during the 2019-2020 school year.

While they approved moving the duals tournament to Feb. 10 on a 7-1 vote, some board members were skeptical of whether the tournament needs to happen at all. Board members questioned the commitment of schools to the duals format and the ability of the tournament to draw a crowd.

"Are we moving around something that doesn't need to happen?" asked board member Jeff Danielsen of Watertown. "I don't think it's serving the purpose it's supposed to have."

Board member Tom Culver of Avon said he recalled a wrestling dual tournament with a small crowd.

"Wrestling coaches need to figure out if they want this or not," Culver said.

Board members agreed that they would track the participation in the duals tournament.

"They'll have one last shot to see how it goes," said board member Kelly Messmer of Harding County.

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A steady stream of people attended the Groton Community Transit Fundrasier held Thursday at the Groton Community Center. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Scott Kettering, Travis McGannon and Joel Bierman were some of the helpers at the Groton Community Transit fundraiser held Thursday at the Groton Community Center.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Hope Block and Diane Warrington dress up their burgers at the Transit Fundraiser. (Photo

by Paul Kosel)



Judge pauses Minnehaha County petition collection site rules

Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – A federal judge has granted a preliminary injunction that prevents Minnehaha County from enforcing designated areas and check-ins for petition circulators as part of what opponents called an overly restrictive policy at the county's administration building in central Sioux Falls.

The petition policy, recommended by County Auditor Leah Anderson and passed unanimously by the Minnehaha County Commission on May 2, came in response to what some county employees and customers characterized as increasingly aggressive behavior from circulators and counter-protestors as signatures are sought for a proposed ballot amendment to enshrine the right to abortion in the South Dakota Constitution.

The rules restricted petition circulation to two designated rectangular areas: one about 50 feet from the main entrance to the building in the parking lot off Minnesota Avenue, and the other southeast of the main entrance to the courthouse.

The policy mandated that circulators check in at Anderson's office prior to conducting political activity "to permit the placement of safety markers and to verify space availability within the designated areas."

Dakotans for Health, the organization behind the proposed abortion amendment, responded with a lawsuit in U.S. District Court and was granted a temporary restraining order May 11. The group claimed that the new policy "prohibits speech in 99.3% of the outdoor space that was available for First Amendment activity before the new policy was implemented."

In his June 13 ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Roberto Lange wrote that Dakotans for Health representatives "have shown a likely violation of their First Amendment rights, and the public interest is served by protecting these rights." He added that his ruling restrains the county from enforcing any part of the policy that requires "check-in" with Anderson's office or restricts petition circulators to "designated areas."

The ruling does not prevent the county from enforcing its previous policy's rules regarding the behavior of petition circulators, Lange wrote, noting that the county already had provisions in place requiring signature gatherers to conduct themselves in a "polite, courteous and professional manner" and not "obstruct individuals as they enter and exit the building."

"The public ... has an interest to enter and leave the county buildings without undue traffic flow problems that overly aggressive petition circulators or those protesting these petitions might create," Lange wrote. "But enforcement of the prior policy should blunt such behavior by petition circulators."

Judge Lange wrote that the county could "develop a different policy that passes constitutional muster if they wish."

Another option would be to appeal the decision to the Eighth Circuit within the next 30 days. Anderson didn't immediately respond to a request for comment from News Watch about the ruling.

'A very important decision'

The legal tussle over the county's petition policy was viewed as crucial to the battle over South Dakota's abortion ban and whether reproductive rights should be decided by voters in 2024.

"This is a very important decision," Jim Leach, the Rapid City lawyer who represents Dakotans for Health, told News Watch. "It recognizes the people's First Amendment right to circulate petitions and recognized that the government has severe restrictions on what it can do to try to impair those rights. While Dakotans for Health brought this case, it's significant for everyone in South Dakota who might want to sign a petition or have the opportunity to vote on these issues."

Dakotans for Health needs to collect a minimum of 35,017 signatures to place the abortion constitutional amendment on the ballot, and the goal is to submit 60,000 or more to ensure that ballot access isn't foiled

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by invalidated signatures or other technicalities. The deadline to submit signatures is May 7, 2024.

Called the "gold standard" of petition circulation by groups soliciting signatures for ballot measures, the county administration building features a steady flow of foot traffic from the parking lot to its main entrance, where circulators are often stationed with clipboards and requests for support of their political cause.

Some of the petition circulators have clashed with volunteers from the anti-abortion Life Defense Fund, whose founders call the proposed amendment "a grave threat to life in our state." The group aims to thwart petitioners through its "Decline to Sign" campaign.

Much of the debate focused on the yellow-striped rectangular box in the parking lot that was a designated area under the new policy. Dakotans for Health claimed it would force circulators to shout at potential signers to go out of their way and potentially walk through parking-lot traffic to engage in conversation.

"All we're saying is that people should have an unimpeded right to decide whether to sign petitions and then to vote on issues that affect them," said Leach.

Measure would make abortion a constitutional right

If passed, the abortion measure would enshrine the right to abortion in the South Dakota Constitution and supersede a 2005 state trigger law that took effect when Roe vs. Wade was overturned and made it a Class 6 felony to perform an abortion except to save the life of the mother.

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at sdnewswatch.org.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

At congressional hearing, Noem calls conservation leases 'dangerous'

Republicans from Western states attack public lands plan in heated U.S. House hearing

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JUNE 15, 2023 5:41 PM

U.S. House Republicans and GOP Govs. Kristi Noem of South Dakota and Mark Gordon of Wyoming teamed up Thursday to rail against the Bureau of Land Management's proposed rule to allow conservation leases on federal lands.

Noem and Gordon joined the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee for about half of a 4 1/2 hour hearing that saw Republican members raise familiar objections to the BLM's proposal that would treat conservation as a use on the same level as mining, oil and gas development or livestock grazing.

The proposed rule would create a conservation leasing system, similar to how the agency divides land for extractive uses. The rule's supporters — many Democrats and environmental groups — say it provides an important tool to better manage lands threatened by climate change, without significantly affecting use by ranchers, miners, energy companies or other federal lands users.

But congressional Republicans, especially those from the Western states that are home to most BLM lands, have said the rule would undermine the agency's mandate to provide grazing, mining and oil and gas opportunities.

U.S. Rep. John Curtis, a Utah Republican, introduced a two-line bill last month that was the subject of Thursday's hearing. Nineteen Republican joined as co-sponsors.

Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman, an Arkansas Republican, said the bill was unlikely to become law, but hinted Republicans would seek to insert language into a spending bill to prevent the rule from being implemented.

Noem: Plan is 'dangerous'

Noem, a former U.S. House member who sat on that committee, endorsed her former colleagues' arguments Thursday, saying that formal conservation leases were unnecessary when ranchers and others are already using conservation practices.

"Conservation is already incredibly a part of every single management practice that happens on BLM land," Noem said. "To go out there and to create mechanisms such as a conservation lease that can be bought by third parties — not even necessarily by people in our own country — and give them access and authority over these lands, it's dangerous."

Noem and Gordon were not the only GOP governors from Western states to voice disapproval of the rule this week.

The two were joined by Govs. Brad Little of Idaho, Greg Gianforte of Montana and Joe Lombardo of Nevada on a letter to U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland on Wednesday asking her to withdraw the proposal.

Democrats slam 'hyper-partisan' panel

Many of the committee's Democrats didn't attend the panel with Noem and Gordon, joining the hearing halfway through.

Curtis said he was angry about his colleagues' absence, which he compared to federal bureaucrats seeking to manage Western lands without input from the people who live there.

"I'm sitting here and having a hard time ... having my head not explode," he said. "There is one member

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across the aisle at this hearing at the beginning and two total now. This is the same reflection of those on the East Coast who like to come to us in the West and tell us how to manage our lands.”

California Democrat Jared Huffman spoke briefly to call the governors’ panel a “hyper-partisan performance masquerading as a legislative hearing.”

“On the off-chance that there may be a few people watching at home who don’t get all their information refracted through the kaleidoscope of right-wing media, I would just like them to know that now every Western state is hyped up on anti-government conspiracy politics,” he said, adding that California supported the BLM proposal.

Several Republicans on the committee said the rule shows BLM’s misunderstanding of how people in the West manage their lands.

“This is going to have incredibly negative, unintended consequences that the people in Washington, D.C., don’t understand,” Wyoming’s Harriet Hageman said. “They should not be making policies like this sitting in their air-conditioned offices here.”

But in a video conference call that a conservation group held with reporters following the hearing, Danielle Murray, the senior policy and legal director for the Conservation Lands Foundation, said Noem was not the best messenger for that idea.

With 275,000 acres managed by the BLM, South Dakota accounts for just more than .1% of the agency’s 245 million acres nationwide, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

“The majority made a lot of points about ... Eastern states trying to tell Western states how to manage their lands,” Murray said. “Under their own calculus, Gov. Noem shouldn’t have been there.”

Supporters of the proposal said Republican alarms were without merit.

“The sort of fearmongering asserted in this morning’s hearing was just completely baseless,” New Mexico Democrat Melanie Stansbury said.

Public comment extended

Republicans on the panel also criticized the BLM for the agency’s strategy for public meetings after publishing the proposed rule.

The agency held two online meetings and in-person forums in Denver; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Reno, Nevada. None were in a rural area, Republicans noted.

They also said the 75-day public comment period was too short.

Following the governors, the committee questioned a second panel that included Nada Wolff Culver, the BLM’s deputy director for policy and programs. Culver said the agency would extend the public comment period for 15 days. The new deadline is July 5.

The rule would only put conservation on the same level as extractive industries, Culver said. It would not exclude other uses, she said.

“Every day the BLM seeks a careful balancing across many uses and resources to steward the public lands for all,” she said. “The proposed rule would help guide balanced management in a manner that does not elevate one use over others.”

Colorado Republican Lauren Boebert asked directly if the rule would block grazing access and if the rule would ban the use of mechanical forest thinning.

Culver answered that grazing leases would not be affected, and that mechanical thinning is a generally accepted conservation technique.

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

Native Americans cheer Supreme Court's upholding of Indian Child Welfare Act, push for more action

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 15, 2023 3:19 PM

After the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Indian Child Welfare Act in a 7-2 vote released Thursday, Native American advocates in South Dakota applauded the decision and said the state should go further to protect Native children.

ICWA is a 1978 federal law giving preference to Native tribes in the case of foster care placement and adoption. The law was in response to high rates of family separation in Native communities, and intended to keep removed children in Native communities.

Before ICWA was adopted, between 25% to 35% of all Native American children were being taken from their homes and placed with adoptive families, foster care or boarding schools.

Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Chairman J. Garret Renville was emotional following the news. The decision for him means tribes can strengthen their communities.

"I think everyone in Indian Country has some sort of personal story that ties us to ICWA," Renville said. "We might have a relative or parent, someone who has gone through the system at some point in their life that's been removed from the community. Sometimes it takes most of that person's life, but they eventually come back searching for their identity, where they come from and who their family is. That reconnects them not just to the family left behind, but their homeland and their people and culture."

While Native children are still overrepresented in the foster care system in South Dakota, other tribal leaders and organizations also celebrated the decision, saying it reaffirmed tribal sovereignty and protections for Native children.

What was at stake in the case

The case, *Brackeen v. Haaland*, centered around a white Texas couple, Chad and Jennifer Brackeen, who challenged the law's preference for Native tribes when American Indian children are adopted, saying it is racial discrimination and forces states to carry out federal mandates.

The decision means that, according to a majority of the justices, the law does not discriminate on the basis of race and does not impose federal mandates on state-regulated areas of power.

The court rejected all of the challenges to ICWA, "some on the merits and others for lack of standing," Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote in her majority opinion. Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented.

The majority opinion cited over a century of precedent that classifies Native Americans as a political, not racial, group.

Alito in his dissent criticized ICWA, saying the federal law conflicts with state laws.

"Decisions about child custody, foster care, and adoption are core state functions. The paramount concern in these cases has long been the 'best interests' of the children involved," Alito wrote. "But in many cases, provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) compel actions that conflict with this fundamental state policy, subordinating what family-court judges — and often biological parents — determine to be in the best interest of a child to what Congress believed is in the best interest of a tribe."

Justice Neil Gorsuch in a concurring opinion joined by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson said he was "pleased to join the Court's opinion in full," adding that he wanted to note the historical significance of the opinion.

"The Indian Child Welfare Act did not emerge from a vacuum. It came as a direct response to the mass removal of Indian children from their families during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s by state officials and private parties," Gorsuch wrote. "In all its many forms, the dissolution of the Indian family has had devastating effects on children and parents alike. It has also presented an existential threat to the continued vitality of Tribes — something many federal and state officials over the years saw as a feature, not as a flaw."

Decision reaffirms Indian child welfare protections, tribal sovereignty

Tribal leaders, organizations and legislators across South Dakota praised the decision.

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State Sen. Red Dawn Foster, D-Pine Ridge, introduced a failed bill during the 2023 legislative session to establish a task force addressing the welfare of Indian children in South Dakota. Foster said the Supreme Court decision was a cause to celebrate, "reaffirming the protections of Indian children and a great day for reaffirming tribal sovereignty."

"This decision should finally put an end to the baseless attacks on the Indian Child Welfare Act as a race-based preference by upholding tribal sovereignty and reaffirming tribes are distinct political entities whose inherent sovereignty predates the United States," Foster said in a text message.

Foster's task force would have worked to identify why Native children are overrepresented in South Dakota's foster care system despite federal ICWA protections for the last 45 years. Her goal is to add support mechanisms to the system to reassure ICWA's standing and support reunification efforts for Native families.

The ICWA task force bill passed the Senate but failed 26-42 in the House. In response, some tribal nations planned to create their own task force. The Oglala Sioux Tribe established the OST ICWA and Child Protective Services task force earlier this year and is working to study the issue. The state has been invited to participate.

The future of ICWA in South Dakota

More than half the state's foster children are Native American, even though Native children make up only 12% of the children in South Dakota. Native American children are nearly three times as likely to be in foster care as other children, according to a 2020 Annie E. Casey Foundation study.

And more than 700 Native American children — or about one of every 40 living in South Dakota — experienced the termination of their parents' rights from 2017 to 2021, according to a ProPublica analysis of the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System removal records. That was one of the highest rates of Native parental termination in the country and nearly 13 times the rate for white children in the state.

"ICWA only works if you follow it," Marcia Zug, a professor of family law at the University of South Carolina School of Law, told ProPublica.

Two other ICWA bills were introduced by Rep. Peri Pourier, D-Rapid City, during the 2023 legislative session, which would have codified aspects of ICWA protections in state law. They would have better defined aspects of ICWA such as "active efforts," ensuring measures to provide transportation, drug counseling, parent classes, and other efforts were made by the state.

One opponent to the ICWA bills, Rep. Tony Venhuizen, R-Sioux Falls, said on the House floor that if the bills became state law and the Supreme Court found ICWA unconstitutional, then the state would have passed potentially unconstitutional laws.

The impending Supreme Court decision was "one of the biggest hurdles" to pass the three bills during session, said Jessica Morson, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe ICWA administrator and chairwoman of the South Dakota ICWA Coalition.

"The disproportionate rates of separation should be heartbreaking to every South Dakota citizen," Morson said. "It doesn't matter the skin color or origin or anything — we all live in this state. When you look at those numbers you have to think: What is happening? There is something there that's not right, and the fact that lawmakers don't want to look at that is disheartening to me and the child welfare system as a whole."

"Now," Morson said, "there is no reason to hold off on anything."

Six states enacted their own ICWA laws codifying the federal law either in part or whole before 2022, when the Brackeens petitioned the Supreme Court. Several other states codified ICWA in their state laws earlier in 2023, in preparation for the Supreme Court's decision.

Venhuizen told South Dakota Searchlight after the Supreme Court decision was published that it still doesn't make sense to pass the two bills that would codify aspects of the ICWA protections in South Dakota law.

"At this point, I don't see why there'd be any need for state legislation," Venhuizen said. "... One of the fears of a state law was that we'd pass a state law similar to ICWA but not the same. Having both in force could cause confusion."

Venhuizen added that he believes the ruling takes away the opportunity for the Legislature to make

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improvements or change ICWA on a state level because federal law preempts state law.

South Dakota established an ICWA task force in the early 2000s to study the state's shortcomings at the time and released a list of recommendations for improvement in the state. Foster said her plans to reintroduce an ICWA task force bill will depend on the outcomes and progress made in the Oglala Sioux Tribe ICWA and Child Protective Services task force.

Morson plans to work with Pourier and other legislators in the upcoming session, which starts in January, to reintroduce the bills that would better define pieces of ICWA in the state.

"It remains clear," Pourier said in a statement. "We must do more to strengthen families of tribal nations, which will require collaborative work from all levels, including tribal and state leaders and the citizens thereof."

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

Native American families are broken up in spite of law to keep children with parents

BY: JESSICA LUSSENHOP, PROPUBLICA AND AGNEL PHILIP, PROPUBLICA - JUNE 15, 2023 11:14 AM

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Update, June 15, 2023: On Thursday morning, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 in favor of upholding the Indian Child Welfare Act. Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote for the majority that the case was about "children who are among the most vulnerable" and that "we reject all of petitioners' challenges to the statute, some on the merits and others for lack of standing."

When Cheyenne Hinojosa saw her husband, Jose, and her mother charging through the doors at the gas station where she worked, she assumed something terrible had happened. In Jose's hands was a stack of papers — the latest legal filing in Hinojosa's long-running child protective services case regarding her then-3-year-old daughter.

In 2018, not long after Hinojosa's daughter turned one year old, a South Dakota Department of Social Services caseworker had come to Hinojosa's home in Huron and taken her away. Two years later, a county judge terminated Hinojosa's parental rights, an act so permanent that in the legal world it's considered the death penalty of child welfare cases.

The decision meant that Hinojosa was no longer legally her daughter's mother.

"I felt my heart just stop," Hinojosa said of the moment she heard the judge's ruling.

She asked her attorney to appeal, though he warned Hinojosa not to get her hopes up. In his four-decade career, he'd never had a parental rights termination ruling reversed. For almost a year, Hinojosa barely had contact with her daughter.

All that changed in July of 2021, when her husband reached across the gas station counter and handed her documents with the words "Supreme Court of the State of South Dakota" near the top. Toward the end was the court's unanimous decision restoring Hinojosa's parental rights. She started to cry.

"I'm back in the game," Hinojosa remembers thinking.

In their ruling, the justices seemed particularly disturbed by one important aspect of the case: As an enrolled member of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Hinojosa and her family should have had powerful federal protections under the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act.

Under ICWA, the state Department of Social Services and the local court had a much higher legal bar to meet than in most child welfare cases before they could terminate Hinojosa's parental rights. And according to the state Supreme Court, the case against her had failed to meet that higher standard, which

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it noted was created by the law's authors "to prevent the breakup of the Indian family."

Against the odds, Hinojosa became one of a small number of parents to have their rights restored by South Dakota's highest court. It was a moment of validation for a young Native American mother who'd been told throughout the process that she wasn't fit to be a parent.

Hinojosa's triumph was short-lived. She had assumed that, with her rights restored, her daughter would be swiftly returned to her custody. She was wrong. And there was yet another fight on the horizon. A month later, Hinojosa learned she was pregnant. Before her second daughter was even a day old, the state was moving to take custody of her as well.

When ICWA became law 45 years ago, the goal was to counteract a century of federal policies that had broken up tribal families. Congress meant to make it harder to terminate the rights of Native American parents, particularly over subjective beliefs about parenting, like that wealthier couples who are not Indigenous would provide a better life for children.

Since its passage, ICWA has played a key role in keeping many Native American families intact, according to tribal leaders, attorneys and child welfare experts. And while federal foster care data — the only national dataset that describes outcomes of the child welfare system — doesn't track whether a child is covered by the law, a ProPublica analysis found that, in recent years, children identified as Native American were less likely to be taken permanently from their parents than white children once they have entered the system.

The reverse is true in a handful of states, including South Dakota. There, more than 700 Native American children — or about one of every 40 living in the state — experienced the termination of their parents' rights from 2017 to 2021, the ProPublica analysis found. That was one of the highest rates in the country and nearly 13 times the rate for white children in the state.

"ICWA only works if you follow it," said Marcia Zug, a professor of family law at the University of South Carolina School of Law.

One issue, child welfare experts said, is that ICWA collides with another federal law. The Adoption and Safe Families Act, passed in 1997, created strict timelines to reduce the amount of time children spend in foster care and free them up for adoption. Once 15 months have passed since a child has been removed from their parent, in most cases child welfare agencies must file for termination of the birth parents' rights. If they don't, states can lose federal funding.

These two pieces of legislation are sometimes at odds in state courts. While ASFA incentivizes speedy decision-making, ICWA mandates efforts that can be more comprehensive and expensive for state and local child welfare offices. In 2005, South Dakota's Supreme Court became the first in the country to rule that ASFA does not take precedence over ICWA. A patchwork of legal determinations across the country has bred confusion, however.

"I wish the feds would clear it up and just come out and say, 'With regard to Native children, either in tribal court or in state court, under ICWA these timelines don't apply,'" said B.J. Jones, the director of the Tribal Judicial Institute at University of North Dakota School of Law.

Looming over all of this is an existential threat to ICWA. The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in November in a challenge to ICWA brought by three couples who say that the law's preference for placing adoptable Native American children in Native households is outdated and biased against white families and should be struck down. That argument is opposed by a coalition of nearly 500 tribes, as well as dozens of state attorneys general, child welfare and tribal rights organizations, which have filed briefs in support of preserving ICWA. The court's decision is expected this month.

In South Dakota, Native American children experience termination of parental rights at 13 times the rate of white children.

Note: Terminations occurred between 2017 and 2021. Race and ethnicity categories are not all mutually exclusive. Black and Native American and Alaska Native children may be of Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic children may be of any race. Non-Hispanic, multiracial children are not included in the data presented.

Source: ProPublica analysis of National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System records and American

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Community Survey data.

Though the current debate centers on adoption, Kimberly Cluff, legal director of the California Tribal Families Coalition, said the termination phase of the child welfare process is what hurts Native American families.

"Creating family for children is a wonderful thing," she said. "It's cutting off of other family that's the problem."

Though Hinojosa's mother lived for a time on the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe reservation in central South Dakota, Hinojosa has spent most of her life in small towns around the state that are predominantly white. After her father, who was white, died when she was 18, Hinojosa developed a stronger connection to her Lower Brule heritage. She found an appreciation for the artwork and language, picking up Lakota and Dakota words from her mother and an aunt.

When she was 20, Hinojosa became pregnant. Though the pregnancy was unplanned, she had always wanted to become a mother.

"I was happy. Scared. You know, the mixed emotions of a first-time mom," she said.

The baby girl was born healthy in the fall of 2017. (ProPublica is not naming either of Hinojosa's children to protect their privacy.) Ten months later, Hinojosa and her daughter's then-28-year-old father, who is from the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, got married.

The state Department of Social Services made its first appearance in the family's life not long after that. In June 2018, someone called the police on Hinojosa and her husband for smoking marijuana at home, and officers cited her husband for possession of drug paraphernalia. Not long after that, Hinojosa went to an anti-abortion counseling center in Huron hoping to get free diapers and formula and blurted out to a worker that she'd smoked marijuana that day. She said the worker reported it to Social Services, which led to her daughter spending a month in foster care before she was returned home.

In early October of that year, documents show, a caseworker arrived unannounced at 9 a.m. in response to another report about the couple. Hinojosa and her husband were asleep, and a roommate let the woman inside. The caseworker wrote in her report that the baby's diaper was so soiled it was wet to the touch, that she was left alone and unsupervised — one of the more serious allegations against the couple — and that she was hungry.

The caseworker also noted "life threatening" conditions in the household: pieces of candy and wrappers on the floor, moldy baby bottles, a fan with no cover on it, cockroaches in the kitchen and prescription bottles in the bedroom. Caseworkers removed the baby, and a court later deemed her an "abused and neglected child." She was placed in foster care with Hinojosa's sister-in-law, who lived about 45 minutes away.

The removal, Hinojosa said, devastated her. But she said she was also immature and slow to appreciate the gravity of the situation. So while she signed up for mental health services, a chemical dependency evaluation and parenting classes, she did not complete them. In their reports, caseworkers noted that she often showed up late to weekly visitations with her daughter or canceled. Though the caseworkers wrote that Hinojosa's daughter was "excited" to see her and was "attached" to her, they also made critical notes. "Cheyenne sat on the couch for the majority of the visit," read one. "Cheyenne brought Burger King" for her daughter, another said, "but ate most of the food."

Over and over, the reports mention out-of-control marijuana use: "Cheyenne's lifestyle is characterized by using illegal drugs, which is prioritized over planning and caring for" her daughter, said one.

Hinojosa has always maintained that her marijuana use was never habitual. She was also baffled by caseworkers' contention that "no adult in the home will perform parental duties."

"I'm the one who's bathing her, changing her, feeding her, all that. Taking her to appointments," she said. "But they still wanted me to say I neglected her."

The South Dakota Department of Social Services declined interview requests and did not respond to a detailed list of ProPublica's questions about Hinojosa's case.

The paperwork also said little about the turmoil in Hinojosa's life. Eight months after their daughter was taken, Hinojosa left her husband and was effectively homeless, sleeping on friends' and relatives' couches.

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She did not have a car. She struggled to hold a job.

About 13 months after the baby was removed, a caseworker emailed their latest report to the Beadle County State's Attorney, which has jurisdiction over child welfare cases in Huron, saying: "Please note we are requesting no further efforts on both parents," and requesting a termination of parental rights hearing within 60 days. Beadle County Circuit Court Judge Jon Erickson granted the request; in December 2019, Social Services cut off the services it had been providing to Hinojosa.

One of the most important mechanisms of ICWA is the requirement that social service caseworkers make "active efforts" to help Native American parents stay in their children's lives and hopefully regain custody. That includes providing transportation to visits and to therapy, as well as access to culturally appropriate programs.

The standard is lower in cases of children who do not qualify for ICWA. Under the Adoption and Safe Families Act, child protective service workers only have to provide "reasonable efforts" to keep families together. After a child has been in foster care for 15 months, the state can end those efforts and file for a termination of parental rights. ASFA also says the state can stop those efforts early if it determines that abuse or neglect is chronic or severe.

ASFA's passage resulted in a large increase in the number of terminations. According to a recent study, the chances a child in the U.S. will experience the severing of their legal relationship with their parents roughly doubled from 2000 to 2016.

In Hinojosa's case, the active efforts made by caseworkers included not just assigning her to parenting classes and setting up visitations, but also providing transportation. Although Social Services never explicitly mentioned ASFA in its simultaneous request to stop providing Hinojosa with these services, the timing of the proposed termination — roughly 15 months after her daughter was removed — followed the law's guideline.

Around the time that Social Services cut off services to Hinojosa, her life was finally stabilizing. She moved in with her mother. She reenrolled in parenting classes. She began meeting with a behavioral analyst named Valere Walton, who started Hinojosa on an intensive case management plan to help her develop better parenting skills.

Hinojosa and her court-appointed lawyer were preparing to present all this at a termination hearing scheduled for March 2020. Then COVID hit. Seven months passed before the hearing could be rescheduled. Not realizing that Social Services had cut off active efforts, Hinojosa continued calling and asking for visits with her daughter.

Walton said she saw firsthand that Hinojosa was asking for home inspections and drug tests.

"This young lady was asking social services, 'Please come into my home, see the changes I'm making,'" said Walton. "They wouldn't even try."

In September 2020, the hearing to terminate Hinojosa's parental rights was convened in the limestone Beadle County Courthouse in the center of Huron. Her then-husband attended, but the couple was headed for a divorce and he was already in the process of voluntarily terminating his parental rights. (He did not respond to requests for comment.)

Under ICWA, the judge had to determine that the evidence proved "beyond a reasonable doubt" that returning custody to Hinojosa was "likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child." When Congress wrote the law, lawmakers chose this standard of proof because they believed that separating parents and children "is a penalty as great, if not greater, than a criminal penalty."

Hinojosa's attorney, Doug Kludt, was optimistic that she had made enough progress to provide a compelling argument for retaining her parental rights. She had completed an eight-week substance abuse program the day before the hearing.

"I thought it was real possible," he said.

ICWA also mandated that Hinojosa's tribe receive notification from Social Services about the termination and be allowed to intervene. But no one from Hinojosa's tribe was in court, even though Social Services had contacted the ICWA offices of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe many times.

Under ICWA, the court also had to hear testimony from a "qualified expert witness" to provide an as-

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assessment of the case from the perspective of someone familiar with the cultural and social norms of the tribe. Raymond Cournoyer testified that, based on his experience as a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, the termination of Hinojosa's rights was best because "drugs and alcohol use is not the Native American way to live your life." He acknowledged that his opinion was based entirely on Hinojosa's Social Services casefile, which did not contain any information about the last nine months of her life, including Hinojosa's claim — supported by her substance abuse counselor — that she had been sober.

Cournoyer, who is now retired, said in an interview that he does not remember Hinojosa's case, but if he had known the file was nine months out of date it would have been a "red flag" to him.

Hinojosa's most recent caseworker took the witness stand to reiterate the conditions of the apartment in 2018 and Hinojosa's marijuana use at the time. While she acknowledged that Social Services had ended its efforts to help Hinojosa nine months before the hearing and that she'd never seen Hinojosa's current apartment, she testified that Hinojosa had failed to show progress. She said Hinojosa had no bond with her daughter.

Walton, the behavioral analyst, testified there was marked improvement in Hinojosa's life over the previous year. She added that, in her opinion, Social Services hadn't just been absent in Hinojosa's case, it had actively undermined Hinojosa.

"There was a lot of resistance and a lot of desire to continue to terminate Cheyenne's parental rights," she told the court. "That is a very loving little girl. And she loves her mom. So to say that there is no bond is a very, very terrible falsehood."

Hinojosa testified last. She admitted that she should have complied with Social Services requirements sooner, but said that issues with her husband, with money and with transportation impeded her progress. She said she felt confident she could be a better caregiver using the parenting and life skills she'd acquired.

"I love her with all my heart. She is my life," Hinojosa said of her daughter. "I think of her when I wake up and when I go to bed."

On cross-examination, Beadle County State's Attorney Michael Moore pressed her about why she was unemployed, how she expected to afford food and diapers and why she fell short on some of her goals with Walton. His closing argument was mostly about how Hinojosa had run out of time.

"How long are we supposed to wait then?" Moore said. And how long, he asked, was Hinojosa's daughter supposed to wait? "They had done stuff — what they could do for 15 months. And they couldn't get her to do anything."

"I don't think we should terminate rights just because somebody is poor and can't maintain a job," Kludt argued in response. "A young child deserves to be with her mother." As to how long Hinojosa's daughter could wait, he said, "If it's her natural mother, she can wait a little while. I don't think we should be on some sort of rigid timetable here."

Minutes later, Judge Erickson terminated Hinojosa's rights.

Cheyenne met her second husband, Jose Hinojosa, on a smoke break at the sprawling turkey processing plant where they both worked at the time. She was candid with him about the complications in her life; one of their first conversations, they both said, was about her child welfare case.

"When I'm nervous, I babble. And everything just comes out," she said.

The day before the couple's wedding, the state Supreme Court reversed the outcome of the termination hearing. In their decision, the justices called out the "glaring defects involving ICWA," principally the failure to continue efforts to reunify Hinojosa and her daughter. They questioned how Erickson could rule beyond a reasonable doubt that Hinojosa's daughter was in imminent physical or emotional danger when no evidence had been introduced into the record for the previous nine months. They gave Hinojosa credit for her "ongoing work with counselors on her own accord."

However, the supreme court's order did not simply restore custody to Cheyenne. Instead, it ordered that the state "reassess" her, this time following the mandates of ICWA. Social Services essentially started the process all over again, allowing the Hinojosas short, supervised visits with Cheyenne's daughter. Although the newlyweds were eager to start their own family, her lawyer advised her to wait until the case was

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closed before having another child.

But it was too late. A month after her wedding, Hinojosa discovered she was pregnant.

"What if they come for this one?" she worried.

On supervised visits with Cheyenne's daughter, she and Jose told the caseworker they were expecting another little girl and asked if there was any cause for concern.

"Every time we could ask, we asked them, 'Is she gonna be taken?'" said Jose. "The response was the same: 'There's no reason for us to take her.'"

The baby was born in April 2022. Hinojosa and her husband posted photos of the dark-haired newborn on Facebook and sent Snaps and texts to family and friends. The next morning, as Cheyenne was having breakfast with Jose in her hospital room, she looked down at her phone and saw a missed call from her caseworker. When they connected for a brief phone call, her worst fears were realized: Social Services was going to take her younger daughter as well.

"I literally felt the soul leave my body," she said.

For the next two days before her discharge, Cheyenne and Jose slept as little as possible, passing the baby back and forth, trying to savor their dwindling moments together. When Cheyenne set her down in her bassinet for the last time and turned to leave, the baby let out a little cry. Her parents fell apart.

They left the hospital empty-handed and tearful. For the next several days, they stayed with Cheyenne's mother; the empty crib in their own house was too much to bear.

In one of the earliest court filings in this new case, a Social Services caseworker alleged that the Hinojosas were neglectful. A sworn affidavit from Social Services said "Cheyenne has made little progress" in her older daughter's case. The court filing made no mention of the fact that Hinojosa's rights had been restored or the mistakes that the lower court and Social Services had made. It criticized the Hinojosas' behavior at visitations with Cheyenne's older daughter, saying they complained too much that she was "exhausting."

"Jose and Cheyenne do not have the resources to meet" their daughters' needs, the affidavit read. "Jose and Cheyenne are routinely using their resources for other things such as eating fast food and shopping."

About a week after the newborn was taken, Cheyenne and her mother huddled around a phone at Kludt's office. Across the street in a storefront legal office, Jose sat with his lawyer. The prosecutor, the caseworker and a new judge all dialed in.

After the caseworker explained their reasoning for taking custody, the judge ticked off the facts of the case. It appeared the younger daughter's removal was based entirely on her older sister's case. The mother had been divorced and remarried. Jose had never had a Social Services case.

After a brief recess, the judge returned custody to Cheyenne and Jose. Hours later, they met their younger daughter's temporary foster mother at the Social Services office.

"I grabbed that car seat, and I left that office," said Jose. "I didn't look back."

The Department of Social Services did not answer ProPublica's questions about the legal justification it had for removing the younger child at the hospital. Moore, the prosecutor, said he told Social Services that he thought Cheyenne Hinojosa had shown enough progress to delay termination regarding her older daughter back in 2020.

"Next time, I think that they will listen to me, because of the Supreme Court case," he said. "It's one of those cases of 'I told you so.'"

Though the prosecutor stood behind the first case he made against Hinojosa, he conceded that the outcome was the result of trying to enforce two conflicting federal laws — plus the typical human disarray that affects many child welfare cases. It was not, he insisted, an attempt to sidestep ICWA.

"To paint a picture that we're ignoring this or not following it, I don't think is fair," Moore said. "I think that there's a lot of things that could be done outside of the court system to make this process better."

For example, he said, in his 30-year career, he has never had a tribe take jurisdiction of a child welfare case and move it to tribal court, which ICWA permits them to do.

"I don't think it's necessarily the tribes' fault. I just don't think they have the resources," he said.

Clyde Estes, the chairman of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, declined to speak specifically about Hinojosa's

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case. But he said his ICWA division is just one person tasked with processing child welfare case requests for the tribe's roughly 4,500 members, the vast majority of whom live off the reservation. The tribe does not have an ICWA attorney, and as one of the smallest tribes in South Dakota, it has little money and relies mostly on financial support from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs to fund its ICWA work.

"It really puts us in a tough bind," he said.

Estes said that things will only get worse if the U.S. Supreme Court strikes ICWA down. While states like North Dakota and Colorado have recently enshrined ICWA tenets into state law, similar bills in South Dakota died during the last session. The state legislature also would not approve the creation of a task force to study the disproportionate impact of the child welfare system on Native American children, a lack of action Estes called "heartbreaking."

In response, several of the state's tribes announced their intention to start their own study.

"This is a very serious issue for the future of our children," said Estes. "They should have the option to be in a Native home on their own lands. Because that's who they are. And that's their identity."

Although ICWA protections ultimately preserved Hinojosa's family, the law couldn't put everything back together. Last Thanksgiving, Hinojosa's family was as close to being whole as it had been in four years. The case with Social Services over her older daughter was still going on, but she and her husband were allowed unsupervised overnight visits. Cheyenne's older daughter had joined them for the holiday. The Hinojosas' younger daughter had been back in their care for about seven months and had grown into a chubby, sweet-tempered girl.

Hinojosa's mother set up tables in the living room. They invited a couple of friends. The spread included ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, chicken and stuffing.

After dinner, Hinojosa realized her older daughter had stopped playing with the other kids and was alone in her room. Hinojosa found the 5-year-old in tears. She said she missed her foster mother and siblings.

"I want to go home. I want to go home," Hinojosa remembers her saying.

After she calmed her down and put her to bed, Hinojosa went into the basement, where the sound of her own crying wouldn't be heard. A feeling that had been building for weeks crashed to the surface. She wondered if the long, disruptive process of regaining custody had somehow harmed her daughter.

In the years since she'd been living with an aunt in another town, Hinojosa's daughter had been diagnosed with emotional disorders and was experiencing developmental delays. Her foster mother had found a school that was helping her achieve her milestones. Many of her doctors were there, too. Social Services had made it clear in their reports that they did not believe Hinojosa understood her daughter's conditions or had the resources to take care of her. Hinojosa felt a sense of inevitability, certain they were heading towards another termination hearing.

And though their relationship had at times been strained over her efforts to regain custody, Hinojosa always thought her older daughter's foster mother was a wonderful caregiver. The woman had long made it clear she would adopt the girl. The day after Thanksgiving, Hinojosa said she called the foster mother to tell her, "You've done an amazing job with her." (Hinojosa's older daughter's foster mother did not respond to several requests for comment.)

In early December, Hinojosa went back in front of Judge Erickson and voluntarily terminated her parental rights for her older daughter. She knew some people would say that she'd just given up.

"I have to do what's best" for her, she told herself, "even if it's not with me."

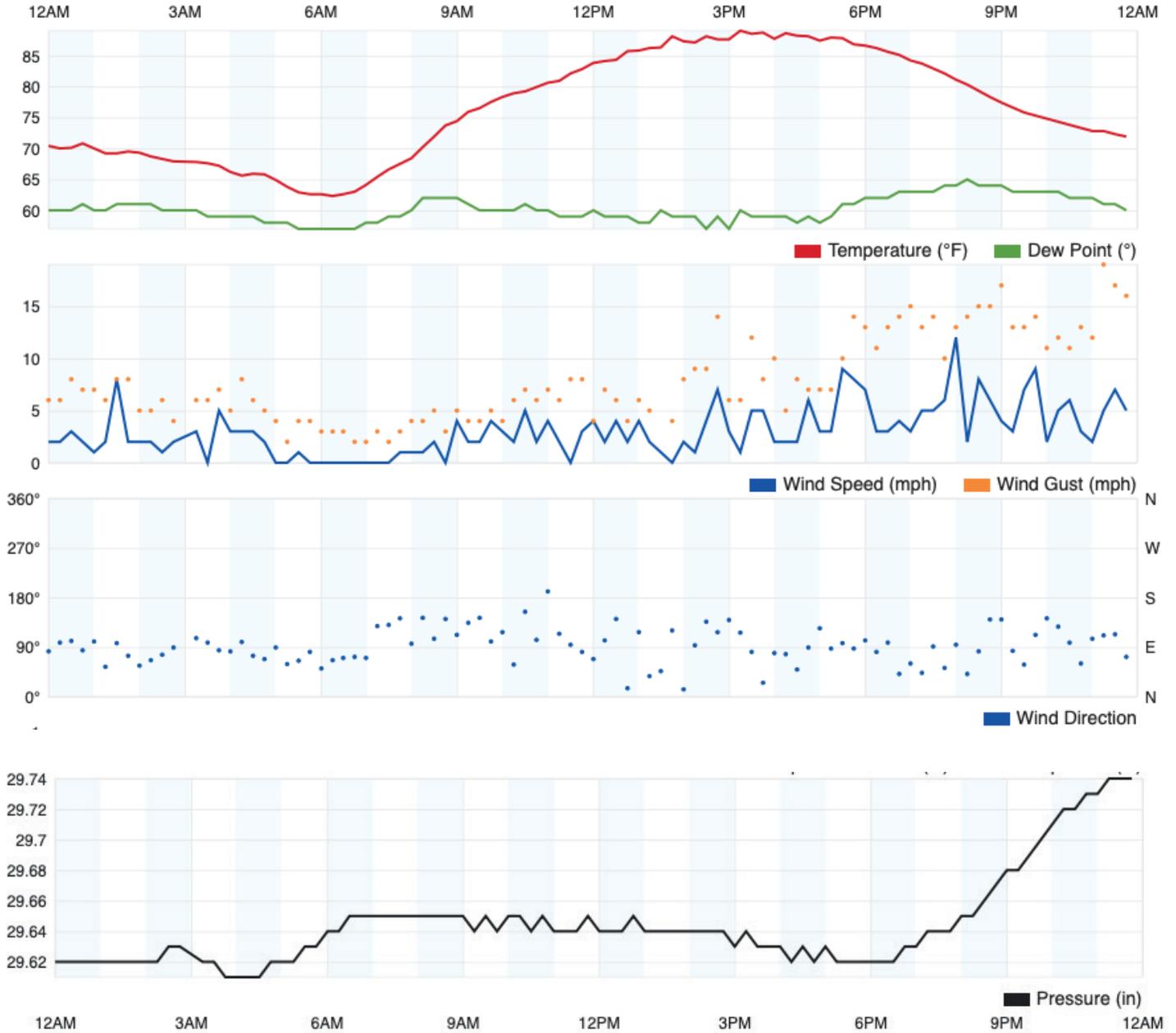
Because of her relationship with the foster mother, Hinojosa gets to see her oldest daughter regularly, though she has no legal right or guarantee that those visits will continue. She is relieved the case is over, but also haunted by her final decision. She replays the events of the last four years in her mind, she said, hoping that someday she can explain all of it to her daughter.

Jessica Lussenhop is a reporter for ProPublica's Midwest team, covering Minnesota. Before coming to ProPublica, Lussenhop was a senior staff writer for BBC North America and a fellow at the radio program "This American Life." She worked at a string of alternative newsweeklies, including City Pages in Minneapolis and the Riverfront Times in St. Louis. Her previous coverage has won an Asian American Journalists Association Excellence Award and a National Native Media Award. She lives in Minneapolis.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89 °F at 3:19 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:12 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 11:10 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 43 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1933

Record Low: 34 in 1903

Average High: 81

Average Low: 56

Average Precip in June.: 1.90

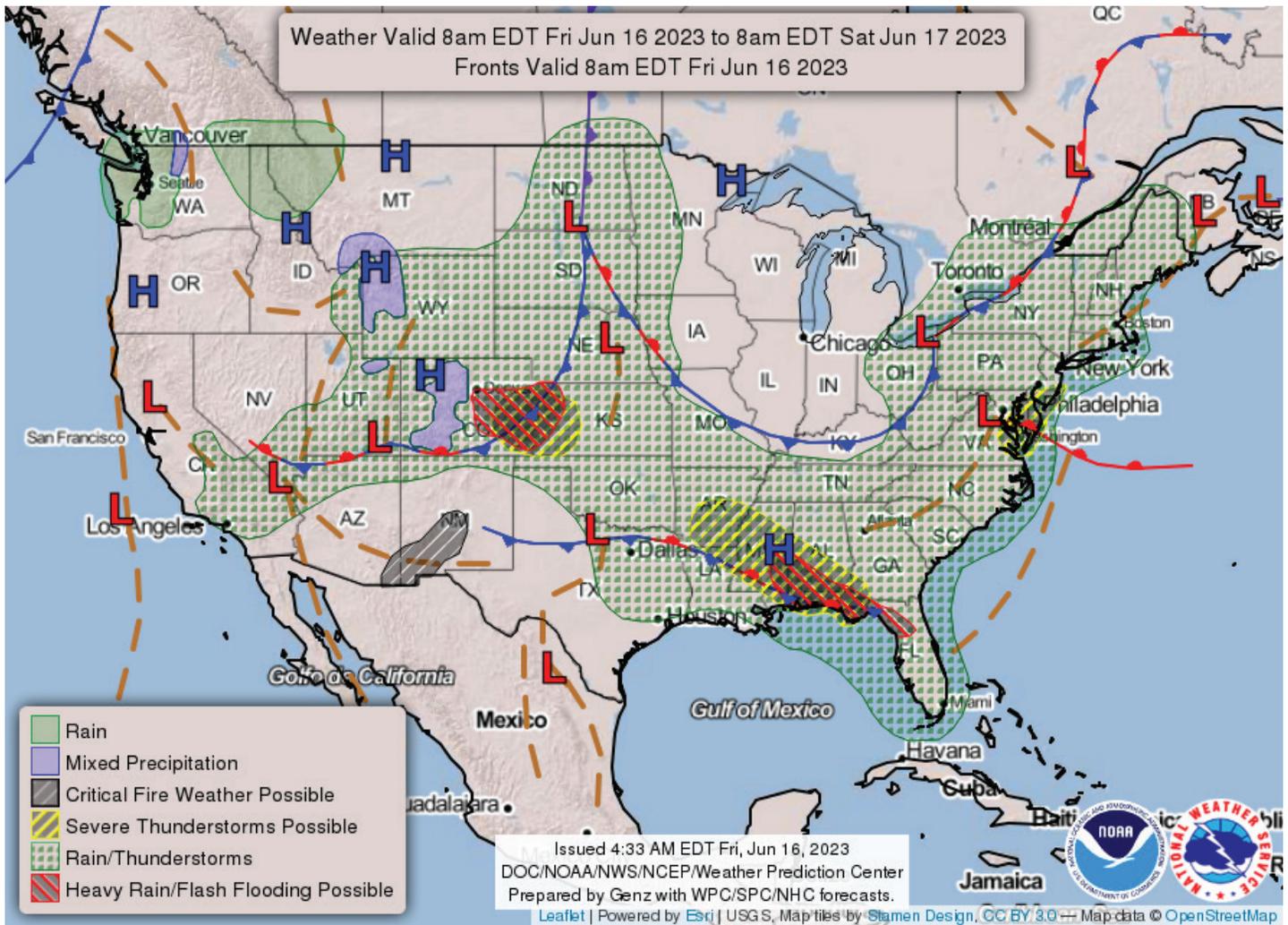
Precip to date in June.: 0.51

Average Precip to date: 9.15

Precip Year to Date: 8.42

Sunset Tonight: 9:24:49 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:29 AM



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Today in Weather History

June 16, 1915: A tornado swept over a narrow path in Hughes, Hyde, and Hand counties during the afternoon hours. This tornado caused several thousands of dollars in property damage and seriously injured many people. Luckily there were no fatalities reported.

June 16, 1992: An F3 tornado caused significant destruction as it moved northeast across the northwestern side of Ft. Thompson. The tornado virtually destroyed the Lake Sharpe Visitor Center. In Ft. Thompson, the tornado destroyed at least four homes, and 15 mobile homes were damaged, leaving about 55 persons homeless. Eight people were injured, two of them seriously. The storm also destroyed other buildings, six 50,000 bushel grain bins, and four high voltage towers from Big Bend Dam. At the Shady Bend Campground, 19 campers and several boats were destroyed.

Also, heavy rains fell over three days beginning on the 15th. The hardest-hit area was in Clear Lake, where the three-day total was 11.53 inches. As a result, a wall of water up to 15 feet high swept down creeks in the Clear Lake area. The resultant flash flooding went through the first floors of many houses and even filled basements of homes on hills. In addition, all roads into Clear Lake were cut off as the town became surrounded by water. Officials in Deuel County estimated at least 37 bridges and culverts were destroyed. Other three-day rainfall totals include; 6.35 inches in Conde; 5.99 in Castlewood; 4.91 inches 2NW of Big Stone City; 4.90 in Redfield; and 4.65 inches at Artichoke Lake.

June 16, 2009: An upper low-pressure area brought several supercell thunderstorms, which produced severe weather across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. Large hail up to 2 inches in diameter, several tornadoes, and flash flooding occurred with these storms. Slow-moving thunderstorms brought heavy rains of 2 to 4 inches in and around Aberdeen, causing extensive road flooding. Dozens of basements were flooded and damaged, along with some sewer backups. Many vehicles became stalled with the police sent out to direct traffic. There were also some power outages. A tornado touched down briefly northwest of Lebanon in Potter County with no damage occurring. A tornado touched down southeast of Polo in Hand County in an open field. No damage occurred. Heavy rains of 3 to over 5 inches caused flash flooding of several roads and crops in north-central and northeast Spink County. Torrential rains from 3 to 6 inches fell across southeast Brown County, bringing flash flooding. Many roads were flooded and damaged, along with many acres of cropland. A tornado touched down in southeastern Hand County and remained on the ground for nearly 15 minutes before lifting. No damage occurred with this tornado as it stayed in the open country.

June 16, 2010: Very strong winds were observed during the evening hours in Dewey County, South Dakota. Three weather stations near Lantry observed winds from 101 to 142 mph. One station had recorded a 101 mph wind before it was destroyed. The other two stations recorded 131 mph and 142 mph winds. The winds destroyed an airplane hangar and severely damaged another one. Several semi-trailers were also tipped over and damaged by the very high winds.

June 16, 1806: The great American total solar eclipse occurred from California to Massachusetts, nearly five minutes in duration.

June 16, 1895: Heavy rain fell in portions of central Arkansas, damaging several roads and bridges. At Madding, east of Pine Bluff, 6.12 inches of rain fell in six hours.

June 16, 1896: A tsunami ravages the coast of Japan, killing between 22,000 and 27,000 people.

June 16, 1957: A violent F4 tornado struck the communities of Robecco Pavese and Valle Scurpasso in Pavia, Italy, flattening many large stone buildings. The tornado killed seven people and injured 80. Images of the damage indicate that tornado may have reached T10 (low-end F5) intensity.

June 16-23, 1972: Agnes was first named by the National Hurricane Center on June 16, 1972: It would go on to make landfall between Panama City and Apalachicola, Florida, on the afternoon of June 19. Hurricane Agnes would later cause catastrophic flooding in the mid-Atlantic states, especially Pennsylvania. Agnes caused over 100 fatalities.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHERE DOES YOUR LIGHT COME FROM?

Little Sara came home from school and proudly said to her mother, "I learned a new song today!"

"Sing it to me," came the request.

"God bless America, land that I love: Stand beside her, and guide her, through the night with the light from a bulb," sang Sara.

There is a great difference between "light from a bulb" and "light from above." As we look at our nation today, we find that most "light" has come from education, information, training, and knowledge that enables individuals to earn a living. However, the "light" that comes from wisdom - the ability to judge what is true or right or something with lasting value or worth - appears to be in short supply. God's wisdom seems to be disappearing!!

James reminds us that if we want to have the ability to make wise decisions in troubling situations we can always pray and ask God for guidance and wisdom.

We do not have to stumble in the darkness hoping to find good answers while looking for a "bulb" to light our path. We can ask God for His directions and He will gladly tell us what to do.

God's wisdom always leads us to the right decision and guarantees us good results. But, we must have God-centered goals that come from knowing, accepting, trusting, and living His Word if we expect His wisdom. It must be within us before it can come out of us or guide us.

Prayer: Lord, fill our minds with Your wisdom as we look to You for guidance to live lives worthy of You. Help us to seek Your wisdom from Your Word to light our way. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.13.23

8 10 19 44 47 4

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$281,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 8 Mins 34
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.14.23

2 15 26 29 30 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$4,090,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 23
DRAW: Mins 34 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.15.23

6 7 26 44 47 6

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 38 Mins 34
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.14.23

3 7 19 24 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$101,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 38
DRAW: Mins 34 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.14.23

6 10 14 16 50 1

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 7
DRAW: Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.14.23

3 20 36 42 64 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$366,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 7
DRAW: Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Republican governors intensify resistance to plan to sell land leases for conservation

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican governors are pushing back against a proposal by the Biden administration to put conservation on equal footing with industry on vast government-owned lands.

On Thursday, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem testified before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources in favor of a bill that would require the Bureau of Land Management to withdraw the proposal, saying it would cause “deep devastation.”

The White House’s plan would allow conservationists and others to lease federally owned land to restore it, much the same way oil companies buy leases to drill and ranchers pay to graze cattle. Leases also could be bought on behalf of companies such as oil drillers who want to offset damage to public land by restoring acreage elsewhere.

The top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona, said the proposal was “long overdue,” noting that conservation historically “has taken a back seat to all other uses.”

Noem, however, was joined in Washington by Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon in decrying the measure. One day earlier they joined the Republican governors of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah in penning a letter urging the bureau to withdraw the drafted rule.

Agriculture industry representatives are blasting it as a backdoor way to exclude mining, energy development and agriculture. Biden administration officials, however, have sought to offer reassurances.

Tracy Stone-Manning, director of the Bureau of Land Management, previously told The Associated that the proposed changes would make conservation an “equal” to grazing, drilling and other uses while not interfering with them.

Cyclone Biparjoy kills 2, uproots power lines after landfall in India, churns toward Pakistan

By AJIT SOLANKI, SIBI ARASU and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

MANDVI, India (AP) — Cyclone Biparjoy knocked out power and threw shipping containers into the sea in western India on Friday before aiming its lashing winds and rain at part of Pakistan that suffered devastating floods last year.

A man and his son died trying to save their livestock in Gujarat state, where the storm came ashore late Thursday after more than 180,000 people took shelter in the two countries.

The storm made landfall a night earlier, packing windspeeds of 85 kph (53 mph) and gusting up to 105 kph (65 mph) through the coastal regions of western Gujarat. Pakistani authorities were on high alert after evacuating 82,000 people.

The full extent of the damage in western India wasn’t immediately known. In addition to the two deaths, three people were injured in nearby Devbhumi Dwarka district, officials said. About 100,000 people who were evacuated in western India have been temporarily relocated to relief camps, authorities said.

The storm did other damage upon landfall, including uprooting trees and electricity poles. Officials in the coastal town of Mandvi said heavy winds threw some shipping containers into the sea at Mundra port, one of India’s largest ports.

The cyclone was expected to weaken later Friday and move toward the neighboring Indian state of Rajasthan on its way to southern Pakistan, which is still recovering from deadly flooding last year.

People in that region lined up to receive food donated by charities, aid agencies and local authorities. Pakistan’s national disaster management agency said the cyclone was 125 kilometers (75 miles) south-southwest of Keti Bandar, a port in flood-hit Sindh province.

“The storm is expected to weaken first to a cyclonic storm and then to a depression by this evening,”

it said.

The Indian Meteorological Department said Cyclone Biporjoy set a record for the longest lifespan over the Arabian Sea, more than 10 days. Cyclone Kyarr in 2019 had a life of nine days, it said.

The Gujarat government said it deployed 184 rapid action squads to rescue wild animals and clear fallen trees in Gir National Park, home to nearly 700 Asiatic lions.

Wind-driven rain pelted southern coastal towns in Pakistan for a second day Friday. The cyclone was expected to cause flash floods in southern Pakistan.

Pakistan's Sindh province experienced one of the country's deadliest floods last summer, partly induced by climate change. At least 1,739 people were killed and 33 million were displaced.

The World Health Organization said Thursday that it was supporting Pakistan's efforts to deal with the impact of the cyclone. Pakistan's government and local aid groups delivered free food and drinking water to displaced people. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has said his government was protecting those in the storm's path.

On Thursday, UNICEF warned that more than 625,000 children were at immediate risk in Pakistan and India.

"In Pakistan, Cyclone Biparjoy threatens a new crisis for children and families in Sindh, the province worst affected by last year's devastating floods," said Noala Skinner, UNICEF's regional director for South Asia.

A 2021 study found that the frequency, duration and intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea increased significantly between 1982 and 2019, and experts say the increase will continue, making preparations for natural disasters more urgent.

Munir Ahmed reported from Islamabad. Arasu reported from Bengaluru, India.

Follow AP's climate change coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

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.

Tornado devastates Texas Panhandle town, killing 3 and injuring dozens

By DAVID ERICKSON and ROBERT JABLON Associated Press

PERRYTON, Texas (AP) — A tornado tore through the Texas Panhandle town of Perryton, killing three people, injuring dozens more and causing widespread damage as another series of fierce storms carved its way through Southern states.

The National Weather Service in Amarillo confirmed that a tornado hit the area shortly after 5 p.m. Thursday. Local officials said Thursday night that two people were missing.

Perryton Fire Chief Paul Dutcher said three people were killed, including at



Buildings and vehicles show damage after a tornado struck Perryton, Texas, Thursday, June 15, 2023. (AP Photo/

David Erickson)

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least one person who died in a mobile home park that took a "direct hit" from a tornado. Dutcher said at least 30 trailers were damaged or destroyed.

First responders from surrounding towns and cities and from neighboring Oklahoma descended on the town, which is home to more than 8,000 people and about 115 miles (185 kilometers) northeast of Amarillo, just south of the Oklahoma line.

Mobile homes were ripped apart and pickup trucks with shattered windshield were slammed against mounds of rubble in residential areas.

Perryton's downtown also was walloped. About two blocks of businesses were heavily damaged, including an office supply store, a floral shop and a hair salon along the town's Main Street. A minivan was shoved into the outer wall of a theater.

With a few hours of daylight left after the storm passed through, broken windows were being boarded up.

The Ochiltree County Sheriff's Department said it would enforce a curfew from midnight to 6 a.m. Friday because of downed power lines and other dangers that might not be visible in the dark.

Storm chaser Brian Emfinger told Fox Weather that he watched the twister move through a mobile home park, mangling trailers and uprooting trees.

"I had seen the tornado do some pretty serious destruction to the industrial part of town," he said. "Unfortunately, just west of there, there is just mobile home, after mobile home, after mobile home that is completely destroyed."

There was no immediate word on the tornado's size or wind speeds, meteorologist Luigi Meccariello said.

About 475,000 customers were without electricity in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Oklahoma as of Friday morning, according to the poweroutage.us website.

Ochiltree General Hospital in Perryton on Facebook said "Walking/wounded please go to the clinic. All others to the hospital ER."

"We have seen somewhere between 50 and 100 patients," said Kelly Judice, the hospital's interim CEO. Those include about 10 people in critical condition who were transferred to other hospitals.

Patients had minor to major trauma, ranging from "head injuries to collapsed lungs, lacerations, broken bones," she said.

The hospital also said an American Red Cross shelter had been set up at the Ochiltree County Expo Center.

Chris Samples of local radio station KXDJ-FM said the station was running on auxiliary power.

"The whole city is out of power," he said.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said Thursday he had directed the state Division of Emergency Management to help with everything from traffic control to restoring water and other utilities, if needed.

By evening, the weather front was moving southeast across Oklahoma. On Friday, scattered strong to severe thunderstorms were forecast for parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and some other states.

Elsewhere in Texas and other Southern states including Louisiana, heat advisories were in effect Friday and were forecast into the Juneteenth holiday weekend with temperatures reaching toward 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius). It was expected to feel as hot as 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius).

The storm system also brought hail and possible tornados to northwestern Ohio.

A barn was smashed and trees toppled in Sandusky County, Ohio, and power lines were downed in northern Toledo, leaving thousands without power. The weather service reported "a severe thunderstorm capable of producing a tornado" over Bellevue and storms showing "signs of rotation" in other areas.

It was the second day in a row that powerful storms struck the U.S. On Wednesday, strong winds toppled trees, damaged buildings and blew cars off a highway from the eastern part of Texas to Georgia.

Jablon reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press journalists Alina Hartounian in Phoenix, Lisa Baumann in Seattle and Adam Kealoha Causey in Dallas contributed.

Teens with severe obesity are turning to surgery and new weight loss drugs, despite controversy

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

John Simon III was a hungry baby, a “chunky” toddler and a chubby little boy, his mother said. But by age 14, his weight had soared to 430 pounds and was a life-threatening medical condition.

Nine months after weight-loss surgery that removed a portion of his stomach, John has lost about 150 pounds, boosting his health — and his hopes for the future.

“It was like a whole new start,” said John, who will start high school in California this fall.

In Minnesota, Edward Kent was diagnosed with fatty liver disease. The 6-foot, 300-pound high school sophomore started using the obesity drug Wegovy in January — just a month after federal regulators approved it for children 12 and older — and has lost 40 pounds.

“It’s a huge deal and it will affect him for the rest of his life,” said his mother, Dr. Barbara Van Eeckhout, an obstetrician-gynecologist. “This is about his health.”

John and Edward are among a small but growing group of young teens turning to treatments like body-altering surgery and new drugs that rewire metabolism to lose large amounts of weight. Critics urge caution at intervening so early, but the kids and their parents say the aggressive — and often costly — measures are necessary options after years of ineffective diet and exercise programs.

“John has tried with all of his might,” said his mother, Karen Tillman, 46, an accountant. “It’s not because he couldn’t try. It was getting harder and harder.”

Eighty percent of adolescents with excess weight carry it into adulthood, with potentially dire consequences for their health and longevity. Obesity was first classified as a complex, chronic disease a decade ago by the American Medical Association, but meaningful treatments have lagged far behind, said Aaron Kelly, co-director of the Center for Pediatric Obesity Medicine at the University of Minnesota.

“It’s a biologically driven disease. It’s not a behavioral disease,” Kelly said. “We need to get on it early. Don’t wait until later in life because it’s too late.”

In January, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued guidelines that call for considering obesity drugs for kids as young as 12 and surgery for those as young as 13. The recommendations were immediately controversial.

Mental Health America, an advocacy group, called them “dangerous” and “disheartening,” saying they would increase eating disorders and perpetuate harmful stigma regarding weight. Some on social media accused doctors and parents of taking the easy way out, blaming things like junk food or video games — or accusing parents of “child abuse.”

Dr. David Ludwig, an endocrinologist and researcher at Boston Children’s Hospital, warned that the “justified excitement” over new weight-loss medications shouldn’t eclipse non-drug options.



John Simon, a teenager who had a bariatric surgery in 2022, exercises with his trainer Chris Robles at El Workout Fitness in Los Angeles, Monday, March 13, 2023. (AP Photo/

Jae C. Hong)

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"Especially for children, diet and exercise must remain at the forefront of obesity prevention and treatment," he wrote in JAMA.

But medical experts who treat kids with severe obesity say research is clear: Diet and exercise alone aren't enough. More than 240 diseases are associated with excess weight — including liver problems, diabetes and inflammation — and the signs show up early, said Dr. Janey Pratt, a Stanford University surgeon who performed surgery on John Simon.

"It's already affecting major organs by the time they get to me," Pratt said. "You're dealing with a train that's headed over a cliff."

Starting in elementary school, John struggled with joint pain, shortness of breath and sleep apnea so severe that, at age 12, he needed coffee to stay awake. He developed anxiety triggered by daily bullying at school and was hospitalized as a sixth grader for two months with post-traumatic stress disorder.

"They call me names, hit me, push me, all of the above," John said. "It was a lot of hardship I had to go through."

He tried diets and exercise, losing up to 40 pounds. But intense food cravings meant the weight always came back — plus more. By the time John met Dr. Callum Rowe, a pediatrics resident in a public health clinic at Children's Hospital, Los Angeles, John had a body mass index of 75. It was way off of the charts that measure body-mass index, or BMI, which is regarded as a flawed tool but widely used by doctors to screen for obesity.

John, who has a shy smile and a soft voice, asked for help. He said he wanted to go on a "journey to wellness," Rowe recalled.

"I found that very profound for a 13-year-old. He's an old soul to have that level of insight about what can I do to change my situation?" said Rowe, who referred John to the Stanford Medicine Children's Health weight-loss program.

It meant traveling to Palo Alto, 350 miles north, but Karen Tillman said she was ready to do anything.

"His weight was just going up by the minute," she said.

Sign-ups for the Stanford surgery program have doubled since the release of the AAP guidelines, Pratt said. It's among the busiest sites in the U.S., performing more than 50 of the 2,000 pediatric weight-loss surgeries logged each year.

John was fortunate; fewer than 1% of children who qualify for metabolic surgery go through with the procedure. Doctors can be reluctant to refer, and families either don't know it's an option or it costs too much, experts said. Fees run upwards of \$20,000 and can be as much as \$100,000.

John's surgery was covered by Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program, which paid for 47 operations for kids ages 11 to 17 last year, according to state health records. Across the U.S., Medicaid coverage of weight-loss surgery for kids varies significantly by state.

On average, children who receive weight-loss surgery lose about a quarter to a third of their body weight, studies show. But about 25% of kids regain the pounds and need further treatment, Pratt said.

With Wegovy, adolescents lost about 16% of their body mass over nearly 16 months in a clinical trial. Those who take obesity drugs — requests for which have soared at Stanford and nationwide — regain weight once they stop, research shows. Some taking the drugs see potentially serious side effects like gallstones and inflammation of the pancreas.

Edward Kent has responded well to the obesity medication, which has turned off his ravenous appetite "like a light switch," his mother said. At a recent exam, Edward's liver function had returned to normal.

John Simon has lost about 35% of his body weight in less than a year. His liver function and insulin resistance have both improved, Pratt said. His arthritis is receding. He's sleeping better and moving more easily.

John's struggle still extends past conquering cravings and improving his health. Attacks by bullies got so bad at his middle school, teachers were assigned to walk with him between classes.

"He's going to come out with some type of hurt," said John's pastor, Charles Griffin III of DaySpring Christian Church. "The prayer is that when he does come out of this, he will be stronger."

John graduated this month from his middle school, where officials wouldn't comment on steps they took

to address the bullying. He'll go to a charter high school next year that will be smaller and, his mother hopes, more compassionate.

John, now 15, is focused on the future. He has learned to cook healthy meals, like a recent dinner of sauteed shrimp and chard. He works out at a local gym, puts 18,000 steps on his pedometer every day and hopes to study hard to land his dream job as an automotive engineer.

"I just want to live a happy, healthy life," he said. "Without the pain. And just without the weight."

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.

Greece's search for hundreds of migrants feared dead in shipwreck enters final day

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greece's coast guard launched its final day of searching an area of the Mediterranean Sea where a large fishing boat packed with migrants sank and hundreds of passengers were missing and feared dead Friday.

The round-the-clock search and rescue operation off the coast of southern Greece entered its third day with little hope of finding survivors or bodies since none have been located since Wednesday, when 78 bodies were recovered and 104 people were rescued.

The fishing boat carrying the migrants was traveling from Libya to Italy. Greek authorities and European Union border protection agency Frontex tracked the boat before it capsized and sank early Wednesday.

The trawler may have carried as many as 750 passengers, according to the International Organization for Migration, the U.N. migration agency.

Most of the survivors were being moved Friday from a storage hangar at the southern port of Kalamata, where relatives also gathered to look for loved ones, to migrant shelters near Athens.

Nine people — all men from Egypt, ranging in age from 20 to 40 — were arrested and detained on allegations of people smuggling and participating in a criminal enterprise. Twenty-seven of the survivors remain hospitalized, health officials said.

Coast guard spokesman Nikos Alexiou, citing survivor accounts, said that passengers in the hold of the fishing boat included woman and children but that the number of missing, believed to be in the hundreds, remained unclear.

Officials at a state-run morgue outside Athens photographed the faces of the victims and gathering DNA samples to start the identification process.



At the Greek port of Kalamata, around 70 exhausted survivors received help after an overloaded fishing boat with migrants trying to reach Europe capsized and sank Wednesday off the coast, authorities said. (June 15) (AP Video/Srdjan Nedeljkovic)

A Russian ransomware gang breaches the Energy Department and other federal agencies

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

The Department of Energy and several other federal agencies were compromised in a Russian cyber-extortion gang's global hack of a file-transfer program popular with corporations and governments, but the impact was not expected to be great, Homeland Security officials said Thursday.

But for others among what could be hundreds of victims from industry to higher education — including patrons of at least two state motor vehicle agencies — the hack was beginning to show some serious impacts.

Jen Easterly, director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, told reporters that unlike the meticulous, stealthy SolarWinds hacking campaign attributed to state-backed Russian intelligence agents that was months in the making, this campaign was short, relatively superficial and caught quickly.

"Based on discussions we have had with industry partners ... these intrusions are not being leveraged to gain broader access, to gain persistence into targeted systems, or to steal specific high value information— in sum, as we understand it, this attack is largely an opportunistic one," Easterly said.

"Although we are very concerned about this campaign and working on it with urgency, this is not a campaign like SolarWinds that presents a systemic risk to our national security or our nation's networks," she added.

A senior CISA official said neither the U.S. military nor intelligence community was affected. Energy Department spokesperson Chad Smith said two agency entities were compromised but did not provide more detail.

Known victims to date include Louisiana's Office of Motor Vehicles, Oregon's Department of Transportation, the Nova Scotia provincial government, British Airways, the British Broadcasting Company and the U.K. drugstore chain Boots. The exploited program, MOVEit, is widely used by businesses to securely share files. Security experts say that can include sensitive financial and insurance data.

Louisiana officials said Thursday that people with a driver's license or vehicle registration in the state likely had their personal information exposed. That included their name, address, Social Security number and birthdate. They encouraged Louisiana residents to freeze their credit to guard against identity theft.

The Oregon Department of Transportation confirmed Thursday that the attackers accessed personal information, some sensitive, for about 3.5 million people to whom the state issued identity cards or driver's licenses.



FILE - Jen Easterly, director of the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, speaks at the National Association of Secretaries of State winter meeting, Feb. 16, 2023, in Washington. U.S. officials say the Department of Energy and several other federal agencies were compromised in a Russian cyber-extortion gang's global hack of a file-transfer program popular with corporations and governments. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File)

(AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File)

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The ClOp ransomware syndicate behind the hack announced last week on its dark web site that its victims, who it suggested numbered in the hundreds, had until Wednesday to get in touch to negotiate a ransom or risk having sensitive stolen data dumped online.

The gang, among the world's most prolific cybercrime syndicates, also claimed it would delete any data stolen from governments, cities and police departments.

The senior CISA official told reporters a "small number" of federal agencies were hit — declining to name them — and said "this is not a widespread campaign affecting a large number of federal agencies." The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the breach, said no federal agencies had received extortion demands and no data from an affected federal agency had been leaked online by ClOp.

U.S. officials "have no evidence to suggest coordination between ClOp and the Russian government," the official said.

The parent company of MOVEit's U.S. maker, Progress Software, alerted customers to the breach on May 31 and issued a patch. But cybersecurity researchers say scores if not hundreds of companies could by then have had sensitive data quietly exfiltrated.

"At this point, we are seeing industry estimates of several hundred of victims across the country," the senior CISA official said. Federal officials encouraged victims to come forward, but they often don't. The U.S. lacks a federal data breach law, and disclosure of hacks varies by state. Publicly traded corporations, health care providers and some critical infrastructure purveyors do have regulatory obligations.

The cybersecurity firm SecurityScorecard says it detected 2,500 vulnerable MOVEit servers across 790 organizations, including 200 government agencies. It said it was not able to break down those agencies by country.

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency in the Treasury Department uses MOVEit, according to federal contracting data. Spokeswoman Stephanie Collins said the agency was aware of the hack and has been monitoring the situation closely. She said it was "conducting detailed forensic analysis of system activity and has not found any indications of a breach of sensitive information." She would not say how the agency uses the file-transfer program.

The hackers were actively scanning for targets, penetrating them and stealing data at least as far back as March 29, said SecurityScorecard threat analyst Jared Smith.

This is far from the first time ClOp has breached a file-transfer program to gain access to data it could then use to extort companies. Other instances include GoAnywhere servers in early 2023 and Accellion File Transfer Application devices in 2020 and 2021.

The Associated Press emailed ClOp on Thursday asking what government agencies it had hacked. It did not receive a response, but the gang posted a new message on its dark web leak site saying: "We got a lot of emails about government data, we don't have it we have completely deleted this information we are only interested in business."

Cybersecurity experts say the ClOp criminals are not to be trusted to keep their word. Allan Liska of the firm Recorded Future has said he is aware of at least three cases in which data stolen by ransomware crooks appeared on the dark web six to 10 months after victims paid ransoms.

AP reporters Sara Cline in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Eugene Johnson in Seattle and Nomaan Merchant and Rebecca Santana in Washington contributed to this report.

A nun commends Dodgers' handling of Pride Night controversy; some archbishops call it blasphemy

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

Devout baseball fans might view their teams' performance as heavenly or hellish, depending on the quality of play. Currently, it's the Los Angeles Dodgers' handling of their annual Pride Night — not the team's record — that has provoked emotional reactions from religious people, including prominent faith leaders, Catholic nuns, and even the team's All-Star ace.

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Indeed, three high-ranking U.S. Catholic leaders this week suggested the team had committed blasphemy. The Dodgers have been holding Pride Nights for 10 years, but this year's edition — taking place Friday night — became entangled last month in a high-profile controversy.

Under a barrage of criticism from some conservative Catholics, the team rescinded an invitation to a satirical LGBTQ+ group called the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence to be honored at Pride Night. The Sisters' performers — mostly men who dress flamboyantly as nuns — are active in protests and charitable programs.

A week later, after a vehement backlash from LGBTQ+ groups and their allies, the Dodgers reversed course — re-inviting the Sisters' Los Angeles chapter to be honored for its charity work and apologizing to the LGBTQ+ community.

The Dodgers' reversal was welcomed by LGBTQ+ allies, including some Catholic nuns. But it infuriated many conservative Catholics, even at the highest levels of the U.S. hierarchy.

On Monday, the team was lambasted in a statement from Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, and the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Military Services.

They asked Catholics to pray on Friday "as an act of reparation for the blasphemies against our Lord we see in our culture today."

"A professional baseball team has shockingly chosen to honor a group whose lewdness and vulgarity in mocking our Lord, His Mother, and consecrated women cannot be overstated," the archbishops said. "This is not just offensive and painful to Christians everywhere; it is blasphemy."

Although official Catholic teaching opposes same-sex marriage and same-sex sexual activity, there are many Catholics who want the church to be more inclusive toward LGBTQ+ people. Among them are nuns in the U.S. who have ministered empathetically to LGBTQ+ Catholics, and took note when the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence made news last month.

One of them, Sister Jeannine Gramick, has ministered to LGBTQ+ Catholics for more than 50 years and is a co-founder of New Ways Ministry, which advocates on their behalf.

She publicly shared a letter she wrote to the Dodgers, welcoming their re-invitation to the drag group and saying its members deserved recognition for their charity work.

"While I am uncomfortable with the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence using the nuns' old garb to draw attention to bigotry, whether Catholic or not, there is a hierarchy of values in this situation," Gramick wrote.

"I believe that any group that serves the community, especially those who are less fortunate or on the margins of society, should be honored."

However, Sister Luisa Derouen, renowned for her outreach to transgender Catholics, said she was "deeply offended" by the Dodgers' decision to honor the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

"I realize they do a lot of good for many people with their philanthropic work, and I thank them for that," she told the AP via email. "But where my passion about this most comes from is with regard to my religious life."

"I have spent about 30 years passionately trying to help people understand and respect the lives of gay, lesbian and trans people," she added. "Women religious are their best allies in the Catholic Church — we don't deserve for our lives to be caricatured in this kind of demeaning way."

"Why can't they do all their wonderful work without disrespecting our lives, when we have done so much to help others respect their lives?"

Robert Barron, a Catholic bishop in southern Minnesota and formerly an auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles, told his 240,000 followers on Twitter that the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence "can only be described as an anti-Catholic hate group."

"I'm a big baseball fan. I've even thrown out the first pitch at a Dodgers game," Barron tweeted. "But I'd encourage my friends in LA to boycott the Dodgers. Let's not just pray, but make our voices heard in defense of our Catholic faith."

Criticism wasn't confined to Catholic ranks. The Rev. Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist

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Theological Seminary, told listeners of his syndicated radio show that the Dodgers “completely capitulated.”

“The company is falling all over itself with what one author called years ago, ‘The Art of the Public Grovel,’” Mohler said.

MLB pitchers Clayton Kershaw of the Dodgers and Trevor Williams of the Washington Nationals criticized the Dodgers for re-inviting the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, saying they resented the group’s mockery of Catholicism. Williams, on Twitter, encouraged his fellow Catholics “to reconsider their support of an organization that allows this type of mockery of its fans to occur.”

But each pitcher said he had no objection to the broader tradition of Pride Nights.

“This has nothing to do with the LGBTQ community or Pride or anything like that,” said Kershaw. “This is simply a group that was making fun of a religion. That I don’t agree with.”

Some conservative religious leaders said they oppose the entire concept of Pride Nights.

“MLB teams have no business sponsoring highly divisive events like Pride Nights and instead need to concentrate on playing baseball,” said prominent megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress via email.

His church, First Baptist Dallas, is about 20 miles from the home field of the Texas Rangers, the only MLB team which isn’t hosting a Pride Night this season.

“All ‘Pride’ events are attempts to celebrate what God has condemned,” Jeffress wrote. “Christians are right to boycott companies and organizations like MLB teams that try to cram their godless and offensive agendas down the throats of Americans.”

Similar condemnation of Pride Nights came from Brent Leatherwood, head of the public policy wing of the Southern Baptist Convention — the country’s largest evangelical denomination.

“These displays continue to confirm just how far removed from biological and sexual reality our culture is right now,” said Leatherwood, reiterating the SBC’s rejection of same-marriages and sexual relationships.

In contrast, the Rev. Alex Santora — who oversees an LGBTQ-welcoming parish in Hoboken, New Jersey — says Pride Nights are useful in combating prejudice.

“Pride Nights hosted by sports teams and Pride displays mounted by businesses acknowledge that accepting the diversity of sexual and gender orientations is normal in society,” he said. “It sends a valuable message to children and teenagers that acceptance is important and contributes to good mental health.”

The Dodgers’ Pride Night saga followed LGBTQ+-related difficulties for some other big-name businesses. Bud Light partnered with a transgender influencer, then tried to walk back its support amid a backlash. Similarly, Target’s support for the LGBTQ+ community has provoked some hostile, homophobic criticisms, as well as calls from LGBTQ+ activists not to cave to the pressure.

A spokesperson for the country’s largest LGBTQ+-rights organization, Laurel Powell of the Human Rights Campaign, said the proliferation of Pride Nights — and similar gestures in other economic sectors — is encouraging.

“They’re an important signal to the LGBTQ community that we are valued by these organizations, that our patronage, our faces in the stands, are welcome,” she said. “It’s also a signal to other folks about where their values are.”

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Mass of rock slides down mountainside above evacuated Swiss village, narrowly misses settlement

BERLIN (AP) — A large mass of rock slid down a mountainside above a Swiss village that was evacuated last month, stopping just short of the settlement, authorities said Friday.

Brienz, in the southeastern Graubunden region of Switzerland, was evacuated on May 12 after geology experts warned that the Alpine rock looming over the village could break loose. In recent days, local officials said rock movements on the slope were accelerating.

Much of the rock mass tumbled toward Brienz between 11 p.m. and midnight on Thursday night, the local



General view of the village of Brienz-Brinzauls below the rockfall “Brienzer Rutsch”, in Switzerland, Friday, June 16, 2023. On Friday night, a large part of the rock masses fell towards the village. The rock masses just missed the village and left behind a meter-high deposit on the main road near the school building. No one was injured since the village was evacuated on May 12. (Michael Buholzer/Keystone via AP)

council said. It added that there was no evidence of damage to the village and the rockslide stopped just short of it, leaving a “meters-high deposit” in front of the school building.

It wasn’t immediately clear how much of the 1.9 million cubic meters (67 million cubic feet) of rock that had been at risk of breaking away actually came loose, but the local council said it appeared to be a large part of the material.

Authorities stepped the alert level up another notch after the rockslide as a precaution, closing some local roads and a railway line and evacuating two houses in the neighboring village of Surava.

The rockslide came a bit over a week after residents of Brienz were allowed to make their first visits back to the village since the evacuation to retrieve essential items from their houses. Only two people per household were allowed in for 90-minute visits.

Officials said at the time of the evacuation that residents would be able to return from time to time, depending on the risk level, but not stay overnight.

African leaders set to meet with presidents of Ukraine, Russia in bid to end war

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — South African President Cyril Ramaphosa arrived in Ukraine on Friday as part of a delegation of African leaders and senior officials seeking ways to end Russia’s war, though an air raid in Kyiv during their visit was a grim reminder of the challenge they face.

Ramaphosa’s press service said that he was met by a Ukrainian special envoy and South Africa’s ambassador at a rail station near Bucha, the Kyiv suburb where bodies of civilians lay scattered in the streets following Russian forces’ withdrawal last spring.

The Bucha visit was symbolically significant, as its name has come to stand for the barbarity of Moscow’s military since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The brutal Russian occupation of Bucha left hundreds of civilians dead in the streets and in mass graves.

The African delegation also includes senior officials from Zambia, Senegal, Uganda, Egypt, the Republic of the Congo and the Comoro Islands.

Shortly after they placed commemorative candles at a small memorial outside St. Andrew’s Church in Bucha, a town on the northwestern outskirts of Kyiv, air raid sirens began to wail in the capital and Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported an explosion in the Podilskiy district, one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods.

“Missiles still flying at Kyiv,” Klitschko wrote on his Telegram channel.

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The documentary focused on the life of Tilikum, a 12,000-pound orca that killed trainer Dawn Brancheau when he dragged her into a pool at SeaWorld Orlando in 2010. The film implied that orcas become more aggressive in captivity.

The film caused visitor numbers to plummet across SeaWorld's three parks in the United States. SeaWorld Entertainment Inc. later agreed to pay \$65 million to settle a lawsuit in which it was accused of misleading investors over the impact the documentary was having on its bottom line.

In the face of mounting criticism, SeaWorld halted its orca breeding program and live performances featuring the whales in 2016. That same year, it announced plans to build a park without orcas in Abu Dhabi in the UAE.

The company's promotional materials say it is committed to rescuing and rehabilitating animals, and that a full-time staff of veterinarians ensures they are well cared for. Last year, its Orlando theme park opened a facility to care for Florida manatees that were dying from starvation in their natural habitat. The company says it has raised \$17 million to support hundreds of research and conservation projects around the globe.

"By leveraging a fundamental SeaWorld design principle of putting animal well-being and care at the core of the design, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi is set to redefine the standards of excellence for marine life theme parks across the world," the company's chairman, Scott Ross, said in a statement.

The park is certified by the international brand of American Humane, which is behind the end-credit certifications that no animals were harmed in the making of films. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums, widely seen as the gold standard for humane certifications, has certified SeaWorld's U.S. facilities, but the Abu Dhabi park has not submitted an application for accreditation, according to Jennifer DiNenna, director of accreditation at the AZA.

Steps taken since the "Blackfish" controversy have yet to silence some of SeaWorld's critics.

"SeaWorld is part of an industry built on the suffering of intelligent, social beings who are denied everything that's natural and important to them," said Jason Baker, senior vice president of international campaigns at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA.

"In nature, dolphins live in large, complex social groups and swim vast distances every day. In captivity, they can only swim in endless circles inside tanks that, to them, are the equivalent of bathtubs."

During a scheduled inspection of SeaWorld Orlando last December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture cited the company for animal welfare violations after discovering a dolphin "actively bleeding" from "many deep rake marks," and excessive chlorine levels in the dolphin tanks.

There have been no reports of abuse at the newly opened Abu Dhabi park which did not answer questions about its treatment of dolphins.

"In the wild, if there is aggression between two animals, they can simply swim away into the open ocean," said John Jett, a former orca trainer at SeaWorld Orlando who spoke out against it in "Blackfish." "But in captivity, the animals are trapped, and what you find is dolphin-on-dolphin aggression that is manifested quite often in broken teeth and rakes up and down their bodies."



A sapper inspects a damaged Russian self-propelled artillery vehicle installed as a symbol of war in central Kyiv, Ukraine, Thursday, June 15, 2023. (AP Photo/Efrem Lukatsky)

At the same time, he says, such animals would be poor candidates for being released into the wild, as most are born in captivity and rely on humans to survive. Plans to release Lolita, a killer whale held captive at the Miami Seaquarium for more than a half-century, have raised fears among some of her former caregivers that she might not survive the ordeal.

For the United Arab Emirates, home to the futuristic city of Dubai, the world's tallest skyscraper, and the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the arrival of SeaWorld adds yet another major tourist attraction.

The partnership with Miral brings SeaWorld into a larger plan to transform Abu Dhabi's Yas Island into a theme park hub to rival Orlando. The island already boasts a Formula 1 circuit, a water park and a Warner Bros. theme park, and celebrities like Kevin Hart and Jason Momoa have been enlisted to promote it.

"It's a form of non-oil diversification and soft power," said Christopher Davidson, a former professor of Middle East politics at Durham University in Britain. "Association with big brands like this serves as a ready-made import to the UAE and will automatically translate into increased tourist numbers."

SeaWorld pays homage to Abu Dhabi's cultural heritage with a themed "realm" of traditional houses and sailboats evoking a simpler time before the discovery of oil, when the sparsely populated emirates largely relied on fishing and pearl-diving.

An in-house research facility will study aquatic life in the Persian Gulf and support the conservation of local species, including the manatee-like endangered dugong.

Jett, the former orca trainer, acknowledges that companies like SeaWorld have a role to play in conservation, saying they've done "really good work" on animal rescue and rehabilitation.

"I wish they would focus more of their energy, expertise, and finances on taking a lead role in moving global policy and helping animals in the wild, rather than figuring out ways to keep them alive in captivity," he said.



Pope Francis leaves the Agostino Gemelli University Polyclinic in Rome, Friday, June 16, 2023, nine days after undergoing abdominal surgery. The 86-year-old pope was admitted to Gemelli hospital on June 7 for surgery to repair a hernia in his abdominal wall and remove intestinal scar tissue that had caused intestinal blockages. (AP Photo/

Andrew Medichini)

Pope Francis leaves Rome hospital 9 days after operation; surgeon says 'he's better than before'

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis on Friday was discharged from the Rome hospital where he had abdominal surgery nine days earlier to repair a hernia and remove painful scarring, with his surgeon saying the pontiff is now "better than before" the hospitalization.

Francis, 86, left through Gemelli Polyclinic's main exit in a wheelchair, smiling and waving and saying "thanks" to a crowd of well-wishers, then stood up so he could get into the small Vatican car awaiting him. In the brief distance before he could reach the white Fiat 500, reporters thrust microphones practically at his face, and the pontiff seemed to bat them

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away, good-naturedly.

"Still alive," the pope quipped when a reporter asked how he was.

"The pope is well. He's better than before," Dr. Sergio Alfieri, the surgeon who did the three-hour operation on June 7 told reporters after he said goodbye to Francis as the pontiff got into the car.

Following the surgery, Francis will be a "strong pope," said Alfieri, who was outside along with the surging crowd as the pontiff exited.

Right after the pontiff returned home, the Vatican press office announced that Francis would make his traditional Sunday noon appearance at an Apostolic window overlooking St. Peter's Square to greet the public, an appointment that lasts about 10 minutes.

But his customary Wednesday general audience with thousands of faithful in the square "has been canceled to safeguard the post-surgical recovery of the Holy Father," the announcement said. The general audience lasts about an hour and includes a speech by the pontiff.

When asked by a reporter outside the hospital for a comment about the migrant disaster off Greece that has claimed dozens of lives and left hundreds missing, Francis replied: "So much sorrow."

Instead of going straight back to the Vatican, Francis stopped to pray for 10 minutes before an icon of the Virgin Mary at the famous St. Mary Major Basilica, where he often stops by after trips abroad to give thanks. Francis stayed in his wheelchair as he prayed. He also went there after his discharge from the same hospital following treatment for bronchitis.

Tourists in the basilica excitedly snapped photos of the pontiff in the basilica, and several people in the crowd outside wept as he left and headed for the Holy See hotel, where he lives on Vatican City grounds.

But before he arrived back home, Francis made two more stops — first at a convent adjacent to the Vatican to greet nuns, and then outside one of the walled city's gates to get out of his car so he could shake hands with and thank police officers who provided a motorcycle escort.

Hours after the surgery, Alfieri said that the scarring, which had resulted from previous abdominal surgeries, had been increasingly causing the pope pain. There was also risk of an intestinal blockage, if adhesions, or scar tissue, weren't removed, according to the doctors.

No complications occurred during the surgery or while the pope was convalescing in Gemelli's 10th-floor apartment reserved exclusively for hospitalization of pontiffs, according to the pope's medical staff.

Alfieri has said that the pontiff, in choosing to have the surgery in June, made his calculations that he would bounce back in time for the August trip to Portugal. "He has confirmed all" his trips, the surgeon said.

"Actually, he'll be able to tackle them better than before, because now he won't have the discomfort he had," Alfieri said, referring to the scarring known medically as adhesions. The surgeon had said that if the pope hadn't had the surgery, there would have been a risk of an intestinal blockage.

"He'll be a stronger pope," the surgeon added.

Right after the surgery, the Vatican said all of the pope's audiences would be canceled through June 18. Among the high-profile appointments Francis is expected to have next week at the Vatican are audiences with the presidents of Cuba and Brazil, although the meetings haven't been officially announced yet by the Vatican.

Commitments that have officially been announced include pilgrimages to Portugal in early August for a Catholic youth jamboree and a trip to Mongolia beginning on Aug. 31, a first-ever visit by a pontiff to that Asian country.

In just under two years, Francis had been hospitalized three times at Gemelli Polyclinic. In July 2021, he underwent surgery to remove a 33-centimeter (13-inch) section of his bowel removed because of narrowing of his intestinal. That, as well as abdominal surgeries years back in his native Argentina before he became pontiff, had contributed to the painful scarring, according to Alfieri. Then in early spring of this year, Francis was back in the hospital to receive intravenous antibiotic treatment for bronchitis, an illness Francis later said caused him pain and fever.

As a young man in his native Argentina, Francis had a portion of one lung removed following infection.

The latest hospitalization came just as Francis seemed to be walking better, with the aid of a cane, fol-

lowing months of often using a wheelchair because of a painful knee problem. He also has suffered from sciatica, a painful inflammation of a nerve that runs down from back to leg.

Alfieri has said that the pontiff, in choosing to have the surgery in June, made his calculations that he would bounce back in time for the August trip to Portugal.

On Friday, the surgeon expressed confidence that the pontiff will pace himself as he resumes his appointment-packed days at the Vatican.

"He'll listen a little more to us, because he has important commitments that he has confirmed, including the trips," Alfieri said.

Thousands of Sudanese fleeing fighting with no travel documents trapped on the border with Egypt

BY SAMY MAGDY Associated Press
ASWAN, Egypt (AP) — When fighting in Sudan erupted in mid-April, Abdel-Rahman Sayyed and his family tried to hold out hiding in their home in the capital, Khartoum, as the sounds of explosions, gunfights and the roar of warplanes echoed across the city of 6 million people.

They lived right by one of the fiercest front lines, near the military's headquarters in central Khartoum, where the army and a rival paramilitary, the Rapid Support Forces, battled for control. Three days into the conflict, a shell hit their two-story home, reducing much of it to rubble.

Luckily, Sayyed, his wife and three children survived, and they immediately fled the war-torn city. The problem was, their passports were buried under the wreckage of their home.

Now they are among tens of thousands of people without travel documents trapped at the border with Egypt, unable to cross into Sudan's northern neighbor.

"We narrowly escaped with our lives," the 38-year-old Sayyed said in a recent phone interview from Wadi Halfa, the closest Sudanese city to the border. He said he was stunned that Egyptian authorities wouldn't let his family in. "I thought we would be allowed in as refugees," he said.

Two months in, clashes continue to rage between the two rival forces in Khartoum and around Sudan, with hundreds dead and no sign of stopping after talks on a resolution collapsed. People continue to flee their homes in droves: This week the total number of people displaced since fighting began April 15 rose to around 2.2 million, up from 1.9 million just a week earlier, according to U.N. figures. Of the total displaced, more than 500,000 have crossed into neighboring countries, while the rest took refuge in quieter parts of Sudan, according to the U.N.

More than 120,000 Sudanese without travel documents are trapped in Wadi Halfa and surrounding ar-



Ibn Sina Mansour, a Sudanese-British national, waits for a call from his older brother, al-Samual Mansour, who is trapped in Sudan, at his hotel in Aswan, Egypt, on May 10, 2023. Ibn Sina traveled to Aswan to be close to his brother, who lost his travel documents and is unable to cross into Egypt. (AP Photo/Samy Magdy)

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eas, according to a Sudanese migration official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to brief media. Among them are those who never had a passport or whose passport expired or was lost during the rush to escape.

Wadi Halfa, which normally has a population of few tens of thousands, is also flooded by huge crowds of Sudanese men, women and children who do have their passports but must apply for visas at the Egyptian Consulate in the town to cross the border. Getting a visa can take days or even longer, leaving families scrambling for accommodation and food, with many sleeping in the streets.

Calls are growing for Egypt to waive entry requirements. The Sudanese American Physician Association, a U.S.-based NGO, called on the Egyptian government to allow those fleeing the war to apply for asylum at the borders.

Instead, the Egyptian government last week stiffened entry requirements. Previously, only Sudanese men aged 16-45 needed visas to enter Egypt. But on June 10, new rules require all Sudanese to get electronic visas. Ahmed Abu Zaid, a spokesman for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, said the measures are aimed at fighting visa forgery by groups on the Sudanese side of the borders.

Sayyed described the June 10 decision as a "stab on the back" to all those trapped at the border. He was one of 14 Sudanese who fled Khartoum without passports and spoke to The Associated Press. All said they had thought that Egypt would ease the entry requirement for the fleeing Sudanese.

"We're forced to leave our homes," Sayyed said. "It's a war."

The passports of others were trapped in foreign embassies because they were applying for visas before fighting erupted. Embassies in Khartoum have almost all been evacuated, in which case procedures often require those passports be destroyed so they don't fall into wrong hands. The U.S. State Department said in a statement that it had destroyed passports left there "rather than leave them behind unsecured."

"We recognize that the lack of travel documentation is a burden for those seeking to depart Sudan," it said. "We have and will continue to pursue diplomatic efforts with partner countries to identify a solution."

Sayyed and his family arrived in Wadi Halfa after a two-day journey from Khartoum. He took refuge in a school along with over 50 other families, all depending on humanitarian assistance from charities and the local community to survive, he said.

Every day for the past five weeks, Sayyed visited the Sudanese immigration authority offices and Egyptian Consulate in Wadi Halfa, a ritual many others followed as well in hopes of getting travel documents or visas.

But Sayyed has little chance, unless Egypt opens the border. New Sudanese passports are usually issued from the main immigration office in Khartoum, which stopped functioning since the onset of the war. The branch in Wadi Halfa doesn't have access to computer records, so it can only renew expired passports manually, not issue new ones or replace lost ones, the migration official said.

Al-Samaul Hussein Mansour, a Sudanese-British national, left his travel documents at his home amid his chaotic escape from the fighting in Khartoum, according to his younger brother, Ibn Sina Mansour.

Al-Samaul, a 63-year-old pediatrician-turned-politician, didn't get to the British Embassy in Khartoum to be evacuated with other British citizens. He thought that the clashes would stop "within a couple of days," Ibn Sina said.

He first went to the western Darfur region, where he stayed with a relative for about a week. But as fighting continued, he headed toward the Egyptian border. Unable to find a place to stay in Wadi Halfa, he went to the nearby town of Shandi.

It was too dangerous to return to Khartoum and retrieve his documents, with continued street fighting and stray bombs and bullets hitting houses, said Ibn Sina, who is also a British citizen.

"Returning to Khartoum means death for Samaul," he said in a recent interview in Aswan, the closest Egyptian city to the border with Sudan. Ibn Sina, a retired aviation engineer, came to Aswan from London to be closer to his older brother.

Also among those trapped were three brothers from Khartoum's neighboring city of Omdurman, who either lost their passports or never had one. The three -- ages 26, 21 and 18 years old -- were separated from their parents and five sisters, who were all able to enter Egypt in early May.

"This war displaced and separated many families like us," their father, Salah al-Din al-Nour, said. "We

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Ramaphosa said last month that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin had agreed to separate meetings with the delegation.

The delegation was set to travel to St. Petersburg later Friday, where Russia's top international economic conference is taking place, and meet with Putin on Saturday.

Officials who helped prepare the talks said the African leaders not only aimed to initiate a peace process but also assess how Russia, which is under heavy international sanctions, can be paid for the fertilizer exports Africa desperately needs.

They are also set to discuss the related issue of ensuring more grain shipments out of Ukraine amid the war and the possibility of more prisoner swaps.

The African peace overture comes as Ukraine launches a counteroffensive to dislodge the Kremlin's forces from occupied areas, using Western-supplied advanced weapons in attacks along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line. Western analysts and military officials have cautioned that the campaign could last a long time.

China has also been working on a peace proposal, but it appears to have few chances of success as the warring sides appear no closer to a cease-fire.

Ukrainian troops recorded successes along three stretches of the front line in the country's south and east, a spokesman for Ukraine's General Staff said in a statement Friday.

According to Andriy Kovalev, Ukrainian forces have moved forward south of the town of Orikhiv in the Zaporizhzhia region, in the direction of the village of Robotyne, as well as around Levadne and Staro-maiorske, on the boundary between Zaporizhzhia and the Donetsk province further east.

Kovalev also said that Ukrainian troops advanced in some areas around Vuhledar, a mining town in Donetsk that was the site of one of the main tank battles in the war so far.

It wasn't possible to independently verify the claims.

Russian shelling on Thursday and overnight killed two civilians and wounded two others in the southern Kherson region, its Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said.

Russian forces over the previous day launched 54 strikes across the province, using mortars, artillery, multiple rocket launchers, drones, missiles and aircraft, according to Prokudin.

Ten people were wounded over that same period in the eastern Donetsk region, local Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

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A decade after outcry, SeaWorld launches orca-free park in UAE, its first venture outside the US

By NICK EL HAJJ Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. theme park chain SeaWorld, mired in controversy in recent years over its treatment of killer whales and other marine mammals, has opened a massive new aquatic life park in the United Arab Emirates, its first outside the United States.

The \$1.2 billion venture with state-owned developer Miral features the world's largest aquarium and a cylindrical LED screen. There are no orcas here, but the park houses animals like dolphins and seals, whose captivity and training for profit and entertainment purposes are also often criticized as unethical by animal rights advocacy groups.

The new facility, which opened to visitors last month, gives the Orlando, Florida-based company a foothold in a fast-growing international tourism destination and the opportunity to continue its rebranding after years of criticism and allegations of animal cruelty.

SeaWorld and Miral declined multiple interview requests from The Associated Press. They also did not answer written questions or grant AP journalists access to the park.

Scrutiny of SeaWorld reached a crescendo following the release of the 2013 documentary "Blackfish."



People enjoy riding on a roller coaster at the SeaWorld on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on May 26, 2023. It's the first venture outside the United States for the theme park chain, which had been mired in controversy in recent years over the treatment of captive killer whales. The \$1.2 billion Abu Dhabi venture with state-owned developer Miral features the world's largest aquarium and cylindrical LED screen, as well as state-of-the-art facilities housing dolphins, seals, and other animals. (AP Photo/Nick ElHajj)

"years of service" and role in expanding medical services for people in custody but signaled it was time for change. He is expected to take a temporary position next week at the Department of Homeland Security, which includes CBP. His reassignment was first reported by The Washington Post.

Anadith Tanay Reyes Alvarez was moved with family to a Border Patrol station Harlingen, Texas, after being diagnosed with the flu until she died on her ninth day in custody on May 17. Staff had about nine encounters with the Panamanian girl and her mother over her final four days.

"As CBP works to implement required improvements to our medical care policies and processes, including from the ongoing investigation into the tragic in-custody death of a child in Harlingen, we are bringing in additional senior leadership to drive action across the agency," CBP said in a statement.

A nurse practitioner reported denying three or four requests from the girl's mother for an ambulance, despite the girl having a 104.9-degree Fahrenheit (40.5-degree Celsius) temperature, nausea and breathing difficulties, according to CBP's Office of Professional Responsibility. She was given medications, a cold pack and a cold shower.

have nothing to do with their struggle for power. They destroyed Sudan and the Sudanese people."

Associated Press writer Matthew Lee contributed from Washington.

Border agency reassigns chief medical officer after custody death of 8-year-old girl

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Customs and Border Protection has reassigned its chief medical officer after the in-custody death of an 8-year-old girl whose mother's pleas for an ambulance were ignored despite her daughter's chronic heart condition, rare blood disorder, high fever and other ailments, authorities said Thursday.

Dr. David Tarantino was CBP's first person to hold the job, which was created in 2020 amid growing numbers of families and young children who have presented Border Patrol agents with complex medical challenges.

CBP commended Tarantino for

California artists, chefs find creative ways to confront destructive 'superbloom' of wild mustard

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — While ripping out yellow blooms blanketing hillsides in Los Angeles, Max Kingery has been questioned about his fervor for killing flowers.

But the clothing designer who used the plants to dye his spring and summer lines said he takes no of-

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A man walks along a trail lined with clusters of wild mustard in Griffith Park in Los Angeles, Thursday, June 8, 2023. Mustard was among the most prominent of wild flowering plants that seemingly popped up everywhere in California this spring. As temperatures warm it is starting to die, making it tinder for wildfires in a state that has been ravaged by blazes. Its stalks can act as fire ladders, causing flames to climb. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

fense at being accused of pillaging this part of California's "superbloom." Instead, he sees it as an opportunity to raise awareness about a destructive flower that proliferated in the state following an unusually wet winter: wild black mustard.

Mustard was among the most prominent of wild flowering plants that seemingly popped up everywhere in California this spring. As temperatures warm it is starting to die, making it tinder for wildfires in a state that has been ravaged by blazes. Its stalks can act as fire ladders, causing flames to climb.

Mustard also smothers native plants, transforming the landscape. Its leaves and roots inhibit the growth of other species, creating a mono-thicket that spreads rapidly. There are numerous kinds of wild mustards in California, but black mustard or *Brassica nigra* is considered among the most pervasive.

Kingery is part of a growing group of artists, designers and chefs, who are

tackling the invasion by harvesting the plant to use in everything from dyes to pesto.

Foragers have led edible hikes to pick its peppery flower and munch on its leaves. There have been workshops and instruction guides on how to turn it into paper, fertilizer and a spicy version of the well-known condiment by the same name.

Kingery's line, aptly named "Pervasive Bloom," features sweatshirts, pants, tank tops and other items dyed naturally using mustard. On the website for his company, Olderbrother, a model embraces the uprooted weed while donning a mustard-dyed jacket. Other photos show the clearing of the land.

The Olderbrother store in Los Angeles is decorated with a huge panel of the plant's stalks, leaves and flowers that were woven on a loom by designer Cecilia Bordarampe. The material came from the first harvest when Kingery said his team initially harvested about 450 pounds (204 kilograms) to make the dye. They have continued, removing more than a 100 pounds (45 kilograms) a week ever since, mostly from public land in Los Angeles.

Even that amount is only nipping at the problem, Kingery said.

The plant from Eurasia was first brought to California in the 1700s — it has been found in the adobe bricks of missions. But its presence exploded this year after a record amount of rainfall from December to April. Years of wildfires also created more spaces for the plant that thrives in disturbed lands.

State and local agencies remove mustard from managed lands, but it's spread to places beyond.

At its peak bloom this spring, undulating swaths of yellow lined freeways. Hillsides jutting up from urban landscapes glowed. Sidewalk cracks were abloom.

"Physically, it's been demanding," Kingery said. "And yes, there seems in sheer volume, if you zoom out a bit, that there could be enough wild mustard here to make salads and dyed sweatshirts for everyone in the United States."

But when Kingery sees native plants sprouting in plots that have been cleared, it makes it all worth it, he said. And, he added, to get the hues that he wants requires a lot of mustard, which in this context is a good thing.

"We don't want to rip a bunch of plants out of the ground for no reason," Kingery said. "The idea of something being utilized that is growing out of the sidewalk is a pretty cool concept."

Artist Erin Berkowitz of Berbo Studio makes dyes from invasive species, including the dye for Kingery's clothing line. She has offered classes along with a chef who crafts pesto from the mustard greens and mashes the flowers into dressing.

"This is an abundant art supply that is all around us," Berkowitz said.

She said her work with Kingery showed the possibilities of what can happen if more people become aware of its uses.

"Visually we watched a whole hill of a park be denuded of mustard, which was a very hopeful thing," she said.

Underneath the towering stalks of mustard, which can grow more more than 8-feet (2.4 meters) tall, blue lupine, poppies and other native plants were fighting to reach sunlight. "One public space, one whole neighborhood, returned to having healthy, functional native ecology," Berkowitz said after the harvest in the working-class neighborhood of El Sereno in east L.A.

Jen Toy of Test Plot, an organization that partnered with Kingery and Berkowitz and helps people restore biodiversity to their neighborhoods, said "it's really about broadening what we mean by land care, and getting other folks who might not see themselves as like environmentalists interested."

To that end, ecological horticulturist Alyssa Kahn and artist Nadine Allan made a zine, a digital magazine, about the uses of black mustard, including to make paper, a face mask and even a kind of natural pesticide to till into garden soil.

Kahn said she was motivated to act in part because she has friends who lost nearly everything to wildfires.

"We wanted to incentivize people to do something about it," she said, and educate them.

"They just look so pretty," Kahn added. "They have those yellow flowers, and if you don't really know kind of what's happening on a larger scale, you might say, oh they're just a sea of yellow flowers."

Jutta Burger of the California Invasive Plant Council applauds the ingenuity and suggests people contact land management agencies to gather left-behind seeds when areas are cleared.

"You'll never completely get rid of it, at least where it's been established for a long time," she said.

Still, Burger said similar efforts to creatively use something have made an impact. For example, she said, when chefs started crafting recipes involving the predatory lionfish and serving it in restaurants, its population decreased in areas, and it became widely known that the species was a threat to native marine life.

"One thing we would like to make sure people know is those yellow fields out there, they were once fields of not just yellow — they were fields of yellow, purple, pink, and blue," Burger said.

American arrested for pushing 2 US tourists into ravine at German castle, leaving one woman dead

By GEIR MOULSON and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — An American man has been arrested over the death of one U.S. tourist and an assault on another near Neuschwanstein castle in southern Germany after he allegedly pushed the two women down a steep slope, authorities said Thursday.

The incident near the popular tourist attraction happened on Wednesday afternoon near the Marienbrücke, a bridge over a gorge close to the castle that offers a famous view of Neuschwanstein.

The 30-year-old man met the two female tourists, ages 21 and 22, on a hiking path and lured them onto a trail that leads to a viewpoint, police said in a statement.

"The younger of the two women was attacked by the suspect," said police spokesman Holger Stabik. "The older one tried to rush to her aid, was then choked by the suspect and subsequently pushed down

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People watch the Neuschwanstein castle, in Schwangau, Germany, Thursday, June 15, 2023. Authorities say an American man has been arrested in Germany after allegedly assaulting two tourists he met near Neuschwanstein castle. The attack, which occurred on Wednesday, left one of the women dead. Police said Thursday that the 30-year-old man met the two women on a hiking path and lured them onto a trail. They said the man then "physically attacked" the younger woman.

(Frank Rumpenhorst/dpa via AP)

from the top of an absolute cliff," he said.

Abneri described it as "a very, very difficult rescue because of those cliffs and because the helicopter came mere feet above the tree line at the top of the hill."

"They did an unbelievable job," he said.

Police said the man they arrested was American and described him as also a tourist; prosecutors said the women were fellow U.S. citizens. The 22-year-old remained hospitalized Thursday, according to prosecutors.

Authorities didn't identify either the suspect or the victims or give any further details.

Police said a judge in nearby Kempten on Thursday ordered the suspect held pending a potential indictment — a process that can take months — and he was taken to jail. He is under investigation on suspicion of murder, attempted murder and a sexual offense.

Police said they and prosecutors were focusing on trying to reconstruct exactly what happened and called for any witnesses to come forward.

Neuschwanstein, located in southern Bavaria close to Austria's border, is one of Germany's most popular tourist attractions.

It is the most famous of the castles built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria in the 19th century. Construction started in 1869 but was never completed. Ludwig died in 1886.

a slope. "

The assailant then appears to have attempted to sexually assault the 21-year-old before pushing her down the slope as well. She fell nearly 50 meters (165 feet), ending up close to her friend.

A mountain rescue team reached both women. The 22-year-old was "responsive" and taken to a hospital, police said; a helicopter carried the 21-year-old with serious injuries to a different hospital, and she died there overnight.

The suspect left the scene but was quickly arrested nearby. Bystander video posted online showed police leading away a handcuffed man in a T-shirt, jeans and a baseball cap.

Eric Abneri, a recent business graduate from the University of Pittsburgh who took the video, said the man appeared to have scratches across his face.

"He did not say a single word. He didn't open his mouth; he didn't mumble," Abneri told The Associated Press. "He just walked with the police and that was it."

Abneri said he and friends reached the scenic overlook as a helicopter arrived and they saw rescuers lower themselves down to the victims.

"I'm honestly absolutely stunned someone is still alive from this. It is like falling

Trump's promise of payback for prosecution follows years of attacking democratic traditions

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

As Donald Trump became the first former president to face federal charges, he and his supporters went through a familiar routine of mounting a victimhood defense in the face of unprecedented allegations of wrongdoing. But this time, the stakes are higher.

Trump upped the level of his claims and threats as he faces the potential of years in prison if convicted on 37 charges of obstruction, illegal retention of defense information and other violations. Hours after pleading not guilty, Trump claimed he is being targeted by the special prosecutor, who is nonpartisan, for political reasons and vowed to retaliate against President Joe Biden if he is elected president in 2024.

"There was an unwritten rule" to not prosecute former presidents and political rivals, Trump told supporters in a speech at his golf club in New Jersey. "I will appoint a real special prosecutor to go after the most corrupt president in the history of America, Joe Biden, and go after the Biden crime family."

The vow is reminiscent of the "lock her up" chants against Democrat Hillary Clinton that Trump led during his 2016 campaign, but the new level of specificity alarmed many experts.

"If he did that, it'd be an authoritarian system, the end of a system of laws rather than of one man," said Lindsay Chervinsky, a presidential historian.

Even as he pledges to retaliate if elected, Trump and his supporters claim he is being targeted in a way that is similar to authoritarian regimes — such as in Russia, where opponents of President Vladimir Putin have been jailed, or Venezuela, where President Nicolas Maduro's chief rival was prosecuted. There is no evidence that Biden made the sort of pledge to target Trump that the former president has now made, and the president said he has never tried to influence the Justice Department on any case.

Trump's attacks on the justice system are the latest step in a now eight-year campaign by the former president and his allies against the traditions and institutions that have helped maintain American democracy.

Trump has long complained about being unfairly treated by the legal system, from contending that the judge in a lawsuit against his for-profit university was biased against him to targeting the FBI over its probe of Russian interference in his 2016 win. He even vowed retribution in that case, assigning a special prosecutor to review how the investigation into his campaign's possible coordination with Russia was handled, which led to only one conviction.

That track record makes his pledge of retribution more menacing, said Fred Wertheimer, president of Democracy 21, a group advocating for better government.



FILE - Former President Donald Trump speaks at Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, N.J., June 13, 2023. Trump's attacks on the justice system after his indictment on federal charges this week are the latest step in a now eight-year campaign by the former president and his allies against the traditions and institutions that have helped maintain American democracy. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, File)

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"He has shown repeatedly during his presidency that he is perfectly willing to misuse and abuse his office to carry out purely personal activities," Wertheimer said.

Stephen Saltzburg, a former top official in the criminal division of the Justice Department who is now a George Washington University law professor, said Trump was signaling that he would use the department to settle scores — just the thing he is claiming led to his indictment.

"This is typical of what Donald Trump does," Saltzburg said. "He essentially accuses people of doing what he would do if he were in the position."

The indictment came from a grand jury in Trump's adopted state of Florida after an investigation led by a special counsel, Jack Smith, who is independent of political appointees in the Biden administration and has previously prosecuted Democrats as well as Republicans. Speaking after the indictment was made public, Smith stressed that investigations such as the one into the documents follow the facts and the law.

"We have one set of laws in this country, and they apply to everyone," he said.

Many experts, of all political persuasions, said the charges against Trump stem from the proper functioning of the legal system, rather than a political vendetta. William Barr, Trump's former attorney general, said the allegations in the indictment were serious and that Trump had no right to keep such documents.

"There is not an attorney general of either party who would not have brought today's charges against the former president," Michael Luttig, a former federal judge who was a conservative favorite for a Supreme Court post, wrote on Twitter.

According to the indictment, Trump held onto classified documents after leaving the White House, admitted on tape that they were classified and that he no longer had the presidential power to declassify them, then refused to return the records when the government demanded them back.

The former president's complaints about being persecuted, if not his vow of retribution, have been taken up by a wide swath of Republicans, from longtime supporters in Congress to governors who position themselves as moderates. That includes Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who bemoaned on Twitter what he called "a two-tiered justice system where some are selectively prosecuted, and others are not."

Another sign of how the right has absorbed Trump's world view came Tuesday night, hours after his court appearance, when Fox News briefly captioned images of Biden and Trump with the words "wannabe dictator speaks at the White House after having his political rival arrested." The network took down the chyron and said in a statement the matter was "addressed" without providing further details.

Trump's complaints about being persecuted are standard for former political leaders in other countries who are charged with crimes, said Victor Menaldo, a political scientist at the University of Washington.

"It makes sense politically if the leader has a rabid support group like Trump," Menaldo said. But in other countries, he said, the leaders are usually successfully prosecuted, and democracy continues.

The federal charges against Trump come two months after the Manhattan District Attorney's office charged him with 34 counts of falsifying business information in arranging payments to a porn star who said she had an affair with him. He also faces legal jeopardy in Fulton County, Georgia, where local prosecutors have launched a wide-ranging investigation of his attempt to have the state's electors assigned to him even though he lost the state to Biden in 2020, a result that was affirmed multiple times. A federal grand jury in Washington, D.C., continues to probe Trump's efforts to overturn his 2020 loss.

The Manhattan charges have drawn skepticism even from some Trump critics, who contend they're legally dubious. Trump's defenders — who include much of his own political party — don't make that distinction, condemning all probes of the former president. Indeed, after taking control of the House of Representatives following November's elections, Republicans empaneled a committee investigating the so-called "weaponization of government" against conservatives that is highlighting perceived injustices in the Trump probes.

The combination of the new federal charges, filed Friday, and the Republican presidential primary has led to stepped up complaints about scrutiny of the former president.

"I, and every American who believes in the rule of law, stand with President Trump against this grave injustice," House Speaker Kevin McCarthy tweeted after Trump announced the indictment against him.

"House Republicans will hold this brazen weaponization of power accountable."

He and other Trump allies note that Biden also improperly had classified documents from his time as vice president — though there are big differences with the Trump case. The current president returned the records when requested and there is no evidence that he tried to conceal more, as is alleged with Trump. A second special prosecutor is looking at Biden's document handling.

Former U.S. Attorney Roscoe Howard said he has faith that the public will see past those protestations in the current case just by looking at the indictment.

"You can read it and make a determination of whether he's violating the law. And anybody who does the same thing, we treat them the same way," Howard said. "When you peel back some of the arguments we're hearing, it is a bit like, 'Oh I don't have to follow these rules.'"

That's the point when it comes to Trump, said Ruth Ben-Ghiat, a historian at New York University who studies authoritarians.

"It's an old situation he's in, but now because this is extremely serious, of course he's going to ramp up that narrative," Ben-Ghiat said. "What strongmen do is, if you are corrupt, you need to get back into power to shut down all the institutions that can harm you."

Fields reported from Washington, Riccardi from Denver.

Biden is returning to his union roots as his 2024 campaign gears up

By WILL WEISSERT and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press



FILE - President Joe Biden speaks in the South Court Auditorium on the White House complex in Washington, Dec. 8, 2022, about the infusion of nearly \$36 billion to shore up a financially troubled union pension plan. (AP Photo/

Susan Walsh, File)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden opened his 2020 presidential run at a Pittsburgh union hall, declaring, "I'm a union man. Period." As he gears up for reelection, the president's first political rally is being held at a union gathering on the other side of Pennsylvania, punctuating just how much Biden is counting on labor support to carry him to a second term — especially in a critical battleground state.

The symmetry is no accident. Rallying labor activists on Saturday at Philadelphia's convention center can help Biden's campaign spark enthusiasm and tap early organizing muscle. That may eventually boost Democratic voter turnout in the city's suburbs and other key parts of Pennsylvania, which in 2020 helped him flip the state where Biden was born from Donald Trump.

"It speaks to this president's visceral understanding that, when the labor

movement in the United States is strong, the economy and our democracy are strong," said Mary Kay Henry, international president of the 2-million-member Service Employees International Union. "He sees the role that working people and unions play in everything that he's trying to make happen."

Biden has used executive actions to promote worker organizing, personally cheered unionization efforts

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at corporate giants like Amazon and authorized federal funding to aid union members' pensions. He's also traveled the country, trumpeting how union labor is building bridges, widening highways, improving train tunnels and expanding rural broadband access as part of the bipartisan, \$1.1 trillion public works package Congress passed in 2021.

Though the number of workers belonging to a union has risen, overall union membership rates nationwide fell to an all-time low in 2022. The country's largest unions have nonetheless built sprawling get-out-the-vote efforts, which Biden is counting on to help turn out his supporters in Pennsylvania, as well as other swing states like Michigan and Nevada.

Still, the White House's relationship with labor has occasionally been tested, such as in December when some union activists criticized Biden for signing legislation preventing a nationwide rail strike.

The United Auto Workers said last month that it wasn't immediately endorsing Biden's reelection campaign due to concerns over the administration's efforts to transition the U.S. into a nation reliant on electric vehicles. Biden supporters believe the holdout is due to the union's new leadership that is taking a more confrontational posture ahead of bargaining sessions with the major auto companies.

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., who leads the Senate Democrats' campaign arm, said "we still have a lot of time right now between now and the election," and that he believed that the auto worker union will endorse Biden's reelection bid in due time.

"He's clearly, probably, the most pro-union president we've had in a very long time, if ever," Peters said. "His record certainly speaks for himself and for itself."

Meanwhile, ongoing strikes have sometimes complicated the administration's messaging.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre has given conflicting comments on whether the administration weighs in on strikes that are in progress, saying in early May that "we don't speak to an ongoing strike" when asked about Hollywood writers, yet offering support earlier this month to striking journalists at the Gannett newspaper chain.

The White House press office also apologized last week for crossing a digital picket line by referencing in a news release coverage from the news outlet Insider, where reporters are striking.

Still, Biden frequently addresses union gatherings and seems to revel in doing so. Though Saturday is his first campaign rally, mere hours after he announced that he was seeking reelection in April, Biden made an official visit to the North America's Building Trades Unions Legislative Conference in Washington and declared, "I make no apologies for being labeled the most pro-union president in American history."

His economic message can also resonate with non-union members. Charlotte Valyo, Democratic Party chairwoman of Chester County in Philadelphia's suburbs, which Biden carried comfortably in 2020, said the president needs to "make sure that everyone is aware" of his administration's efforts to slow inflation and spur job growth.

"There are issues that are universal, regardless of socioeconomic status, or whether you're in the suburbs or the cities or rural areas," Valyo said. But she also said that the top issue among Chester County voters was defense of abortion rights after the Supreme Court struck down the constitutional right to an abortion last summer.

"Roe v. Wade is huge," Valyo said.

Even as Biden racked up major endorsements from union leadership in 2020, meanwhile, some rank-and-file members supported Trump. Biden won the support of about six in 10 union members then, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of the national electorate. That's a healthy, but not commanding, margin.

Republicans, meanwhile, have hammered Biden on failing to better tame inflation, hoping to peel away the support of more such voters ahead of next year's election.

"Hardworking Americans are paying the price for this administration's failed agenda," Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel said in a statement this week.

Brent Booker, general president of the Laborers' International Union of North America, which represents mostly construction and energy sector workers and endorsed Biden last week, said not all of his union's members are Democrats. But he said a key reason the union announced it was backing Biden so early was to ensure its members know how much his administration has accomplished, especially with the

public works law.

"We saw what 2016 to 2020 looked like and those policies — or lack thereof — for our membership," Booker said. Noting that Trump is again running for president, he added, "If it is Biden vs. Trump part two, I can point to: 'What did the Trump administration do on infrastructure? And what did the Biden administration do on infrastructure?'"

Henry also noted that her union "had some small percentage of members that were for Trump" in the past. But she said the group has worked to counter that with ongoing messaging on union websites, through social media campaigns and field staff work and even via paper leaflets — and that such efforts continue during canvassing this summer.

"We've done massive member education of those members, to help them understand how virulently anti-union and pro-corporation and wealthy the Trump administration was," Henry said.

She said Biden's pro-labor reelection message is a strong one, but also cautioned that the president, when he speaks to voters, refrain from against getting "bogged down in the recitation of accomplishment" and instead makes clear "how those accomplishments are going to make a difference in people's everyday lives."

"Talking about how he understands that, for the vast majority of the American people, there's still a lot of struggle to make ends meet," Henry said, "and that he's tried to use his first four years in office to intervene in that struggle."

US guided-missile submarine arrives in South Korea, a day after North Korea resumes missile tests

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

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The United States deployed a nuclear-powered submarine capable of carrying about 150 Tomahawk missiles to South Korea on Friday, a day after North Korea resumed missile tests in protest of the U.S.-South Korean live-fire drills.

The USS Michigan's arrival in South Korea, the first of its kind in six years, is part of a recent bilateral agreement on enhancing "regular visibility" of U.S. strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear program, according to South Korean officials.

With the deployment of the USS Michigan, the U.S. and South Korean navies are to conduct drills on boosting their special operation capabilities and joint ability to cope with growing North Korean nuclear threats, the South Korean Defense Ministry said in a statement.

It said the U.S. submarine arrived at the southeastern port city of Busan



The nuclear-powered submarine USS Michigan approaches a naval base in Busan, South Korea, Friday, June 16, 2023. The United States deployed the nuclear-powered submarine capable of carrying about 150 Tomahawk missiles to South Korea on Friday, a day after North Korea resumed missile tests in protest of the U.S.-South Korean live-fire drills. (Gang Duck-chul/Yonhap via AP)

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but didn't say how long it would stay in South Korean waters.

The USS Michigan is one of the biggest submarines in the world. The Ohio-class guided-missile submarine can be armed with 150 Tomahawk missiles with a range of about 2,500 kilometers (1,550 miles) and is capable of launching special forces missions, according to the South Korean statement.

The South Korean and U.S. militaries have been expanding their exercises in reaction to North Korea's provocative run of missile tests since last year. North Korea has argued it was forced to ramp up testing activities to deal with its rivals' expanded military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal, but experts say the North ultimately aims to modernize its arsenal and increase its leverage in eventual diplomacy.

In April, after their meeting in Washington, President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol agreed that the United States would enhance the "regular visibility of strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula." Biden also stated that any North Korean nuclear attack on the U.S. or its allies would "result in the end of whatever regime" took such action.

The two leaders also announced other steps to reinforce joint deterrence capabilities such as the docking a U.S. nuclear ballistic missile submarine in South Korea periodically; bolstering joint training exercises; and the establishment of a new nuclear consultative group. The nuclear ballistic missile submarine hasn't come to South Korea.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, slammed the Biden-Yoon summit agreements, saying they revealed the two countries' "most hostile and aggressive will of action" against the North. She threatened to further bolster her country's nuclear forces.

On Thursday, North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast, shortly after it vowed responses to the just-ended South Korea-U.S. firing drills near the Koreas' heavily armed border.

They were the North's first weapons launches since it tried to put its first spy satellite into orbit in late May. The launch failed as the rocket carrying the spy satellite crashed into the waters off the Korean Peninsula's west coast.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said Friday that military search crews have salvaged what it believes is part of the crashed North Korean rocket. The ministry released photos of the white, metal cylinder, which some experts said would have been the rocket's fuel tank.

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US attorney general in Minneapolis to share results of police department probe

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and JIM SALTER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The findings of a two-year investigation of the Minneapolis Police Department, prompted by the death of George Floyd, are expected to be announced Friday by U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland.

The Department of Justice on Thursday announced a news conference "on a civil rights matter" was scheduled for Friday morning at the federal courthouse in Minneapolis. Justice Department and city officials declined to confirm about whether they will announce findings of that police department investigation.

A Justice Department advisory said Garland will be joined by Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, Police Chief Brian O'Hara and others. A link to a Justice Department public webinar scheduled for Friday afternoon has the heading: "DOJ Presentation for MPD Investigative Findings."

The "pattern or practice" investigation was launched in April 2021, a day after former officer Derek Chauvin, who is white, was convicted of murder and manslaughter in the May 25, 2020, killing of Floyd, who was Black.

Floyd repeatedly said he couldn't breathe before going limp as Chauvin knelt on his neck for 9 1/2 minutes.

The killing was recorded by a bystander and sparked months of mass protests as part of a broader national reckoning over racial injustice.

The federal investigation concerns whether the Minneapolis Police Department engaged in a pattern

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FILE - Attorney General Merrick Garland speaks during a meeting with all of the U.S. Attorneys in Washington, Wednesday, June 14, 2023. Two years after the U.S. Department of Justice launched an investigation of the Minneapolis Police Department in the wake of George Floyd's death, Garland will be in Minneapolis on Friday, June 16, "on a civil rights matter." DOJ spokeswoman Dena Iverson on Thursday, June 15, declined to say if the police department investigation will be the subject of the news conference at the federal courthouse in Minneapolis. (AP

Photo/Jose Luis Magana, File)

agreement requires the city and the police department to make "transformational changes" to fix the organizational culture of the force, noting it could serve as a model for how cities, police departments and community members elsewhere work to stop race-based policing.

The federal investigation could prompt a separate but similar court-enforceable agreement, known as a consent decree, that would overlap the settlement with the state. Several police departments in other cities, such as Seattle, operate under consent decrees for alleged civil rights violations.

Floyd, 46, was arrested on suspicion of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill for a pack of cigarettes at a corner market. He struggled with police when they tried to put him in a squad car, and though he was already handcuffed, they forced him on the ground. As Chauvin pressed his knee against Floyd's neck, J. Alexander Kueng held Floyd's back, Thomas Lane held Floyd's feet and Tou Thao kept bystanders back.

Chauvin was sentenced to 22 1/2 years for murder. He also pleaded guilty to a federal charge of violating Floyd's civil rights and was sentenced to 21 years in that case. He is serving the sentences concurrently at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tucson, Arizona.

Kueng, Lane and Thao were convicted of federal charges in February 2022. All three were convicted of depriving Floyd of his right to medical care, and Thao and Kueng also were convicted of failing to intervene to stop Chauvin during the killing. Lane and Kueng have since pleaded guilty to a state count of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter. In exchange, counts of aiding and abetting murder were dropped.

Lane, who is white, is serving his 2 1/2-year federal sentence at a facility in Colorado. He is serving a three-year state sentence at the same time. Kueng, who is Black, is serving a three-year federal sentence

or practice of unconstitutional or unlawful policing. Such investigations typically look at the use of force by officers, including force used during protests, and whether the department engages in discriminatory practices. The investigation also was expected to assess the way the department handled misconduct allegations and how it held officers accountable.

A similar investigation by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights led to a "court-enforceable settlement agreement" to address the long list of problems identified in the report, with input from residents, officers, city staff and others. Frey and state Human Rights Commissioner Rebecca Lucero signed the agreement in March.

The state investigation, which concluded in April 2022, found "significant racial disparities with respect to officers' use of force, traffic stops, searches, citations, and arrests." And it criticized "an organizational culture where some officers and supervisors use racist, misogynistic, and disrespectful language with impunity."

Lucero said the legally binding

in Ohio, while also serving a 3 1/2-year state sentence.

Thao, who is Hmong American, received a 3 1/2-year federal sentence. In May, the judge in the state case found him guilty of aiding and abetting manslaughter. Thao had said it "would be lying" to have pleaded guilty and he agreed to let the judge decide the case. The judge set sentencing for Aug. 7.

___ Salter reported from O'Fallon, Missouri.

Find AP's full coverage of the death of George Floyd at: <https://apnews.com/hub/death-of-george-floyd>

Pregnant woman shot and killed was owner of Seattle restaurant near famed market

SEATTLE (AP) — A pregnant woman who was killed in what appears to have been a random shooting in downtown Seattle this week has been identified as the owner of a sushi restaurant near the city's famed Pike Place Market.

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell said on Twitter Thursday that his condolences go out to the family of Eina Kwon. Kwon, 34, was eight months pregnant when a man shot multiple times into her car Tuesday while it was stopped at an intersection near the Aburiya Bento House restaurant she owned with her husband.

The fetus was delivered at a hospital and but died soon after, according to a probable cause statement. The woman's 37-year-old husband, Sung Kwon, was shot in the arm and treated at the hospital.

"Eina was a leader in our community and business owner, running Aburiya Bento House with her family. What was supposed to be a joyful time for the Kwon family has turned into an unimaginable nightmare caused by senseless gun violence," Harrell's statement said.

Harrell also said he spoke to Sung Kwon on Thursday.

"He is a grieving but resilient father and husband who is grappling with unimaginable pain while recovering from his own injuries," Harrell said.

On Tuesday morning, a man approached the couple's car, fired at the driver's side with a handgun and ran away, the probable cause statement said. Video from the neighborhood showed no previous interaction with the victims.

Police said they found a 30-year-old man who matched witnesses' description soon after. Approached by officers, he raised his arms and said, "I did it, I did it," according to police. Police said the man told investigators he saw a firearm in the vehicle and reacted by firing.

He was taken into custody, and a judge found probable cause to hold him on investigation of homicide, assault and unlawful possession of a firearm, according to a spokesperson for prosecutors. Charges are



A bouquet of flowers and a photograph sits on the corner of Lenora St. and 4th Avenue, Thursday, June 15, 2023 in Seattle. A pregnant woman who was killed in what appears to have been a random shooting in downtown Seattle this week has been identified as the owner of a sushi restaurant near the city's famed Pike Place Market.

(Dean Rutz/The Seattle Times via AP)

expected this week, The Seattle Times reported.

The shooting has led to an outpouring of grief for the Kwons, who also have a toddler.

Mourners have placed flowers and other remembrances at their now-shuttered restaurant, including Eunji Seo, the consulate general for the Republic of Korea in Seattle. A crowdfunding campaign to bring Eina Kwon's family from Korea to the United States for her funeral has raised nearly \$50,000.

The Kwons opened Aburiya, which serves traditional and fusion sushi, in 2018. The restaurant is popular with tourists and downtown workers seeking lunch deals.

Fowler, Schauffele break US Open record with 62s at Los Angeles Country Club

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer
LOS ANGELES (AP) — Rickie Fowler and Xander Schauffele became part of U.S. Open history on Thursday in a most unfathomable manner. No one had ever shot 62 in the previous 122 editions of golf's toughest test until they did it some 15 minutes apart.

Even more stunning were so many other records on an extraordinary day for scoring at the major that puts par on a pedestal.

Fowler made 10 birdies — believed to be a record for most holes under par for any round in the U.S. Open — and can always say he was the first with a 62. Two groups behind him, Schauffele capped off his 8-under 62 without a bogey on his card or a care in the world.

"I'm going to take what the course can give me," he said. "And today it gave me a low one."

The North course at Los Angeles Country Club was so defenseless that

no one shot 80 or higher over 18 holes. The U.S. Open had never had more than two players at 65 or better in the opening round. There were six such rounds at LACC.

Most telling was the average score of 71.37 was the lowest for an opening round in U.S. Open history. Most embarrassing for the USGA was the U.S. Open joining the Bermuda Championship as the only tournaments this year to feature two rounds at 62 on the same day.

"I'd imagine the USGA is not loving the scores too much," Mackenzie Hughes said. "I'm guessing the sprinklers are going to be turned off tonight."

No need for Fowler and Schauffele to apologize. No need for an asterisk. PGA champion Brooks Koepka couldn't break par — he shot 71, never a bad start at the U.S. Open but leaving him nine shots behind in this one.

The toughest test in golf. Tough meant keeping track of the 485 birdies and eight eagles.

"It's not really what you expect playing a U.S. Open," Schauffele said. "But monkey see, monkey do. Was just chasing Rickie up the leaderboard. Glad he was just in front me."

Those who came behind them looked to do the same. Dustin Johnson hit all 13 fairways and had a



Rickie Fowler waves after setting scoring record with a 62 in the first round of the U.S. Open golf tournament at Los Angeles Country Club on Thursday, June 15, 2023, in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/George Walker IV)

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chance at 62 until his 5-iron on the par-3 ninth went into a bunker next to the 18th green. That led to his only bogey and a somewhat disappointing 64 — rare to say in a U.S. Open — to join Wyndham Clark.

Rory McIlroy went out in 30 — his best nine-hole start in any major — and had to settle for a 65. He whiffed on a delicate flop shot from the thick collar of grass around the 18th and escaped with a bogey. Also at 65 was Brian Harman, who played his first 10 holes in 6 under but went 1 over from there.

Johnson found his way into the record book. He tied Tiger Woods for most rounds of 65 or lower in the majors (10).

"This isn't your typical U.S. Open mindset of like, 'I'm just playing for par.' You've got to make some birdies to keep in line with those guys," Harris English said after a ho-hum 67.

It all started with Fowler, whose remarkable round included two bogeys when he missed the green on the 254-yard 11th and missed the fairway on the 17th on his front nine. Starting with a 15-foot birdie putt on the 18th, he ran off four straight birdies.

He set the record with a two-putt from just under 60 feet on the par-5 ninth. That's also when he noticed the leaderboard.

"I knew where I was at," Fowler said. "I would say from the middle of the round up until the ninth green, our last hole, I didn't really know or see any scores. And then I saw that Xander was at 7 (under) at that point, and I'm not sure if he even knew where I was or anything.

"But it was kind of cool if he did to see he kind of latched on and we were taking off a bit."

Schauffele was two groups behind and never too far away. He lost one birdie chance on the short par-4 sixth by trying to drive the green, but then picked up a rare birdie on the 258-yard seventh hole with what he called a "tomahawk 4-iron" to 5 feet and got up-and-down from short of the green on the par-5 eighth.

They now share the major championship record with Branden Grace, who had a 62 in the third round at Royal Birkdale in the 2017 British Open.

Their record day came on the 50-year anniversary of Johnny Miller posting the first 63 in U.S. Open history. Since then, five players have shot 63 in a U.S. Open, most recently Tommy Fleetwood in 2018 at Shinnecock Hills.

Jack Nicklaus and Tom Weiskopf each shot 63 in the opening round at Baltusrol in the 1980 U.S. Open, which Nicklaus went on to win.

The conditions were prime for scoring — overcast, mild with barely any wind. Condensation in the morning felt like a like mist, and it kept the greens receptive.

The next best score from the morning wave was a 3-under 67 by a group that included Scottie Scheffler and Bryson DeChambeau. Five more players shot 67 before the day was over.

The low scoring was sure to raise questions about LACC, a century-old club hosting a major championship for the first time.

"It's just Thursday," Schauffele said. "It's literally just the first day of a tournament. It's a good start," Schauffele said. "You just wait until this place firms up. It's going to be nasty."

Schauffele tends to play his best in the U.S. Open — five top 10s in his six appearances, and he has been among the elite on the PGA Tour the last several years even without winning a major.

Fowler is different. He once finished in the top five at all four majors in 2014. But a recent slump made a challenge just to get in them. He was the first alternate last year at Brookline and had to go home without hitting a shot.

But he went back to instructor Butch Harmon in September and has played well enough to get back into the top 50 in the world after being in danger of falling out of the top 200 a year ago.

And there he was at a major, putting his name in the record book for all the right reasons.

"It's definitely been long and tough — a lot longer being in that situation than you'd ever want to," Fowler said. "But it makes it so worth it having gone through that and being back where we are now."

Bus full of seniors heading to a casino in Canada collides with truck, killing 15 people

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press
TORONTO (AP) — A bus carrying seniors to a casino collided with a semi-trailer truck at a highway intersection in a rural part of the Canadian province of Manitoba Thursday, killing 15 people and injuring 10 more, police said.

Rob Hill, Commanding Officer of the Manitoba Royal Canadian Mounted Police, said the bus was carrying 25 people and authorities in Manitoba were deploying all their resources to the scene. Ten people were taken to hospitals.

TV broadcasters aired images of what looked like a large van or bus smoldering in a ditch near a transport truck with a smashed engine on a road. The pavement was littered with debris — broken glass, a large bumper and what looked like a walking aid. Seven blue and yellow tarps were stretched out.

RCMP Supt. Rob Lasson said “as of right now the drivers of both the bus and truck are alive and in hospital.” He did not say if they were among the 10 listed as injured. The dead were mainly seniors.

Lasson said the bus was heading south and there would have been a stop and yield sign. He said the bus was crossing the east bound lanes when it was struck by the truck that was going east, adding that who had the right of way is critical to the investigation.

“The public is reeling and asking a lot of questions and people are trying to determine if their loved ones were involved,” Lasson said. “Death on this scale is never normalized for us.”

The crash scene was in Carberry, a city 170 kilometers (105 miles) west of Manitoba’s capital of Winnipeg. “The news from Carberry, Manitoba is incredibly tragic,” Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted. “I’m sending my deepest condolences to those who lost loved ones today, and I’m keeping the injured in my thoughts.”

A family support center has been set up at a Lutheran Church in Dauphin, Manitoba for relatives. Police said the people on the bus were from Dauphin and the areas around it.

Flags have been lowered to half-staff at the Manitoba legislature.

A spokesperson for the Sand Hills Casino in Carberry said the van had been scheduled to arrive there later in the day.

Kim Armstrong, the administrator of the Dauphin senior center, said the bus left from the senior center Thursday morning.

The senior community is extremely tight knit in the city of around 8,600 people and the center is sometimes like a second home, she said.

“It’s huge to lose so many individuals of our community and of course it is shocking. We just pray for



This photo shows the scene of a major collision that has closed a section of the Trans-Canada Highway near Carberry, Manitoba on Thursday June 15, 2023. Authorities did not confirm casualties, but health officials said they were preparing a mass casualty response. (Steve Lambert/The Canadian Press via AP)

those that are surviving," she said.

Armstrong said seniors and community members often go on trips on buses to nearby events or casinos. The truck company said in a statement it was heartbroken about the crash but had limited details about what happened.

"We will fully cooperate with the investigation and offer any assistance and support that we can," said William Doherty, CEO of Day & Ross.

Nirmesh Vadera, who was working at a business on the side of the highway when the crash happened, said he went outside and saw a transport truck with a smashed engine on the highway. The bus was on fire in the grass on the side of the road. First responders were trying to get people out of the burning vehicle, he said.

"It was burning and all the (firefighters) and medical help and everybody was trying to get them away from the fire," he said.

The crash brought back memories of the 2018 bus crash in the neighboring province of Saskatchewan that killed 16 people from the Humboldt Broncos minor league hockey team. Lasson said investigators in that crash are assisting.

"Sadly this is a day in Manitoba and across Canada that will be remembered as one of tragedy and incredible sadness," said Hill, the RCMP commanding officer.

Students meet under trees as schools shelter villagers displaced by Philippine volcano

By JIM GOMEZ AND AARON FAVILA Associated Press



Students hold class under trees because the school was converted into a temporary evacuation center at Malilipot town, Albay province, northeastern Philippines, Thursday, June 15, 2023. Thousands of residents have left the mostly poor farming communities within a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) radius of Mayon's crater in forced evacuations since volcanic activity spiked last week. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)

mostly grade and high school campuses. Every classroom has turned into an overcrowded sanctuary for several families with sleeping mats, bags of clothes, cooking stoves and toys for children.

MALILIPOT, Philippines (AP) — Nearly 20,000 people have fled from an erupting Philippine volcano and taken shelter in schools, disrupting education for thousands of students, many of whom are having classes in chapels and tents or under trees, officials said Friday.

The Mayon volcano in northeastern Albay province, one of the deadliest of 24 active volcanoes across the Philippine archipelago, began expelling lava late Sunday in a gentle eruption that has not caused any injuries or death. But it could drag on for months and cause a prolonged humanitarian crisis, officials warned.

Most of those forced to evacuate live in farming villages within a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) radius of the volcano's crater that has long been designated as a permanent danger zone but has been home to thriving communities for generations.

The evacuees were directed to more than 20 emergency shelters, which are

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More than 17,000 students in five Albay towns are among affected by the displacements for the eruption. About 80% are continuing their daily school lessons through an emergency system in which parents teach their children at home or elsewhere using school-provided "learning modules," said Alvin Cruz of the Department of Education in Albay.

The temporary distant-learning approach for students was extensively used during the two years of the coronavirus pandemic, when most of the Philippines was under police-enforced quarantine that restricted people to their homes.

"We came from the pandemic and the learning loss was grave, and now we have the Mayon volcano erupting," Cruz told The Associated Press. "Our challenge now is how to track the displaced school children so we can give their parents the learning modules."

Some teachers are trying to continue in-person classes, meeting with their students inside village halls, chapels, gymnasiums and daycare centers, outside in gardens and under trees, or even in school corridors, Cruz said.

"We can't do anything because we're in an emergency," he said. "We will always find ways to ensure the learning continuity."

At the San Jose elementary school campus now crammed with more than 2,400 displaced villagers in Malilipot town, AP journalists saw teachers holding classes along narrow open-air walkways, in a flower garden, inside a tiny guest hut and under the shade of a tree.

"Life must go on despite the volcano," teacher Shirley Banzagales said as she held a mathematics class for 13 children in uniform under a mango tree. "We are now essentially in an evacuation camp, but I have to continue teaching my students."

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. flew to Albay on Wednesday to reassure displaced villagers, hand out food and discuss with the provincial governor and town mayors the impact of the eruption on villagers, schoolchildren and the province's economy.

The eruption is the latest natural calamity to test the administration of Marcos, who took office last June in a Southeast Asian nation regarded as one of the most disaster-prone in the world. About 20 typhoons and storms lash the Philippines every year, and the archipelago with 24 active volcanoes is shaken by frequent earthquakes.

Marcos told evacuees at one center that it could be up to three months before the volcanic eruption eases and allows them to return home.

Some of the displaced villagers have complained about heat and overcrowding in emergency shelters, and local officials pledged to provide more electric fans and improve their condition.

Albay's governor, Edcel Greco Lagman, expanded the permanent danger zone around Mayon to a 7-kilometer radius Monday and has warned people living nearby to be ready to move out quickly if the volcano's conditions should intensify.

Mayon appeared calm Friday, though government volcanologists said lava was still flowing slowly down its slopes and could not be seen easily under the bright sun.

The 2,462-meter (8,077-foot) volcano is a top tourist draw in the Philippines because of its picturesque conical shape, but is the most active of the country's 24 known volcanoes. It last erupted violently in 2018, displacing tens of thousands. An 1814 eruption buried entire villages and killed more than 1,000 people.

Associated Press journalist Joael Calupitan contributed to this report.

Chinese spies breached hundreds of public, private networks, security firm says

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

Suspected state-backed Chinese hackers used a security hole in a popular email security appliance to break into the networks of hundreds of public and private sector organizations globally, nearly a third of them government agencies including foreign ministries, the cybersecurity firm Mandiant said Thursday.

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"This is the broadest cyber espionage campaign known to be conducted by a China-nexus threat actor since the mass exploitation of Microsoft Exchange in early 2021," Charles Carmakal, Mandiant's chief technical officer, said in a emailed statement. That hack compromised tens of thousands of computers globally.

In a blog post Thursday, Google-owned Mandiant expressed "high confidence" that the group exploiting a software vulnerability in Barracuda Networks' Email Security Gateway was engaged in "espionage activity in support of the People's Republic of China." It said the activity began as early as October.

The hackers sent emails containing malicious file attachments to gain access to targeted organizations' devices and data, Mandiant said. Of those organizations, 55% were from the Americas, 22% from Asia Pacific and 24% from Europe, the Middle East and Africa and they included foreign ministries in Southeast Asia, foreign trade offices and academic organizations in Taiwan and Hong Kong, the company said.

Mandiant said the majority impact in the Americas may partially reflect the geography of Barracuda's customer base.

Barracuda announced on June 6 that some of its email security appliances had been hacked as early as October, giving the intruders a back door into compromised networks. The hack was so severe the California company recommended fully replacing the appliances.

After discovering it in mid-May, Barracuda released containment and remediation patches but the hacking group, which Mandiant identifies as UNC4841, altered their malware to try to maintain access, Mandiant said. The group then "countered with high frequency operations targeting a number of victims located in at least 16 different countries."

Word of the breach arrived with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken departing for China this weekend as part of the Biden administration's push to repair deteriorating ties between Washington and Beijing.

His visit had initially been planned for early this year but was postponed indefinitely after the discovery and shutdown of what the U.S. said was a Chinese spy balloon over the United States.

Mandiant said the targeting at both the organizational and individual account levels, focused on issues that are high policy priorities for China, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. It said the hackers searched for email accounts of people working for governments of political or strategic interest to China at the time they were participating in diplomatic meetings with other countries.

In a emailed statement Thursday, Barracuda said about 5% of its active Email Security Gateway appliances worldwide showed evidence of potential compromise. It said it was providing replacement appliances to affected customers at no cost.

The U.S. government has accused Beijing of being its principal cyberespionage threat, with state-backed



FILE - Attendees walk past an electronic display showing recent cyberattacks in China at the China Internet Security Conference in Beijing, on Sept. 12, 2017. Hackers linked to China were likely behind the exploitation of a software security hole in cybersecurity firm Barracuda Networks' email security feature that affected public and private organizations globally, according to an investigation by security firm Mandiant. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein, File)

Chinese hackers stealing data from both the private and public sector.

In terms of raw intelligence affecting the U.S., China's largest electronic infiltrations have targeted OPM, Anthem, Equifax and Marriott.

Earlier this year, Microsoft said state-backed Chinese hackers have been targeting U.S. critical infrastructure and could be laying the technical groundwork for the potential disruption of critical communications between the U.S. and Asia during future crises.

China says the U.S. also engages in cyberespionage against it, hacking into computers of its universities and companies.

AP Business Writer Zen Soo contributed from Hong Kong.

Sam Bankman-Fried could face 2 criminal trials, with prosecution on some charges delayed until 2024

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press



FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried, right, leaves Manhattan federal court, Thursday June 15, 2023, in New York. Bankman-Fried's lawyers encountered a skeptical federal judge when they argued that he should toss out criminal fraud charges their client faces after the collapse of his cryptocurrency business. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

NEW YORK (AP) — FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried may face two criminal trials after a federal judge on Thursday granted a request by prosecutors to delay a trial on some of the charges until next year.

Bankman-Fried faces trial in October on charges brought against him last year. Judge Lewis A. Kaplan in Manhattan set a March 11 trial date for him on newer charges filed earlier this year.

Kaplan chose to schedule two trials after prosecutors said they will only go ahead with the newer charges if authorities in the Bahamas — where Bankman-Fried was first arrested — agree to it.

The judge acted hours after Bankman-Fried appeared before Kaplan as his lawyers argued for dismissal of charges alleging that he and other top executives cheated investors and looted FTX customer deposits, in part to fund lavish lifestyles. Kaplan

seemed skeptical toward some of their arguments but didn't immediately rule.

When one defense lawyer finished speaking, the judge told him: "I congratulate you on an extraordinarily imaginative argument."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Thane Rehn told Kaplan charges brought in a rewritten indictment in February and again in March require approval from Bahamian authorities to comply with the terms of a U.S. Extradition Treaty that was activated when the man once viewed by some as a cryptocurrency visionary was extradited from the Bahamas in December.

Those new charges included a claim that Bankman-Fried directed the payment of \$40 million in bribes to a Chinese official or Chinese officials to free \$1 billion in cryptocurrency that was frozen in early 2021.

Rehn said prosecutors will not continue with the new charges unless it obtains the waiver, citing "an

interest in observing diplomatic relationships." He said discussions with Bahamian authorities prior to the unsealing of the superseding indictment led prosecutors to believe the waiver will be delivered.

He said a trial based on the original indictment will last four to five weeks, about a week shorter than it would be with the new charges included.

Bankman-Fried, 31 — referred to by crypto enthusiasts as "SBF" — has pleaded not guilty to all charges as he awaits trial at his parent's home in Palo Alto, California, where the terms of his \$250 million personal recognizance bond severely limit his online communications and ability to move money. If convicted, he could face years in prison. U.S. Attorney Damian Williams has called it "one of the biggest frauds in American history."

In asking the judge to dismiss the indictment, his lawyers have argued that the charges are flawed, saying they are duplicative, vague and non-specific and the kinds of things that usually result in regulatory enforcement actions rather than criminal charges.

"They're trying to criminalize a civil matter," argued attorney Christian Everdell as he tried to poke holes in various charges facing his client, including a bank fraud conspiracy charge. It was Everdell who prompted the judge to praise his "extraordinarily imaginative argument."

Prosecutors contend that Bankman-Fried and other executives in his cryptocurrency operation cheated investors and looted FTX customer deposits to make lavish real estate purchases, donate money to politicians and make risky trades at Alameda Research, his cryptocurrency hedge fund trading firm.

FTX entered bankruptcy in November when the global exchange ran out of money after the equivalent of a bank run.

Bill Cosby accusers seek to expand time frames for lawsuits by sex-assault victims

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Legal Affairs Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A group of women who accused Bill Cosby of sexual assault and were dismayed when he had his conviction overturned and left prison are trying again to seek justice in the courts, by urging states to give them more time to pursue civil damages.

More than a dozen women have sued the actor and comedian since his June 2021 release, including nine who brought cases Wednesday in Nevada, weeks after successfully lobbying to eliminate the statute of limitations for adult survivors in the state.

They join advocates who battled the Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts and other institutions in the debate over how long adult victims should have to file suit. That debate has intensified in the years since the #MeToo movement exploded onto the national scene, as some states extend deadlines for lawsuits, eliminate them altogether or enact so-called lookback laws estab-



FILE - Bill Cosby arrives for his sentencing hearing at the Montgomery County Courthouse, Sept. 24, 2018, in Norristown, Pa. A group of women who accused Cosby of sexual assault and were dismayed when he had his conviction overturned and left prison are trying again to seek justice in the courts, by urging states to give them more time to pursue civil damages. (AP Photo/Matt Slocum, File)

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lishing windows of a year or two to sue.

Nevada dropped its statute of limitations on May 31. In New York, lawmakers enacted a one-year window for anyone abused as an adult to sue that runs through November. And at least three states have abolished deadlines for people who were abused as children to sue.

Cosby has been accused of sexual misconduct by more than 60 women but was only arrested in one case given the shorter time frames that many states have for pursuing criminal charges.

"When Cosby was in jail, there was a sense of justice, even if it wasn't for what individually happened to them," said lawyer Jordan Rutsky of New York, who represents 13 Cosby accusers with suits pending in Nevada, New York and New Jersey.

"(Then) he was not only released but took the position that he was exonerated ... and there was a feeling of justice being robbed," Rutsky said. "And so when these laws have been changed, this has been a way for these women to finally seek the justice that has been denied them."

Their efforts echo the fight to give child sex assault victims more time to come forward and decide whether or not to sue. More than 10,000 such suits were filed in New York alone during a two-year window.

One of the first to file during New York's one-year window for adult victims was writer E. Jean Carroll, whose claim against former President Donald Trump went to trial and recently resulted in a \$5 million judgment in her favor.

Cosby, now 85, was freed from state prison the day the Pennsylvania Supreme Court threw out a jury verdict that found he had drugged and sexually assaulted a Temple University women's basketball staffer after inviting her to his home in 2004.

The decision stemmed from a long-running court fight over whether the prosecutor in the 2015 case was bound by his predecessor's verbal promise in 2005 not to charge the comedian. Cosby — once admired for breaking racial barriers in the 1950s as a Black actor and later known as "America's dad" for his 1980s sitcom work — served nearly three years in prison of a three- to 10-year term.

Cosby spokesman Andrew Wyatt on Thursday blasted the Nevada accusers and their lawyers, in part for filing the lawsuit just before the June 19 Juneteenth holiday marking the emancipation of enslaved African Americans.

"It is disappointing to see that these alleged distractors are able to monetize false allegations against Mr. Cosby," Wyatt said in a statement. "Mr. Cosby continues to invoke his constitutional rights by saying 'Not Guilty' and vehemently denying all of these alleged allegations waged against him."

Cosby settled a 2005 lawsuit filed by Andrea Constand, the lone accuser in the later criminal trial, after giving a damaging deposition in 2006. His insurer settled a defamation lawsuit in Massachusetts involving seven women while he was in prison.

And the Nevada case follows a flurry of suits since his release, including one filed in California by a woman who said Cosby sexually abused her at the Playboy Mansion in 1975 when she was 16. That case settled for \$500,000.

Plaintiff Lise-Lotte Lublin said she worked to change the law in her native Nevada so she too could have her day in court. She accuses Cosby of spiking her drink and raping her at a Las Vegas hotel in 1989. The new law, passed by unanimous vote, rescinds what had been a two-year deadline to sue.

"We prevailed through determination, by showing up and testifying, by pouring our hearts out to the senate and assembly and revealing our darkest moments of fear and anguish," she said Thursday. "We all fought to ensure that survivors' voices could be heard (for) generations to come."

Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo, a Republican, said he hoped the new law would bring some closure to victims.

"It doesn't fix it, but it helps," Lombardo said, according to KVTN-TV. "With the passage of time people tend to forget the victim, but the victim never forgets."

Follow Legal Affairs Writer Maryclaire Dale on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Maryclairedale>.

Conor McGregor is accused of sexually assaulting a woman at an NBA Finals game in Miami

MIAMI (AP) — The NBA and the Miami Heat are investigating an allegation that former UFC champion Conor McGregor sexually assaulted a woman inside an arena bathroom after Game 4 of the NBA Finals.

The woman's attorney, Ariel Mitchell, said her client has provided Miami police with the clothing she was wearing that night and that a report was filed. Miami police did not respond when asked Thursday evening whether they were investigating.

McGregor's attorney said the fighter denied any wrongdoing. "Mr. McGregor will not be intimidated," said the attorney, Barbara Llanes.

In letters sent to the NBA, the Heat and McGregor's representatives, Mitchell detailed her client's allegations and said the client would discuss "reasonable settlement offers" before June 12 or else proceed with litigation.

"We are aware of the allegations and are conducting a full investigation," read a statement from the Heat. "Pending the outcome of the investigation, we will withhold further comment."

The NBA had a similar statement, saying it was working with the Heat to gather information.

The alleged incident happened on the same night McGregor knocked out the Heat mascot in a midgame bit that went wrong.

Burnie — more specifically, the man who occupies Burnie's costume — briefly sought medical attention Friday night after taking two punches from McGregor during a third-quarter stoppage of Game 4 of the NBA Finals between the Heat and the Denver Nuggets.

The employee, who was not identified, received pain medication and was recovering, the team said.

McGregor was there as a promotional gimmick for a pain-relief spray — and was booed by many in the Miami crowd even before the bit started. The flame mascot was wearing oversized boxing gloves and a robe akin to what a fighter would wear entering the ring for a bout. McGregor hit Burnie with a left hook, knocking him down, then punched the mascot again after he hit the floor.

McGregor then tried to "spray" the mascot with the pain-relief product, while several members of the Heat's in-game promotional team dragged Burnie off the court.

McGregor hasn't fought since injuring his left leg in a loss to Dustin Poirier at UFC 264 in July 2021. His last win came in January 2020.

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

June temperatures briefly passed key climate threshold. Scientists expect more such spikes

BERLIN (AP) — Worldwide temperatures briefly exceeded a key warming threshold earlier this month, a hint of heat and its harms to come, scientists worry.

The mercury has since dipped again, but experts say the short surge marked a new global heat record for June and indicates more extremes ahead as the planet enters an El Niño phase that could last years.

Researchers at the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service said Thursday that the start of June saw global surface air temperatures rise 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels for the first time. That is the threshold governments said they would try to stay within at a 2015 summit in Paris.

"Just because we've temporarily gone over 1.5 degrees doesn't mean we've breached the Paris Agreement limit," cautioned Samantha Burgess, deputy director of the Copernicus program. For that to happen the globe needs to exceed that threshold for a much longer time period, such as a couple of decades instead of a couple of weeks.

Still, the 11 days spent at the 1.5-degree threshold shows how important it is for scientists to keep a close watch on the planet's health, not least because previous spikes above 1.5 have all happened dur-

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ing winter or spring in the northern hemisphere, she said. "It's really critical to monitor the situation, to understand what implications this has for the summer to come."

"As a climate scientist I feel like I am watching a global train wreck in slow motion. It's quite frustrating," said University of Victoria's Andrew Weaver, who wasn't part of the measurements.

That's because a three-year La Niña phase — which tends to dampen the effects of global warming — has given way to the opposite, an El Niño period, which could add another half-degree or more to average temperatures.

"The expectation is that 2024 will be even warmer than 2023 as this El Niño continues to develop," said Burgess.

"We know as well the warmer the global climate is, the more likely we are to have extreme events and the more severe those extreme events may be," she said. "So there's a direct correlation between the degree of global warming and the frequency and intensity of extreme events."

Stefan Rahmstorf of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research said the Copernicus data "are a reminder of how close we are to the 1.5 C global warming limit, beyond which there are major risks for humanity in terms of climate instability and ecosystem system losses."

Rob Jackson, a Stanford University climate scientist who like Rahmstorf wasn't involved in collecting the Copernicus data, said its significance is still unclear.

"But sometime in the next few years we will shatter global temperature records," he said. "It's the coming El Niño, yes. But it isn't just El Niño. We've loaded the climate system. No one should be surprised when we set extended global records. 1.5 C is coming fast; it may already be here."

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.

Who's running for president? See a rundown of the 2024 candidates

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

With roughly a year and a half until the 2024 presidential contest, the field of candidates is largely set. Former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis have dominated the early Republican race as the other candidates look for an opening to take them on. President Joe Biden faces a couple of Democratic challengers but is expected to secure his party's nomination.

Here's a look at the candidates competing for the Republican and Democratic nominations:

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY FIELD

DONALD TRUMP

The former president announced his third campaign for the White House on Nov. 15 at his Mar-a-Lago resort, forcing the party to again decide whether to embrace a candidate whose refusal to accept defeat in 2020 sparked the U.S. Capitol attack and still dominates his speeches.

The GOP front-runner remains hugely popular in the Republican Party, despite making history as the first president to be impeached twice and inciting the Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021. Referring to himself as America's "most pro-life president," Trump's three nominations of conservative judges to the Supreme Court paved the way for the reversal of Roe v. Wade, which had legalized abortion nationwide for nearly 50 years. Sweeping criminal justice reforms he signed into law in 2019 eased mandatory minimum sentences and gave judges more discretion in sentencing.

In March, Trump became the first former U.S. president to be criminally charged, facing 34 felony counts of falsifying business records as part of a hush money scheme. He is now under indictment on dozens of charges related to alleged mishandling and retention of classified documents.

RON DESANTIS

The Florida governor officially launched his 2024 presidential campaign on May 24 in a glitch-marred Twitter announcement, casting himself as Trump's only legitimate Republican rival.

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Heralding his state as a place "where woke goes to die," DeSantis has framed his campaign around a desire to bring the conservative policies he championed in Florida to the national stage. He has made a name for himself battling with Disney over the entertainment giant's opposition to a bill dubbed by critics as the "Don't Say Gay" law, which bans instruction or classroom discussion of LGBTQ issues in Florida public schools for all grades.

Under his governorship, the state has also banned abortions after six weeks of pregnancy and blocked public colleges from using federal or state funding on diversity programs

MIKE PENCE

The former vice president opened his White House bid on June 7 in Iowa with forceful criticism of Trump, accusing his onetime boss of abandoning conservative principles and arguing Trump's Jan. 6 action and inaction amounted to a dereliction of duty.

While lauding the accomplishments of the "Trump-Pence administration," Pence has said Trump endangered the vice president's family and the lives of everyone at the U.S. Capitol by falsely insisting that Pence had the power to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

He faces an uphill battle in a party in which Trump remains the most dominant figure.

TIM SCOTT

The South Carolina senator launched his campaign May 22 in his hometown of North Charleston with what he's casting as an optimistic and compassionate message that can serve as a contrast with the rest of the field.

The Senate's sole Black Republican, Scott has rejected the notion that the country is inherently racist and repudiated the teaching of critical race theory. He has said his party and the country are at a crossroads and must choose between "victimhood or victory."

NIKKI HALEY

The former United Nations ambassador and South Carolina governor became the first major GOP challenger to Trump when she kicked off her campaign on Feb. 15 in Charleston. She is the only woman in the GOP field.

The former Trump Cabinet official once said she wouldn't challenge her former boss for the White House in 2024. But she changed her mind, citing the country's economic troubles and the need for "generational change," a nod to the 77-year-old Trump's age.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY

The wealthy biotech entrepreneur and author of "Woke, Inc." kicked off his presidential campaign on Feb. 21 with a video and op-ed.

The son of Indian immigrants, he has gained stature in conservative circles for his criticism of the environmental, social and corporate governance movement that aims to promote socially responsible investing. He has largely self-funded his campaign so far.

CHRIS CHRISTIE

The former two-term New Jersey governor went after Trump when announcing his presidential campaign on June 6 in New Hampshire, calling the former president a "lonely, self-consumed, self-serving mirror hog" and arguing that he's the only one who can stop him.

Christie, a 2016 presidential candidate and former Trump adviser, has said that others may be afraid to challenge the former president, but he has no such qualms. "The reason I'm going after Trump is twofold," Christie said. "One, he deserves it. And two, it's the way to win."

ASA HUTCHINSON

The former two-term Arkansas governor launched his presidential campaign on April 26 in Bentonville, pledging to "bring out the best of America" and to reform federal law enforcement agencies.

He announced his campaign shortly after Trump was indicted by a grand jury in New York and has called for the former president to drop out of the race, saying, "The office is more important than any individual person."

DOUG BURGUM

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The two-term North Dakota governor announced his candidacy on June 7 in Fargo. A former computer software entrepreneur, he is known to few outside his home state but portrays himself as a commonsense, rural-state conservative experienced in energy policy.

LARRY ELDER

The conservative talk radio host announced his campaign on April 20 on Fox News' "Tucker Carlson Tonight." He made his first bid for public office in 2021 in a failed effort to replace California Gov. Gavin Newsom in a recall election.

FRANCIS SUAREZ

The Miami mayor announced his presidential bid on June 15 on ABC's "Good Morning America." Suarez, a two-term mayor first elected in 2017, is also president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. He is the only Hispanic candidate in the race.

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY FIELD

JOE BIDEN

President Joe Biden formally announced his reelection campaign on April 25 in a video, asking voters for time to "finish this job."

Biden, the oldest president in America history, would be 86 at the end of a second term, and his age has prompted some of his critics to question whether he can serve effectively. A notable swath of Democratic voters has indicated they would prefer he not run, though he is expected to easily win the Democratic nomination.

Biden, who has vowed to "restore the soul of America," plans to run on his record. He spent his first two years as president combating the coronavirus pandemic and pushing through major bills such as the bipartisan infrastructure package and legislation to promote high-tech manufacturing and climate measures.

ROBERT F. KENNEDY JR.

The bestselling author and environmental lawyer launched a long-shot bid to challenge Biden on April 19 in Boston.

A nephew of President John F. Kennedy and son of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, he has emerged as one of the leading voices of the anti-vaccine movement, with public health experts and even members of his own family describing his work as misleading and dangerous. He has also been linked to far-right figures in recent years.

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

Self-help author Marianne Williamson entered the Democratic primary on March 4 in Washington, calling for "a vision of justice and love that is so powerful that it will override the forces of hatred and injustice and fear."

During her unsuccessful 2020 presidential campaign, she proposed the creation of a Department of Peace and argued the federal government should pay large financial reparations to Black Americans as atonement for centuries of slavery and discrimination.

Meg Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>

Guardisman indicted on charges of disclosing classified national defense information

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Massachusetts Air National Guardsman accused of leaking highly classified military documents has been indicted on federal felony charges, the Justice Department said Thursday.

Jack Teixeira faces six counts in the indictment of willful retention and transmission of national defense information.

He was arrested in April on charges of sharing highly classified military documents about Russia's war in Ukraine and other top national security issues in a chat room on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers. The stunning breach exposed to the world unvarnished secret assessments of Russia's war in Ukraine, the capabilities and geopolitical interests of other nations and other

national security issues.

"As laid out in the indictment, Jack Teixeira was entrusted by the United States government with access to classified national defense information — including information that reasonably could be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to national security if shared," Attorney General Merrick B. Garland said in a statement announcing the indictment.

Each count in the indictment is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

A judge last month ordered him to remain jailed as he awaits trial, saying that releasing Teixeira would pose a risk that he would attempt to flee the country or obstruct justice.

His family has expressed support for him, and his lawyers had pressed the judge to release him to his father, saying he has no criminal history.

FDA advisers endorse updating COVID vaccines to target latest omicron strain

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writers

The COVID-19 vaccines are on track for a big recipe change this fall.

Today's vaccines still contain the original coronavirus strain, the one that started the pandemic — even though that was long ago supplanted by mutated versions as the virus rapidly evolves.

Thursday, the Food and Drug Administration's scientific advisers said the next round of shots in the U.S. should only include protection against the newest variants that are now dominant worldwide — a branch of the omicron family tree named XBB.

The FDA will make the final decision. Vaccine makers said during the meeting that they could have updated vaccines available within months, depending on the strain.

While infections have declined, the virus could be a real concern next winter, FDA's vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks said as the daylong meeting began.

"We're concerned that we may have another wave of COVID-19 during a time when the virus has further evolved, immunity of the population has waned further, and we move indoors for wintertime," he said.

Here are some things to know:

WHY ANOTHER ROUND OF SHOTS?

The FDA had told Americans to expect an updated fall vaccine against COVID-19, just like they get a new flu shot every fall. Even though most of the population has either been infected or had at least one round of vaccinations, the coronavirus keeps churning out new varieties.

What's in use in the U.S. now are combination shots from Pfizer and Moderna that mix the original strain with protection against last year's most common omicron variants, called BA.4 and BA.5. But just 17% of Americans rolled up their sleeves for a combo booster.

And while the FDA did allow seniors and others at high risk to get an extra booster dose this spring, most people will be many months beyond their last shot by fall.

Those currently available shots do still help prevent severe disease and death even as XBB variants have taken over. But protection gradually wanes over time and was short-lived against milder infection even before the virus, inevitably, evolved again.

"We need a better vaccine. We should be updating it," said one adviser, Dr. Eric Rubin, an infectious disease doctor at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

SHARPENING PROTECTION

Last year when regulators were struggling to decide how to update the vaccine, a combo shot seemed like the safest bet. Omicron was pretty new, and there was no way to know how long it would stick around or if the next big coronavirus change would more resemble the original strain.

Keeping the original strain in the shot actually has a downside called "imprinting." After repeated exposure to the original strain, people's immune systems tended to recognize and respond more strongly to it than to the half of the new booster dose that was brand new.

The FDA advisory panel agreed that the fall shot should just target XBB variants. The World Health

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Organization's vaccine advisers and European regulators recently made similar recommendations.

PREDICTING WHAT WILL HIT THIS WINTER

Another challenge: Deciding which XBB variant to target — since what's spreading now likely will have mutated again by winter.

Regulators will be making their best guess, just like they do every year in setting the recipe for the fall flu vaccine.

The FDA has identified three XBB subtypes as the top strain choices. Vaccine makers already have been developing XBB-targeted formulas. At the meeting Thursday, there was a consensus that this fall's vaccine target variant XBB.1.5, the most common version infecting people in recent months.

HOW MANY MORE SHOTS?

Older adults and others at high risk because of seriously weak immune systems continue to have the highest rates of hospitalization from COVID-19 even as cases have declined. One question is whether they'll be urged to get a single fall shot or be eligible for more than one.

Another is how many doses the youngest children who've never been vaccinated would need.

Ultimately, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will make the final recommendations on who should get the updated shot and when.

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.

MLB commissioner suspects many pitchers are using banned sticky stuff

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred thinks the use of banned sticky stuff is more widespread than the three pitchers ejected this season for illegal grip aids.

"I am sure that out of an abundance of caution and good judgment, umpires have had questionable situations that they decided: just not quite sure," Manfred said Thursday following an owners meeting. "And I am 100% certain they err on the side of no violation."

New York Mets pitcher Drew Smith was suspended for 10 games Wednesday, a day after he was ejected. That followed similar bans for Mets teammate Max Scherzer on April 20 and Yankees pitcher Domingo Germán on May 17.

"We talk to the umpires after each situation like that. I think it is fair to say across the board the violation situations were in the unquestionable zone," Manfred said. "It was absolutely clear that the level of stickiness in each situation could not be have been produced by the allowable use of a rosin bag,"

Five pitchers have been suspended since MLB began its crackdown on foreign substances in June 2021, Seattle's Hector Santiago and Arizona's Caleb Smith served suspensions in 2021.

"Nothing arbitrary about the enforcement," Manfred said. "The umpires all receive uniform training on what the use of rosin on the mound in the way that is allowed under the rules, what that feels like and what it feels like when you're doing something illegal, either combining it with rubbing alcohol or sunscreen or some other sticky substance.

"I don't accept the premise that that it's arbitrary. And, look, the sticky substance phenomenon was altering the way the game was being played on the field. And we feel that from an integrity and fairness perspective it's our obligation to do everything we can to make sure those rules are enforced. Where the violations happen to fall, that's a product of who's violating, in my view."

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

Ex-NYC Mayor de Blasio ordered to pay \$475K for misusing public funds on failed White House bid

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio was ordered Thursday to pay \$475,000 by a city ethics board that found he misused public funds on a police security detail during his failed presidential bid.

The hefty fine is the largest ever handed out by New York's Conflicts of Interest Board, capping off a yearslong investigation into the two-term mayor's use of taxpayer dollars to cover the travel costs of NYPD officers who accompanied him on cross-country campaign stops.

Under the ruling, which he has vowed to appeal, de Blasio, a Democrat, will be forced to reimburse the city for \$320,000 spent on the officers' flights, hotels, meals and rental cars during the four-month campaign. He will also have to pay a fine of \$25,000 for each of the security detail's 31 out-of-state trips, amounting to \$155,000.

The order was handed down by the Conflicts of Interest Board Chair, Milton Williams, who found that de Blasio "plainly violated" the city's prohibition on using public resources to advance a political campaign. De Blasio was advised of this rule prior to his campaign, but "disregarded the Board's advice," Williams wrote in his ruling.

In a statement, an attorney for de Blasio, Andrew G. Celli Jr., described the ruling as "reckless and arbitrary," arguing that recent acts of political violence underscored the security needs of public servants.

"In the wake of the January 6th insurrection, the shootings of Congressmembers Giffords and Scalise, and almost daily threats directed at local leaders around the country, the COIB's (Conflicts of Interest Board's) action — which seeks to saddle elected officials with security costs that the City has properly borne for decades — is dangerous, beyond the scope of their powers, and illegal," he wrote.

De Blasio has faced previous allegations of misusing his security detail. Months before he left office in 2021, a report by the city's Department of Investigation found he treated the officers as a "concierge service," using them to move his daughter into an apartment and shuttle his son to college.

De Blasio did consult with the Conflicts of Interest Board about the costs of his security prior to announcing his presidential campaign in May 2019. He was told the salaries for NYPD officers would be covered, but that all other costs associated with their travel would not, the board said.

During interviews with investigators, de Blasio said he did "not have a 100% clear understanding" of the guidance, and "suggested that it was an issue for others to resolve," according to Kevin Casey, an administrative law judge that recommended the fine imposed by the Conflicts of Interest Board.

Casey accused de Blasio of showing a "deliberate indifference" to the city's ethics board, then blaming his own employees for the error.

"It is troubling that during his DOI (Department of Investigation) interview respondent repeatedly attempted to shift blame to his lawyers and campaign staff, while failing to recognize his personal responsibility for following the law," Casey wrote.

In an interview with New York Magazine published earlier this week, de Blasio described his White House bid as a mistake.

"I think my values were the right values, and I think I had something to offer, but it was not right on a variety of levels," he said. "I think I got into a place of just extreme stubbornness and tunnel vision."

A Vermont man charged with killing his mother at sea over inheritance dies awaiting trial

By LISA RATHKE and DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

The Vermont man charged with killing his mother off the coast of New England in a scheme to inherit millions of dollars has died in jail while awaiting trial, federal authorities said Thursday.

Nathan Carman, 29, pleaded not guilty last year to fraud and first-degree murder in the death of his

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mother, Linda Carman, and was scheduled to go on trial in October.

An eight-count indictment also says Carman shot and killed his wealthy grandfather John Chakalos as he slept in 2013, in order to obtain money and property from his grandfather's estate. But the indictment does not charge Carman with his grandfather's killing, and he had consistently denied any involvement in the two deaths.

The cause of Carman's death was not immediately clear. He was the sole occupant of a county jail cell in New Hampshire when guards found him dead at around 2:30 a.m., said Doug Losue, superintendent of the Cheshire Corrections Department, which runs the facility. Losue said the death was being investigated by police in Keene, which is near the Vermont state line.

The U.S. Marshals Service confirmed Carman died Thursday in their custody, adding that the service does not own or operate detention facilities but partners with state and local governments to house approximately 65% of its prisoner population.

One of his lawyers, Martin Minnella, said Carman appeared "in good spirits" when he last spoke to his defense team on the phone Wednesday.

"We were meeting with some experts today over Zoom at 12 o'clock. We were prepared to start picking a jury on Oct. 10 and we were confident we were going to win," Minnella said. "I'm just heartbroken because I wanted him to have his day in court."

Carman left a note for his lawyers, but they did not know what it said as of Thursday afternoon, said David Sullivan, Carman's other attorney. Federal prosecutors told them about the note.

Prosecutors say the deaths of Carman's mother and grandfather paved the way for him to inherit an estimated \$7 million — Linda Carman's share of her father's estate. That inheritance remains tied up in probate court in Connecticut, where his three aunts sought to block Carman from receiving any money from his grandfather's estate.

Chakalos' three surviving daughters — Carman's aunts — said in a statement Thursday that they were "deeply saddened" to hear about his death and asked for privacy "while we process this shocking news and its impact on the tragic events surrounding the last several years."

In September 2016, Carman organized a fishing trip with his mother, who lived in Middletown, Connecticut, during which prosecutors say he planned to kill her and report that his boat sank and his mother disappeared in the accident.

He was found floating in an inflatable raft eight days after leaving a Rhode Island marina with his mother, whose body was never recovered. Prosecutors allege he altered the boat to make it more likely to sink. Carman denied that allegation.

Minnella and Sullivan criticized the indictment — including allegations Carman killed his grandfather, saying he was never charged with that crime.

"The whole situation would have come out in court," Minnella said Thursday. "This young man would have been vindicated."

Prosecutors say the inheritance scheme spanned nearly a decade and began with Carman buying a rifle in New Hampshire, which he allegedly used to shoot Chakalos in the man's home in Windsor, Connecticut on Dec. 20, 2013. Carman then discarded his own computer's hard drive and the GPS unit in his truck, prosecutors said.

Police say Carman was the last person to see his grandfather alive and owned a semi-automatic rifle similar to the one used to kill Chakalos — but the firearm disappeared. In 2014, police in Windsor drafted an arrest warrant charging Carman with murder in his grandfather's death, but a state prosecutor declined to sign it and requested more information. No criminal charges were brought until the federal indictment.

In court documents filed in 2018, Carman alleged there was stronger evidence that a woman he described as his grandfather's "mistress" was involved in the killing, suggesting a robbery motive because of Chakalos' wealth.

After Chakalos died, Carman received \$550,000 from two bank accounts his grandfather had set up and that he was the beneficiary of when Chakalos died. He moved from an apartment in Bloomfield, Connecticut, to Vernon, Vermont, in 2014.

He was unemployed much of the time and by the fall of 2016 was low on funds, prosecutors said, which is when he arranged the fishing trip with his mother.

In 2017, investigators began keeping tabs on a lawsuit filed in federal court in Providence, Rhode Island, where insurers and Carman were suing each other over his rejected \$85,000 claim for the loss of his boat, named the "Chicken Pox." The insurance case tied all the evidence together and may have spurred a new effort to charge Carman, current and former investigators said.

The insurers' lawyers laid out a case accusing Carman of plotting both killings and covering them up, using police investigation findings and information they obtained themselves. A judge sided with the insurers in their rejection of Carman's claim.

Rathke reported from Marshfield, Vermont. Collins reported from Hartford, Connecticut. Associated Press writer Kathy McCormack reported from Concord, New Hampshire.

This story has been updated to correct that Carman died in a county jail, not a federal prison.

Jury awards \$25.6 million to white Starbucks manager fired after the arrests of 2 Black men

CAMDEN, N.J. (AP) — Jurors in federal court have awarded \$25.6 million to a former Starbucks regional manager who alleged that she and other white employees were unfairly punished after the high-profile arrests of two Black men at a Philadelphia location in 2018.

Shannon Phillips won \$600,000 in compensatory damages and \$25 million in punitive damages on Monday after a jury in New Jersey found that race was a determinative factor in Phillips' firing, in violation of federal and state anti-discrimination.

In April 2018, a Philadelphia store manager called police on two Black men who were sitting in the coffee shop without ordering anything. Phillips, then regional manager of operations in Philadelphia, southern New Jersey, and elsewhere, was not involved with arrests. However, she said she was ordered to put a white manager who also wasn't involved on administrative leave for reasons she knew were false, according to her lawsuit.

Phillips said she was fired less than a month later after objecting to the manager being placed on leave amid the uproar, according to her lawsuit.

The company's rationale for suspending the district manager, who was not responsible for the store where the arrests took place, was an allegation that Black store managers were being paid less than white managers, according to the lawsuit. Phillips said that argument made no sense since district managers had no input on employee salaries.

The lawsuit alleged Starbucks was instead taking steps to "punish white employees" who worked in the area "in an effort to convince the community that it had properly responded to the incident."

During closing arguments on Friday, Phillips' lawyer Laura Mattiacci told jurors that the company was looking for a "sacrificial lamb" to calm the outrage and show that it was taking action, Law360 reported. Picking a Black employee for such a purpose "would have blown up in their faces," she said.

Starbucks denied Phillips' allegations, saying the company needed someone with a track record of "strength and resolution" during a crisis and replaced her with a regional manager who had such experience, including navigating the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, Law360 reported.

Phillips' attorney, however, cited earlier testimony from a Black district manager, who was responsible for the store where the arrests took place, who described Phillips as someone beloved by her peers and who worked around the clock after the arrests.

In an email to The Associated Press, Mattiacci confirmed the award amount and said the judge will consider awarding back pay and future pay, as well as attorney's fees. Mattiacci told the New Jersey Law Journal that she will seek about \$3 million for lost pay, and roughly \$1 million on her fee application. Starbucks declined comment Tuesday.

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In the April 2018 incident, Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson were arrested in a Starbucks coffee shop near Tony Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia shortly after the manager called police to report that two men were refusing to either make a purchase or leave the premises. They were later released without charges.

Video of the arrest prompted national outcry and led the current CEO of Starbucks to personally apologize to the men. The company later reached a settlement with both men for an undisclosed sum and an offer of free college education. The company also changed store policies and closed locations across the country for an afternoon for racial-bias training.

The two men also reached a deal with the city of Philadelphia for a symbolic \$1 each and a promise from officials to set up a \$200,000 program for young entrepreneurs. The Philadelphia Police Department adopted a new policy on how to deal with people accused of trespassing on private property — warning businesses against misusing the authority of police officers.

A Missouri doctor's death is steeped in mystery and speculation. Authorities aren't talking

By MARGARET STAFFORD and JOHN HANNA Associated Press

CASSVILLE, Mo. (AP) — John Forsyth was known as a hard-working doctor who cared deeply for his patients and often teased nurses in the emergency room to ease tension. He was a father of eight and newly engaged. He also co-founded a cryptocurrency business with his brother.

His sudden disappearance from a southwestern Missouri town last month — and the eventual discovery of his body in an Arkansas lake — has led those who knew him to wonder what happened to the man who seemed happier than he'd been for some time. A lack of information from law enforcement has only deepened the mystery, prompting amateur sleuths to espouse theories on Facebook.

"It's like the world dropped on us; we're just in shock" said his sister Tiffany Forsyth. "There's a part of me that's not quite sure this is real yet. I guess it comes in steps."

Forsyth, 49, disappeared on May 21 from a parking area at a public swimming pool. His body, which had suffered an apparent gunshot wound, was found nine days later. An autopsy was done, but a report isn't expected for at least two months. Law enforcement officers have released almost no details, except to say there is no danger to the public.

The doctor's family is adamant that his death wasn't a suicide: He had just recently become engaged, and his fiancée was pregnant.

Some true-crime followers on social media have speculated that his death may have been connected to the cryptocurrency company that he co-founded with his brother, Richard Forsyth. Multiple other theories also have surfaced in a Facebook discussion group that has grown to more than 1,000 members. Posts in that group are now closed to public view.

Only 10 days before his disappearance, a judge had finalized Forsyth's divorce — his second from the same woman. The split was amicable, according to family members and the ex-wife's attorney, Ryan Ricketts, who said she was "devastated" by the doctor's death.

Richard Forsyth said his brother was excited about his upcoming marriage and new child and had a plane ticket to go see one of his daughters.

"He said, 'I can't wait to introduce her to you. We're going to have a wonderful life together. We're all going to spend a lot of time together,'" Richard Forsyth said. "... I hadn't seen him that happy for a long time."

Forsyth even texted his fiancée on the day of his disappearance, saying he would see her soon, according to his brother. The fiancée did not answer a social media request for an interview.

Alongside hopeful comments about his future life, however, John Forsyth had recently made cryptic remarks about possibly being in danger, his brother said, adding, "I think he crossed paths with some bad folks and he didn't tell me about them."

CONFLICTING INFORMATION

There has been some confusion about what happened near the public pool where John Forsyth was last

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seen in Cassville, 40 miles (64 kilometers) west of the Ozark Mountains tourist destination of Branson and about half a mile from a hospital where he worked. On May 21, the pool had yet to open for the summer season. Beaver Lake, a man-made reservoir used for recreation and where his body was found, is at least an hour's drive away from Cassville, over twisty highways that snake through the Ozarks.

Initially, Richard Forsyth said security camera footage showed his brother getting into someone else's vehicle. He now says the footage shows that a few minutes after the doctor parked his car, a white SUV arrived, then left shortly afterward. About 10 or 15 minutes after that, the doctor got out of his car and walked away, never to be seen alive again, Richard Forsyth said. Found inside his unlocked car were two cellphones, a laptop and important documents, he said.

So far, authorities have not publicly indicated whether they believe he was murdered, shot accidentally or took his own life. They have not said whether they found the gun that was used or whether the SUV was related to Forsyth's disappearance.

Richard Forsyth said family members have been told it could be a long wait for answers, but they have confidence in the investigating officers.

CRYPTO CONNECTIONS

Authorities have also not indicated how deeply they are looking into Forsyth's connections to crypto.

Online publications covering the industry quickly took note of his death, which was confirmed just seven weeks after authorities in San Francisco charged a tech consultant with the stabbing death of Cash App founder Bob Lee. Prosecutors believe the killing occurred over a dispute involving the suspect's sister.

John and Richard Forsyth founded Onfo LLC, what they called a "network mining" venture, in 2018. At that time, Onfo's website said account holders could earn credits without putting up cash, by referring others to the company.

Onfo's website features a nearly eight-minute video titled, "The U.S. Dollar is Doomed," which says all governments' currencies could collapse. The video promoting the launch of Onfo portrayed bankers and political officials as pigs in suits, describing them as, "drunk on expensive liquor, resting in palaces."

An online Forbes magazine story in 2020 described John Forsyth as a bitcoin millionaire.

But Richard Forsyth said he and his brother were looking to give large numbers of people, including poor people in developing nations, a chance to invest in decentralized, digital currency. He described Onfo as fighting what the brothers believed crypto had become: driven by greed, "about Lamborghinis" and "billionaires and tax evasion."

Paul Sibenik, lead case manager for CipherBlade, an agency that investigates cybercrimes involving crypto, said Onfo's business model resembles pyramid schemes, which rely on an ever-growing number of referrals and cannot be sustained.

"There is not a single legitimate cryptocurrency project that operates in this way," Sibenik said in an email to The Associated Press.

Richard Forsyth acknowledged that others might question whether Onfo was a "multi-level marketing" operation, but added, "The key difference is that we never sold anything." And, he said, it's probably cost them millions of dollars, rather than turning a profit.

"What we are just doing is saying to people, 'Let's build this together,'" he said.

John Forsyth had substantial crypto currency holdings when his second divorce became final last month. The divorce decree evenly split his and his ex-wife's holdings in bitcoin and another digital currency, Ethereum, valuing them at more than \$800,000. The decree also required him to pay an additional \$15,000 a month to his ex-wife as well as \$3,999 a month to support four of their children, ages 10 to 18. The decree estimated the value of John Forsyth's business interests outside his cryptocurrency holdings at \$1 million.

A FRIENDS' AND FAMILY'S FAREWELL

John and Richard Forsyth were among seven siblings in an extended family with more than 100 cousins. The brothers grew up both in southwest Missouri and Alberta, Canada, and had dual American and Canadian citizenship, Richard Forsyth said.

The family had a private funeral Saturday, followed by a public vigil Sunday night in a park in Monett just north of Cassville. There, about 40 people, mostly family members, lit memorial candles and shared

poignant and humorous stories about him.

Colleagues remembered how Forsyth often tried to lighten the mood in the intense emergency room of a hospital in the town of Aurora where he worked. Nurse Leah Tate remarked that he liked to see "just how much he could annoy you," drawing chuckles from those gathered for the memorial service. She said Forsyth once made it his mission to get a nurse to throw something at him at least once a day.

Louise Hensley, a Monett resident and former neighbor of John Forsyth, said he treated her husband, who had Lou Gehrig's disease, for several years.

"He was always so caring about his patients. He was so helpful to my husband and me during that time," said Hensley, who described Forsyth's death as "tragic."

"I was just shocked when I heard a doctor was missing and then saw it was him."

Hanna reported from Topeka, Kansas. Associated Press writers Jim Salter in St. Charles, Missouri; Summer Ballentine in Columbia, Missouri; and Lisa Baumann in Seattle contributed to this report.

Follow John Hanna on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/apjdhanna>

Twitter is the worst major social media platform when it comes to LGBTQ+ safety, says GLAAD

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — All major social media platforms do poorly at protecting LGBTQ+ users from hate speech and harassment — especially those who are transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming, the advocacy group GLAAD said Thursday. But Twitter is the worst.

In its annual Social Media Safety Index, GLAAD gave Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter low or failing scores, saying the platforms don't do enough to keep their users safe. That said, most improved from a year ago.

Twitter, which was acquired by Tesla CEO Elon Musk last October, was the only exception. GLAAD's scorecard called it "the most dangerous platform for LGBTQ people" and the only one that saw its scores decline from last year — to 33% from 45% a year ago.

Twitter's communications staff was eradicated after Musk took over the company and for months inquiries to the press office have been answered only with an automated reply of a poop emoji, as was the case when The Associated Press reached out to the company for comment.

LGBTQ+ advocates have long warned that online hate and harassment can lead to violence offline. But even when it does not, online abuse can take a toll on a person's mental health.

"There isn't a week that goes by that we don't have a doxxing situation for somebody in our community that we have to come in and help them stop it and stop the hate, stop the vitriol and stop the attacks," said GLAAD CEO and President Sarah Kate Ellis referring to the malicious practice that involves gathering private or identifying information and releasing it online without the person's permission, usually in an attempt to harass, threaten, shame or exact revenge. "It's really been amped up to a level that we've never seen before."

On Twitter, attacks on LGBTQ+ users have increased substantially since Elon Musk took over the company last fall, according to multiple advocacy groups.

A big part of the reason is the drastic staffing cuts Musk has enacted since his takeover — there are simply not enough content moderators to handle the flood of problematic tweets that range from hate speech to graphic material and harassment. Musk has also said he views Twitter's previous policies were too restricting.

In April, for instance, Twitter quietly removed a policy against the "targeted misgendering or deadnaming of transgender individuals, raising concerns that the platform is becoming less safe for marginalized groups. Musk has also repeatedly engaged with far-right figures and pushed misinformation to his 143 million followers.

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Twitter, as part of the same retooling of its site policies, also changed how it responds to tweets that violate its rules. While in the past, offending tweets were removed, the company now says it will sometimes restrict a tweet instead of removing it from the platform altogether.

"Twitter is largely a cesspool now. You can't post without getting attacked. There's no room for conversation. It is just about hand-to-hand combat," Ellis said. "And that's what it is. It's like backyard dogfights."

Ellis lamented that before the takeover, Twitter was a "leader" among major social media platforms when it comes to protecting LGBTQ+ users.

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, saw a 15 percentage point score increase for both its platforms, to 61% and 63%, respectively. GLAAD's index measures 12 LGBTQ+-specific indicators, such as explicit protections from hate and harassment for LGBTQ+ users, offering gender pronoun options on profiles, and prohibiting advertising that could be harmful or discriminatory to LGBTQ+ people.

While Meta has improved and has strong policies in place, GLAAD says the company does not consistently enforce them. For instance, the group says for many abusive posts that it reports, Meta will send an automated response stating that due to the high volume of reports it receives, it is not able to review the post.

Meta said in a prepared statement that it works with "civil society organizations around the world in our work to design policies and create tools that foster a safe online environment," including getting input from LGBTQ+ safety and advocacy organizations.

TikTok, which saw its score increase by 14 points to 57%, said it is "proud to have strong policies aimed at protecting LGBTQ+ individuals from harassment and hate speech, including misgendering and dead-naming, and we're always looking to strengthen our approach, informed both by our community and the advice of experts, such as GLAAD."

Google's YouTube, meanwhile, scored 54%, up nine points from 2022.

"Our policies prohibit content that promotes violence or hatred against members of the LGBTQ+ community. Over the last few years, we've made significant progress in our ability to quickly remove this content from our platform and prominently surface authoritative sources in search results and recommendations," said spokesperson Jack Malon.

Musk, in tweets and public statements, has repeatedly said he supports freedom of speech and calls himself a "free speech absolutist" who wants to turn Twitter into a "digital town square" where people with differing views can debate freely. The company's newly installed CEO, Linda Yaccarino, also tweeted recently that "you should have the freedom to speak your mind. We all should."

But GLAAD and other organizations advocating for marginalized groups note that unfettered freedom for one group can infringe on the free speech of others.

"Freedom of speech does not mean I get to, you know, bully and harass people relentlessly," said Jenni Olson, GLAAD's director of social media safety. "And that is why companies have hate speech policies, because ... if someone is bullying and harassing me that actually means that I don't have freedom of speech because I'm afraid to say anything."

Things to know about the Supreme Court ruling upholding the Indian Child Welfare Act

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The Supreme Court has preserved a federal law giving preference to Native American families when it comes to adopting Native children in foster care. The court's 7-2 ruling Thursday leaves in place the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, which aims to reverse centuries of government-sanctioned efforts to weaken tribal identity by separating Native American children from their families and raising them outside their tribal cultures.

Here are some things to know about the law and the issues around it:

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WHAT WAS PURPOSE OF THE 1978 INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT?

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The law requires states to notify tribes when adoption cases involve their members or children eligible for tribal membership, and to try to place them with their extended family, their tribe or other Native American families. It was enacted to address historic injustices: Before the law took effect, between 25% and 35% of Native American children were being taken from their families and placed with adoptive families, in foster care or in institutions. The majority were placed with white families or in boarding schools in attempts to assimilate them. A series of scandals involving the long-closed boarding schools shed light on government-sanctioned efforts to wipe out Native culture by cutting their hair and forbidding them from speaking their languages.

HOW ARE TRIBAL LEADERS REACTING?

Native American leaders are celebrating the ruling as a huge win. A joint statement by Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., Morongo Band of Mission Indians Chairman Charles Martin, Oneida Nation Chairman Tehassi Hill and Quinault Indian Nation President Guy Capoeman said they hope it will "lay to rest the political attacks aimed at diminishing tribal sovereignty." Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren called it a victory for "all Indigenous children and all Indigenous Nations in the United States." The Native American Rights Fund said 497 tribal nations, 62 Native organizations, 23 states, 87 members of Congress and 27 child welfare and adoption organizations signed onto Supreme Court briefs supporting the law.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRIBES AND THE U.S.?

Justice Neal Gorsuch set the ruling in the context of a sweeping history of the relationship between tribal nations and state and federal governments, noting that past Supreme Court rulings at times were confusing or contradictory. "Often, Native American Tribes have come to this Court seeking justice only to leave with bowed heads and empty hands," Gorsuch said. "But that is not because this Court has no justice to offer them. Our Constitution reserves for the Tribes a place — an enduring place — in the structure of American life. It promises them sovereignty for as long as they wish to keep it. And it secures that promise by divesting States of authority over Indian affairs and by giving the federal government certain significant (but limited and enumerated) powers aimed at building a lasting peace."

WHAT WAS THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE ACT?

Three white families and several Republican-led states including Texas claimed the law is based on race in violation of the equal protection clause and puts the interests of tribes ahead of what's best for the children. They also argued that the law gives the federal government excessive power over adoptions and foster placements, which are generally overseen by states, and challenged whether Congress even has the authority to pass laws addressing Native American issues. The lead plaintiffs, Chad and Jennifer Brackeen of Fort Worth, Texas, adopted a Native American child after a lengthy battle with the Navajo Nation, one of the two largest tribes in the U.S. The couple wants to adopt the boy's 5-year-old half-sister, who has lived with them since infancy; the Navajo Nation opposes it. Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented, with Alito writing that the decision "disserves the rights and interests of these children."

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Justice Brett Kavanaugh cautioned in a separate concurring opinion that the court didn't address the merits of whether the law provides an unconstitutional racial preference for Native foster and adoptive parents. "In my view, the equal protection issue is serious," Kavanaugh wrote, and suggested the court should revisit the issue with plaintiffs found to have proper standing in a state court. Attorney Mathew McGill, representing the Brackeens, said he would press just such a claim. McGill runs the gaming practice for the Gibson Dunn law firm and successfully argued *Murphy v. NCAA* before the Supreme Court, which gave all states the ability to legalize sports betting to the detriment of tribal casinos around the country.

Supreme Court preserves law that aims to keep Native American children with tribal families

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Thursday preserved the system that gives preference to Native American families in foster care and adoption proceedings of Native children, rejecting a broad attack from some Republican-led states and white families who argued it is based on race.

The court left in place the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act, which was enacted to address concerns that Native children were being separated from their families and, too frequently, placed in non-Native homes.

Tribal leaders have backed the law as a means of preserving their families, traditions and cultures and had warned that a broad ruling against the tribes could have undermined their ability to govern themselves.

The “issues are complicated” Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote for a seven-justice majority that included the court’s three liberals and four of its six conservatives, but the “bottom line is that we reject all of petitioners’ challenges to the statute.”

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented, each writing that Congress lacks the authority to interfere with foster care placements and adoptions, typically the province of the states. The decision, Alito wrote, “disserves the rights and interests of these children.”

But Justice Neil Gorsuch, a Colorado native who has emerged as a champion of Native rights since joining the court in 2017, wrote in a separate opinion that the decision “safeguards the ability of tribal members to raise their children free from interference by state authorities and other outside parties.”

The leaders of tribes involved in the case called the outcome a major victory for tribes and Native children.

“We hope this decision will lay to rest the political attacks aimed at diminishing tribal sovereignty and creating instability throughout Indian law that have persisted for too long,” said a joint statement from Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., Morongo Band of Mission Indians Chairman Charles Martin, Oneida Nation Chairman Tehassi Hill and Quinault Indian Nation President Guy Capoeman.

President Joe Biden, whose administration defended the law at the high court, noted that he supported the law 45 years ago when was a Democratic senator from Delaware.

“Our Nation’s painful history looms large over today’s decision. In the not-so-distant past, Native children were stolen from the arms of the people who loved them,” Biden said in a statement.

Congress passed the law in response to the alarming rate at which Native American and Alaska Native children were taken from their homes by public and private agencies.

The law requires states to notify tribes and seek placement with the child’s extended family, members of the child’s tribe or other Native American families.

Three white families, the state of Texas and a small number of other states claimed the law is unconstitutional under the equal protection clause because it was based on race. They also contended it puts the interests of tribes ahead of children and improperly allows the federal government too much power over adoptions and foster placements, areas that typically are under state control.

The lead plaintiffs in the Supreme Court case — Chad and Jennifer Brackeen of Fort Worth, Texas — adopted a Native American child after a prolonged legal fight with the Navajo Nation, one of the two largest Native American tribes, based in the Southwest. The Brackeens are trying to adopt the boy’s 5-year-old half-sister, known in court papers as Y.R.J., who has lived with them since infancy. The Navajo Nation has opposed that adoption.

At last fall’s arguments, several conservative justices expressed concern about at least one aspect of the law that gives preference to Native parents, even if they are of a different tribe than the child they are seeking to adopt or foster.

Among them was Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who was in the majority Thursday in favor of the tribes. But Kavanaugh injected a cautionary note in a separate opinion focused on the preferences for Native foster and adoptive parents.

“In my view, the equal protection issue is serious,” Kavanaugh wrote, commenting that the race of prospective parents and children could be used to reject a foster placement or adoption, “even if the place-

ment is otherwise determined to be in the child's best interests."

The Supreme Court dealt with that issue by determining that neither Texas nor the parents had legal standing to make that argument in this case.

The Brackeens and others can make those arguments in state court proceedings, the justices said.

Matthew McGill, who represented the Brackeens at the Supreme Court, said he would press a racial discrimination claim in state court.

"Our main concern is what today's decision means for the little girl, Y.R.J. — now five years old — who has been a part of the Brackeen family for nearly her whole life. The Court did not address our core claim that ICWA impermissibly discriminates against Native American children and families that wish to adopt them, saying it must be brought in state court," McGill said in a statement.

All the children who have been involved in the current case at one point are enrolled or could be enrolled as Navajo, Cherokee, White Earth Band of Ojibwe and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. Some of the adoptions have been finalized while some are still being challenged.

More than three-quarters of the 574 federally recognized tribes in the country and nearly two dozen state attorneys general across the political spectrum had called on the high court to uphold the law.

The Supreme Court had twice taken up cases on the Indian Child Welfare Act before, in 1989 and in 2013, that have stirred intense emotion.

Before the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted, between 25% and 35% of Native American children were being taken from their homes and placed with adoptive families, in foster care or in institutions. Most were placed with white families or in boarding schools in attempts to assimilate them.

Confidence in science fell in 2022 while political divides persisted, poll shows

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Confidence in the scientific community declined among U.S. adults in 2022, a major survey shows, driven by a partisan divide in views of both science and medicine that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, 39% of U.S. adults said they had "a great deal of confidence" in the scientific community, down from 48% in 2018 and 2021. That's according to the General Social Survey, a long-running poll conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago that has monitored Americans' opinions on key topics since 1972.

An additional 48% of adults in the latest survey reported "only some" confidence, while 13% reported "hardly any," according to an analysis of the survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The survey showed low confidence levels among Republicans as partisan gaps that emerged during the pandemic era have stuck around, said Jennifer Benz, the center's deputy director.

"It doesn't look all that dramatic when you just look at the trends for the overall public," Benz said. "But when you dig into that by people's political affiliations, there's a really stark downturn and polarization."

Between surveys in 2018 and 2021, as the pandemic took hold, the major parties' trust levels headed in opposite directions. Democrats reported a growing level of confidence in science in 2021 — perhaps as a "rallying effect" around things like COVID-19 vaccines and prevention measures, Benz said. At the same time, Republicans saw their confidence start to plummet.

In the 2022 survey, Democrats' confidence fell back to around pre-pandemic levels, with 53% reporting a great deal of confidence compared with 55% in 2018. But Republicans' confidence continued its downward trend, dropping to 22% from 45% in 2018. Confidence in medicine has also grown more polarized since 2018. That year, Democrats and Republicans were about equally likely to say they had high confidence. By 2022, though, Republicans' confidence had fallen to 26%, while Democrats' has remained about the same as it was before the pandemic, at 42%.

Overall, 34% of Americans reported a great deal of confidence in medicine in 2022, compared with 39%

before the pandemic.

Generally, scientists have had a high level of trust compared to other groups in the U.S., said John Besley, who studies public opinion about science at Michigan State University. And even with the latest declines, confidence in science is still higher than many other institutions, he pointed out.

But the split between political parties is a cause for concern, experts said.

"You can definitely see the impact here of people taking cues from their political leaders," Benz said.

For Sudip Parikh, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the drops were "disappointing but not surprising." He sees them as part of an "overall pulling apart of our communities" and a loss of trust in many institutions.

The latest survey found that distrust has grown for some other groups, too. According to the 2022 survey, confidence in the Supreme Court has plunged to its lowest level in at least 50 years. Americans also reported lower levels of trust in education, the press, major companies and organized religion.

Besley said that scientists should communicate about their motives to help show that they are trustworthy: "Not only do we have some expertise, but that also we're using that expertise to try to make the world better," he said.

Parikh thought the stakes are high for rebuilding trust in science — and doing so across political lines.

"Science must be bipartisan," he said. "The causes of Alzheimer's are the same whether you're a Republican or a Democrat. The fusion that goes on in the sun is the same whether you live in Topeka or you live in San Francisco."

The General Social Survey has been conducted since 1972 by NORC at the University of Chicago. Sample sizes for each year's survey vary from about 1,500 to about 4,000 adults, with margins of error falling between plus or minus 2 percentage points and plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. The most recent survey was conducted May 5, 2022, through Dec. 20, 2022, and includes interviews with 3,544 American adults. Results for the full sample have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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How much prison time could Trump face? Past cases brought steep punishment for document hoarders

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI investigators who searched Harold Martin's Maryland property in the fall of 2016 found classified documents — including material at the top secret level — strewn about his home, car and storage shed.

Unlike former President Donald Trump, the former National Security Agency contractor didn't contest the allegations, ultimately pleading guilty in 2019 and admitting his actions were "wrong, illegal and highly questionable." But his expressions of contrition and guilty plea to a single count of willful retention of national defense information didn't spare him the harsh punishment of nine years in prison.

The resolution of that case looms as an ominous guidepost for the legal jeopardy Trump could face as he confronts 37 felony counts — 31 under the same century-old Espionage Act statute used to prosecute Martin and other defendants alleged to have illegally retained classified documents. Even many like Martin who have pleaded guilty and accepted responsibility have nonetheless been socked with yearslong prison sentences.

"When they decide to pursue a willful mishandling case, it's to send a message: that we take these cases very seriously," said Michael Zweiback, a defense lawyer and former Justice Department prosecutor. "They almost always are seeking jail time."

How much prison time the former president could face in the event of a conviction is impossible to say, with such a decision ultimately up to the trial judge — in this case, a Trump appointee who has already

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demonstrated a willingness to rule in his favor. It's also hard to know the extent to which other factors — including the logistical and political complications of jailing a former president — might play a role.

The Espionage Act offense is punishable by up to 10 years in prison, though it's rare for first-time federal offenders to get close to the maximum. But beyond the retention, prosecutors have also identified multiple aggravating factors in Trump's alleged conduct, accusing him of seeking to enlist others — including a lawyer and aides — to hide the records from investigators and showing off some to visitors. Some of the other counts in the indictment, including conspiracy to obstruct justice, call for up to 20 years in prison.

Justice Department prosecutors in recent years have used the Espionage Act provision against a variety of defendants, including a West Virginia woman who retained an NSA document related to a foreign government's military and political issues. Elizabeth Jo Shirley pleaded guilty in 2020 to a willful retention count and was sentenced to eight years in prison.

This month, a retired Air Force intelligence officer named Robert Birchum was sentenced to three years in prison after pleading guilty to keeping classified files at his home, his overseas officer's quarters and a storage pod in his driveway.

Many defendants have pleaded guilty, rather than face trial, though not all have gone to prison. Trump — who also faces charges related to hush-money payments in New York state court — has shown no signs that he could be headed toward a plea deal, vigorously insisting he is innocent and personally attacking Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith hours after appearing in Miami federal court Tuesday.

Despite the details in the indictment, Trump does have some avenues to try to contest the charges.

For one thing, he's drawn Judge Aileen Cannon, who sided with Trump last year in the former president's bid to appoint a special master to conduct an independent review of the seized classified documents. Citing the "stigma" she said was associated with an FBI search of Trump's home, she said a "future indictment" based on items that should've been returned to Trump "would result in reputational harm of a decidedly different order of magnitude."

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit unanimously overturned her ruling, which was widely criticized by legal experts as extraordinary and unusually broad.

Over the next several months, Cannon will make decisions that will shape the trial, including how quickly it will happen and whether any evidence will be kept out.

Prosecutors also face the challenge in Florida — where Republicans have made steady inroads in recent years — of a jury pool likely to be more favorable to Trump than if the case were tried in overwhelmingly Democratic Washington, D.C.

Still, "I think that it might very well be that Jack Smith welcomes a Florida jury because if there is a conviction, it will be much harder to say, 'Well, that jury was somehow anti-Trump,'" said Stephen Saltzburg, a George Washington University law school professor and former Justice Department official.

Experts anticipate Trump's lawyers to echo the former president's public remarks in trying to get the case dismissed by arguing he was entitled to have the documents and is the victim of prosecutorial overreach. Trump could also try to block prosecutors from being able to use key evidence, such as notes from his lawyer detailing conversations with the former president.

If the case gets to trial, experts say Trump's attorneys may attempt what's called "jury nullification" or try to convince jurors that he should be acquitted even if they believe Trump broke the law because the violation wasn't serious enough to warrant charges and he is being singled out.

"The theme of the defense can be riddled with suggestions of unfairness and selective prosecution — basically trying to convince a jury that even if the former president did what the government says he did, none of this should have ever ended up in a criminal prosecution," said Robert Mintz, a defense attorney and former Justice Department prosecutor.

Robert Kelner, a Washington criminal defense lawyer, said while an outright acquittal seems unlikely given the volume of evidence, a pathway for a mistrial exists if Trump attorneys can persuade even one juror to acquit on grounds that the president enjoyed the absolute authority to declassify information.

That authority ended the moment Trump left the presidency, but even so, "some jurors will likely find

it hard to rationalize convicting him for something that he previously had the absolute authority (to do) simply because he didn't file the right forms and do it at the right time," Kelner said.

In the end, facing a mountain of evidence and the prospect of years in prison, Trump's best hope may be a tactic he often pursues: Delay, delay, delay, said Cheryl Bader, a former federal prosecutor and head of Fordham University Law School's Criminal Defense Clinic.

"His best defense may be to try to ride out the election cycle, be elected as president and therefore be in charge of the Justice Department before the case goes to trial," she said.

Richer reported from Boston.

Former Harvard morgue manager stole brains, skin and other body parts to sell them, indictment says

SCRANTON, Pa. (AP) — A former manager at the Harvard Medical School morgue, his wife and three other people have been indicted in the theft and sale of human body parts, federal prosecutors in Pennsylvania announced Wednesday.

Cedric Lodge, 55, of Goffstown, New Hampshire, stole dissected portions of cadavers that were donated to the school in the scheme that stretched from 2018 to early 2023, according to court documents. The body parts were taken without the school's knowledge or permission, authorities said, adding that the school has cooperated with the investigation.

Lodge sometimes took the body parts — which included heads, brains, skin and bones — back to his home where he lived with his wife, Denise, 63, and some remains were sent to buyers through the mail, authorities said. Lodge also allegedly allowed buyers to come to the morgue to pick what remains they wanted to buy.

Bodies donated to Harvard Medical School are used for education, teaching or research purposes. Once they are no longer needed, the cadavers are usually cremated and the ashes are returned to the donor's family or buried in a cemetery.

In a message posted on the school's website entitled "An abhorrent betrayal," deans George Daley and Edward Hundert called the matter "morally reprehensible." They said Lodge was fired May 6.

"We are appalled to learn that something so disturbing could happen on our campus — a community dedicated to healing and serving others," the deans wrote. "The reported incidents are a betrayal of HMS and, most importantly, each of the individuals who altruistically chose to will their bodies to HMS through the Anatomical Gift Program to advance medical education and research."

Paula Peltonovich and her sister, Darlene Lynch, said they were shocked to learn that their father's remains were among those said to be stolen. They said their parents were both police officers in New Hampshire who wanted to donate their bodies to science.

While the woman fear they may never know what happened to their father's remains, they have asked the school to return the body of their mother, who died in March. Their father died in 2019.

"Who could do something like that? What kind of person? No respect at all for the family," Peltonovich told WMUR-TV about the defendants. "They need to pay."

The indictment charges the Lodges and three others — Katrina Maclean, 44, of Salem, Massachusetts; Joshua Taylor, 46, of West Lawn, Pennsylvania; and Mathew Lampi, 52, of East Bethel, Minnesota — with conspiracy and interstate transport of stolen goods.

Taylor's lawyer, Christopher Opiel, declined comment Thursday. It was not known if any of the other defendants had a lawyer who could comment on their behalf.

According to prosecutors, the defendants were part of a nationwide network of people who bought and sold remains stolen from the school and an Arkansas mortuary. The Lodges allegedly sold remains to Maclean, Taylor, and others in arrangements made through telephone calls and social media websites.

Taylor sometimes transported stolen remains back to Pennsylvania, authorities said, while other times

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the Lodges would mail remains to him and others. Maclean and Taylor resold the stolen remains for profit, authorities said.

Maclean owns Kat's Creepy Creations, a store in Peabody, Massachusetts, where authorities say she sold and stored human remains. Its Instagram page notes the store sells "creations that shock the mind & shake the soul," along with "creepy dolls, oddities and bone Art."

The indictment cites a transaction where Maclean allegedly sold human skin to a Pennsylvania man who tanned it to create leather. After MacLean shipped more human skin to the man, she contacted him to confirm the shipment arrived because she "wanted to make sure it got to you and I don't expect agents at my door," court papers said.

In another instance, MacLean allegedly agreed to buy "two dissected faces for \$600" from Cedric Lodge in October 2020.

The indictment also alleged that over a three-year period, Taylor transferred 39 payments for human remains totaling \$37,355.56 to a PayPal account operated by Denise Lodge. One payment for \$1,000 included the memo "head number 7," while another for \$200 read "braiiiiiiins."

Denise and Cedric Lodge both made their initial court appearances Wednesday in federal court in Concord, New Hampshire, and were each released on personal recognizance bail. They declined comment as they left the courthouse.

Two other people have been charged in the case.

Jeremy Pauley, age 41, of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, allegedly bought some remains from Candace Chapman Scott, of Little Rock, Arkansas, who allegedly stole them from a mortuary where she worked. Authorities have said Scott stole body parts from cadavers she was supposed to have cremated, noting many of the bodies had been donated to and used for research and educational purposes by a medical school in Arkansas.

Pauley allegedly sold many of the stolen remains to other people, including individuals, including Lampi. Pauley and Lampi bought and sold from each other over an extended period of time and exchanged more than \$100,000 in online payments, authorities said.

Scott and Pauley have both pleaded not guilty.

Movie Review: Chris Hemsworth returns in 'Extraction 2,' a gun-for-hire who pulls you completely in

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Tyler Rake was clinically dead when we last saw him at the end of "Extraction," tumbling over a bridge in Bangladesh with a fatal, burbling bullet wound to his neck. But death is no match for Netflix.

Chris Hemsworth returns as the sad-sack, gun-for-hire Rake in "Extraction 2" and you'll thank the giant streamer for such a nifty bit of resurrection because this franchise is pure cinematic adrenalin.

The new movie comes two years after a surprisingly good first installment, which saw Rake intervene in a feud between two rival drug dealers, survive numerous double-crosses, ask things like "How many hostiles onsite?" and lob an inexhaustible number of grenades.

How he survived it all stuns even his friends. Emerging from a coma in "Extraction 2," he is stashed in a remote chalet in Gmunden, Austria, and told to chill out — learn to knit, go on hikes, try to reach mindfulness. "Enjoy retirement," he is told. If he did there would be no "Extraction 2."

Inevitably, a new extraction job comes along, so cue the getting-in-shape montage of Hemsworth doing pushups in the snow, splitting firewood, pushing a sled filled with rocks and some light ax throwing. Somehow, the "Extraction" movies lean into all the cliches but they don't feel old.

Hemsworth is re-joined here by Marvel Comic Universe—screenwriter Joe Russo and stunt-specialist-turned-director Sam Hargrave, but their ace-in-the-hole is their cinematographers, who create impossibly long single takes of complicated fighting or driving scenes that put the viewer directly into the action like few other thrillers.

Last time it was Newton Thomas Sigel. This time, Greg Baldi stages a breathless rescue from inside the

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winding tunnels of a brutal Georgian prison, complete with a full riot, a flaming police shield used as a weapon, a car chase with motorcycles and rockets, a race through a factory and then onto a train moving 40 mph, where helicopters are shot down and there's more hand-to-hand combat aboard. It's a 20-minute tour-de-force — the kind of sequence that brings you up from your seat to applaud, even if you're on your couch. And there's more than an hour to go.

"Extraction 2" seems to have more money this time around — I'm sure they'd like to apologize for using a lot of it to trash downtown Vienna — but unlike other action franchises, it doesn't waste it on pretty excursions to Paris museums or five-star Tokyo hotels.

The strength of these movies has always been being down in the mud, streets and dirt, with the sound of spent cartridges pinging off concrete. These characters sweat and they bruise, even if many look fabulous in sunglasses.

The baddies here are similar to the first installment — a pair of powerful, scarred brothers who run heroin and guns in Georgia and are quiet-talking psychopaths, the kind who whisper a metaphor and then plunge a rake into your throat.

We learn a bit more about Rake and even meet members of his extended family, but he remains a one-note emotionally suppressed man. One knock on the franchise is that it hasn't been able to take advantage of Hemsworth's humor, like Marvel has done with his Thor.

Family is at the heart of "Extraction 2" as Rake gets in between this Georgian clan and also seeks to keep alive his trusted handler, Nik Khan (Golshifteh Farahani, seriously good, a franchise spin-off anyone?) and her cool-as-silk sidekick brother (Adam Bessa).

Death will only free one side and, along the way, a fancy rooftop gym will be turned into a charnel house, a skyscraper will be virtually razed by rocket fire, an airfield will explode in a fiery mess and a church will be wrecked — sorry, God. But death isn't the final word — in this franchise, that's relative.

"Extraction 2," a Netflix release that airs Friday, is rated R for "strong, bloody violence throughout and language." Running time: 123 minutes. Three stars out of four.

MPAA definition of R: Restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

Online: <https://www.netflix.com/title/81098494>

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

Noah Kahan writes songs about New England. His vulnerability has far wider appeal

By ELISE RYAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Singer-songwriter Noah Kahan's "Stick Season" is about New England — a topic the Vermont native says he could write about for the rest of his life — but it's also largely about in-between spaces.

When resentment lingers but forgiveness feels possible. When a broken friendship is just beginning to mend. When homesickness clashes with a desire to leave. Or, in the case of the album's title track, when fall hasn't yet turned to winter.

Writing the folk-pop album, he told The Associated Press, felt "like breathing."

Kahan revisits those themes through a new lens on the recently released "Stick Season (We'll All Be Here Forever)," a deluxe version of the album that adds six new tracks and an extended version of fan-favorite "The View Between Villages." The additions also see Kahan reflect on the eight months between the original album's release and now.

"I'm speaking about the highs and the lows," Kahan said of reconciling the version of home he'd written about with reality. "And the truth is it's always somewhere in the middle when you really go back."

"Stick Season," the song, went viral last year, earning millions of streams fueled largely by social media.

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It wasn't his first big release — at 26, Kahan has already put out three studio albums and two EPs. But it was one with momentum: Fans had latched onto the song long before its release, having heard Kahan perform it on pandemic-era Instagram livestreams and at shows that followed. When the single came out last July, Kahan called it "his favorite song ever" in a tweet.

Viral TikToks followed. Among them was a cover by two sisters seated at a piano, harmonizing.

"We're Canadian. We're very Canadian. At that point, we had never left the country," Moira MacMullin, 24, one-half of the indie folk-pop duo Moira & Claire, told the AP. "But somehow we got into the emotions of it ... there's just something about his writing."

Their TikTok video, posted the day after the song's release, now has nearly 3 million views. Kahan commented on the TikTok: "Better than the original." Moira MacMullin's first trip outside Canada would be to see Kahan perform in Vermont.

"Everyone in the crowd is from Vermont, and I'm like (singing) 'I love Vermont,' and I'm not even from there," she said. "It was so loud, and ... just wild."

Seeing fans connect with the song's lyrics and themes has been "the coolest thing," Kahan said, especially because "Stick Season" also marked his wholehearted embrace of the folk genre and childhood influences like The Avett Brothers and Paul Simon.

"When I would write songs that were more pop-y in a studio, I would go home and write a song that was more folk-y just for me because I felt like I was accessing that inner child," Kahan said of previous projects. "Being able to finally explore that in this record and really lean into those inspirations and those feelings was really freeing."

Moments of humor throughout the album reflect Kahan's personality. But the topics he dissects are heavy — along with heartbreak, isolation and homesickness, there are references to substance abuse, death, depression and divorce. Kahan's narrators aren't perfect, but that's the point.

Making the album about home, he said, felt like home. But watching it explode in the months that followed was challenging emotionally and creatively.

"I wanted to kind of show people who I was and continue to do that in the context of 'Stick Season,' but also explain this journey I've been on in the past year, with touring all the time and trying to be creative and feeling like I was a fraud," Kahan, who has long been open about his mental health, said as he described the motivation behind the deluxe album.

That meant introducing some acceptance and grace, to counter some of the resentment he said imbued the original release: "In a lot of ways I wrote this record as a letter to myself to say it's okay to feel these things and it's okay to go on this journey."

At a sold-out concert at New York's Radio City Music Hall two days before the deluxe album's release, Kahan encouraged "even the happiest person in the room" to be in therapy. He sang his lyrics, with their open references to depression, medication and therapy, and invited the audience to scream his words back to him.

Dressed in deep greens, browns, plaid and blue denim overalls, the crowd obliged, rendering the atmosphere at Radio City one you'd find at summer camp — and not just because the show fell on a day when the air outside smelled of bonfire smoke.

"Songwriting for me has always been a way to process my emotions. Sometimes I'm not great at processing them in a very logical way. Sometimes it takes me sitting down and writing a song to remember that I was feeling that way," Kahan told the AP. "But for me the question is always can this help somebody get through their own discomfort ... or problem or struggle?"

That's part of why it felt like a natural step for him to launch The Busyhead Project, an initiative aiming to raise \$1 million for organizations that specialize in mental health resources and awareness. Launched last month, the project named for his 2019 album has already raised over \$340,000, with Kahan donating a portion of his tour ticket sales.

Joy Oladokun, Kahan's tour opener, acknowledged her own mental health struggles during her set. Her latest album, "Proof of Life," features a collaboration with Kahan, the dark-but-also-kind-of-funny "We're

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All Gonna Die.”

“For me, music has always been about bridge building,” Oladokun told AP.

Acknowledging hard things in her songs or on stage before performing them “is very much central to my values,” like Kahan’s, she added. “That is the reason I leave my house and go on tour in the first place.”

But honesty can be brutal. These songs aren’t always easy to sing — or to sing along to.

“A lot of these songs talk about shame and about substance abuse and about parental flaws and family trauma. And those are tricky things,” Kahan said. “They’re tricky for me to write, and it’s tricky (for fans) to own that in a show and to sing it. But it’s a beautiful, beautiful thing to see.”

One song that’s been unexpectedly embraced is “Orange Juice.” Kahan has said the track, which alludes to sobriety, is about two friends who reunite after their relationship fell apart in the wake of shared trauma.

“That’s a song that I was almost not going to play because it felt so personal and so vulnerable,” Kahan said. Watching people own it on social media and at shows makes him proud.

“We are writing about heavy things and we are dealing with heavy things, and we are two sensitive people,” Oladokun said. But she also tries to keep some humor at the forefront of her projects. In the lyric video for “We’re All Gonna Die,” animated versions of the duo race coffins, parodying Mario Kart (which they also play together before soundcheck).

“We also like to have fun, you know?” she said.

North Korea launches 2 ballistic missiles toward sea in protest of US-South Korea military drills

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

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Thursday, its neighbors said, in a resumption of weapons tests to protest just-ended South Korean-U.S. live-fire drills that it viewed as an invasion rehearsal.

The launches are the first by North Korea since it failed to put its first spy satellite into orbit in late May.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were launched from North Korea’s capital region and traveled about 780 kilometers (480 miles) before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. It called the launches “a grave provocation” and said South Korea’s military will maintain a firm readiness in close coordination with the United States.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the missiles landed inside Japan’s exclusive economic zone. He called the launches a “violent action” that threatened international peace and safety.

The chief nuclear envoys from South Korea, Japan and the U.S. held a three-way telephone call and agreed to continue efforts to get North Korea to halt weapons activities and return to talks, according to Seoul’s Foreign Ministry.

The launches came hours after South Korean and U.S. troops ended a fifth round of large-scale live-fire drills near the Koreas’ heavily fortified border earlier Thursday. About 30 minutes before the launches, North Korea’s military vowed an unspecified response to the drills, which it called “provocative and irresponsible.”

“Our response to (the South Korean-U.S. drills) is inevitable,” an unidentified spokesperson of the North Korean Defense Ministry said in a statement carried by state media. “Our armed forces will fully counter any form of demonstrative moves and provocation of the enemies.”

Tensions have risen in past months as the pace of both North Korean weapons tests and U.S.-South Korea military exercises has increased in tit-for-tat actions. North Korea has test-fired about 100 missiles since the start of 2022. Experts say North Korea may be using the U.S.-South Korean exercises as a pretext to conduct test launches to develop more powerful missiles and increase its leverage in future diplomacy.

On May 31, a North Korean long-range rocket carrying its first spy satellite crashed off the Korean Peninsula’s west coast. North Korea admitted the failure and vowed to push for a second launch. A spy satellite is among a slew of high-tech weapons that leader Kim Jong Un wants to develop to cope with what he calls U.S. hostility.

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"This launch is not to make up for the recent failure, because North Korea will almost certainly make another attempt later to put a spy satellite into orbit," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "The message of today's missiles is more likely Pyongyang's protest against South Korea's combined defense exercises with the United States, as well as a demonstration of North Korea's own military capabilities and readiness."

Thursday's South Korean-U.S. exercises were the fifth and last round of live-fire drills that began last month. This year's drills were the biggest of their kind since they started in 1977. Each of the five rounds involved 2,500 South Korean and U.S. troops and about 610 military assets including stealth fighter jets, attack helicopters, tanks and drones from both countries, according to the South Korean Defense Ministry.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and other senior South Korean and U.S. military officials observed Thursday's drills.

"Only a strong military — which can fight and defeat the enemy and which the enemy can't even dare to challenge — can guarantee the freedom, peace and prosperity of the Republic of Korea," Yoon said at the training site, using South Korea's official name.

North Korea's state media have accused South Korea and the U.S. of using the firing drills to master "military threat and blackmail and war tactics" against North Korea.

On Thursday, top security officials from the United States, South Korea and Japan met in Tokyo for talks on North Korea and other issues. During the meeting, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan reiterated Washington's commitment to the defense of South Korea and Japan, the White House said in a statement.

North Korea was slapped with international economic sanctions over its past nuclear and ballistic missile tests, which are banned by U.N. Security Council resolutions. But it has avoided new U.N. sanctions over its recent series of missile tests because China and Russia, embroiled in separate confrontations with the U.S., blocked attempts by the U.S. and others to toughen the sanctions.

Whether North Korea has functioning nuclear missiles is a source of outside debate. The last time it tested a major nuclear-capable ballistic weapon was April 13, when it launched what it described as a newly developed intercontinental ballistic missile powered by solid propellants. Such missiles are easier to move and fire quickly than ones with liquid propellants, making them harder to detect and intercept.

Associated Press writer Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Through personal ups and downs, they've waited years to perform Hajj. These are their stories

By FARES AKRAM, NINIEK KARMINI, ABBY SEWELL, MARIAM FAM and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

This year's Hajj is a landmark: the first full pilgrimage after a daunting three-year period when the COVID-19 pandemic sharply reduced the scale of one of Islam's holiest and most beloved rites.

Millions of Muslims from around the world will start converging next week on Mecca in Saudi Arabia to begin the several days of rituals at holy sites in and around the city. For pilgrims, it is the ultimate spiritual moment of their lives, a chance to seek God's forgiveness for their sins and walk in the footsteps of revered prophets like Muhammad and Abraham.

It's a mass, communal experience, with Muslims of many races and classes performing it together as one. But it is also deeply personal; every pilgrim brings their own yearnings and experiences.

The Associated Press spoke to several pilgrims from far-flung places as they prepared for their journey.

GAZA: Amid family's love, her dream comes true

It's been hard, raising 10 children on her own and living in the Gaza Strip, blockaded on all sides and torn by multiple wars. But Huda Zaqqout says her life feels miraculous because she is surrounded by her family, including 30 grandchildren.

And now, at 64, she is finally going on Hajj. It just so happens that now, after an easing of Saudi policy,

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more women pilgrims can participate without a "mahram," or a male relative to escort them. It's serendipitous timing for Zaqqout, who has waited years for this opportunity, and whose sons cannot afford to make the long, arduous trip from Gaza to Mecca.

"Gaza is like a prison. We are locked up from all directions and borders," she said.

Instead, she will travel with a group of women, all over 60.

It will be a dream come true for Zaqqout, who says her dreams are often premonitions.

There was the dream that predicted her triplets. Or another that promised something good would follow something bad. The bad turned out to be that, after serving 10 years in prison, her husband took a younger, second wife and eventually left Zaqqout. But the good, she says, was that she emerged stronger, blessed by the love of her large family.

In April, she dreamt Prophet Muhammad was standing beside her.

"After I saw the prophet, I just felt I want to be there, in his proximity," she said. She immediately signed up for an Umrah, the so-called "lesser pilgrimage" to Mecca that can happen any time.

She had registered for Hajj in 2010 but had never been selected to go. After she returned from Umrah, she nervously tuned into the radio broadcast announcing this year's Hajj pilgrims. She fell to the ground, crying with joy, when her name was announced.

For Gazans, the trip is particularly hard. The tiny Mediterranean coastal territory has been blockaded by Israel and Egypt since 2007, when the militant group Hamas took power. Though pilgrims are allowed to travel, it is a bureaucratic nightmare. Then the arduous bus ride to Cairo Airport takes at least 15 hours and sometimes twice that due to long waits at the border and Egyptian checkpoints in the Sinai.

That hasn't dampened Zaqqout's joy. Her neighbors congratulate her. She watches YouTube videos to learn the Hajj rituals and goes to physiotherapy for her feet, which often hurt, knowing she'll be doing a lot of standing and walking.

At her house in an old section of Gaza City, her grandchildren throng around her. At one point as she told her story, Zaqqout started to cry; the children hugged her and cried with her. When she went shopping for gifts, prayer mats and clothes, one grandson insisted on accompanying her, holding her hand the whole time.

Zaqqout feels Hajj is the last thing on her life's to-do list. She has no debts, her children are married and have families. "After that, I don't need anything from life."

On Mount Arafat, the climactic moment of the Hajj, she said she will pray for peace and love between people. And she'll pray for her family.

"I would like to see my children live a happy life and be proud of their children."

INDONESIA: He set aside a few coins a day

At a rural intersection outside Jakarta, 85-year-old Husin bin Nisan stands guard, his hands nimbly signaling for vehicles to stop or proceed. It's a blind curve, and approaching traffic can't see what's coming. Now and then, a driver thanks him with a few coins that he tucks into his orange vest.

Husin is a "Pak Ogah," a type of volunteer traffic warden found across Indonesia. Nearly every day for more than 30 years, he has directed traffic in a poor village called Peusar, living off tips equivalent to a few dollars a day.

The whole time, he has put aside coins for his dream. It has been a wait of more than 15 years, but finally Husin is going on the Hajj.

Husin tearfully recounted the prayer he had repeated: "I beg you, God ... open the way for me to go to Mecca and Medina. Please give your blessing."

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, has a staggeringly long line of citizens wanting to go on Hajj; wait times can last decades. It lengthened even more when Saudi Arabia barred foreign pilgrims in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, when Hajj reopened but with age restrictions, less than half of Indonesia's quota could attend, said Arsyad Hidayat, director of Hajj Development at the Religious Affairs Ministry.

"The waiting period for the pilgrims was doubled," he said. "And when it returns to normal to 100% of

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our quota, the impact of not having the pilgrimage for two years is still there.”

To catch up, Indonesia negotiated with Saudi Arabia and received an additional 8,000 spots this year, reaching an all-time high of 229,000. Authorities are giving special preference to older people. Nearly 67,000 of this year’s pilgrims are above 65, including more than 8,200 above 85. The oldest is a 118-year-old woman. The elderly will get extra services, including first-class flights and special accommodations and health care.

Husin has spent much of his life awaiting this chance. After two decades working as a Pak Ogah, he managed in 2009 to save the 25 million rupiah (\$1,680) needed to register for the pilgrimage. It took four more years before authorities conveyed the date he would go — 2022, nearly a decade in the future.

When 2022 arrived, he couldn’t go because he was over the age limit. It was a blow, but he kept his faith that the pandemic would end and he would make it to Mecca.

A father of four and grandfather of six, Husin still works every day. His wife helps him put on his vest in their small home. Thin, with thick white hair and white beard, he walks to his intersection. He sometimes stands directing traffic for 12 hours a day, taking breaks sitting under a tree by a nearby cemetery.

Earlier this year, he paid off the remaining 26 million rupiah (\$1,750) and was confirmed for this year’s Hajj.

In early June, Husin packed his suitcase, including his “ihram,” the white robe that all male pilgrims wear. Then he put on his best clothes and said goodbye to his family and friends. He began his journey.

“Now, I could die in peace at any time because God has answered my prayer,” he said.

LEBANON: A near-death experience cemented his faith

Abbas Bazzi doesn’t fit most people’s image of a religiously observant Muslim. With his long hair pulled back in a bun, he co-owns an organic cafe and grocery in Beirut’s trendy Badaro neighborhood. He sells sugar-free smoothies and vegan shawarma sandwiches. He teaches conscious breathing classes, practices reiki healing and does yoga.

He is now preparing for what he hopes will be his fourth Hajj journey.

Bazzi was born in a Shiite Muslim community in south Lebanon; his parents were secularists who never went to mosque. He took an interest in Islam on his own, beginning to pray at age 9 and to fast at 11. Later, he studied all the major world religions — “a journey from west to east,” he said. But he remained most convinced by Islam.

Bazzi attributes his early interest in religion to the circumstances surrounding his birth. He was born prematurely, at home, in 1981, at the height of Lebanon’s civil war. The newborn was not breathing properly, so a friend of his mother’s — a religiously observant woman — gave him rescue breathing until they could get him to the hospital.

In the first month of his life, Bazzi said, he was so sickly that his parents didn’t name him, fearing he would die. Although not a practicing Muslim, his father made a vow: If his son lived, he would name him for Imam Abbas, one of Shiite Islam’s most revered figures. The child lived; his father kept his promise.

As Bazzi grew up, he explored spiritual practices, including meditation and yoga. While others found the blend between those practices and Islam strange, he saw them as complementary.

Some people may think that a Hajj pilgrim should look different or pray more conspicuously, he said, but “I made a decision in my life that all of my life will be in service to the divine project.”

In 2017, at 36, Bazzi applied for the Hajj. But up to the last minute, he hadn’t received his visa. He went to the airport with his group of pilgrims and saw them off, waving goodbye. The next morning, he got a call saying his visa was ready. He scrambled to book a new ticket and followed his friends to Mecca.

“I’ve gotten used to surprises in my life,” he said with a laugh.

In Mecca, he said, “I saw peace. I saw this is the only place where people are gathered from every country in the world, every color ... different doctrines. I saw unity, I saw love.”

He returned the next year, and the years after that, feeling he had more to learn. “It’s not possible to reach knowledge of all of (Islam) in a single trip or a single day.”

This year could be another nail-biter. His visa is approved, but his passport has expired. Renewing it was delayed because so many Lebanese are trying to get passports to leave the country since its economy collapsed in 2019.

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Time is running short.

"I am praying," Bazzi said. "God willing, if it's meant to happen, it will happen."

UNITED STATES: Her quest gained an urgency during the pandemic

A wave of emotions washed over Saadiha Khaliq as she reflected on the spiritual significance of her upcoming pilgrimage to Mecca, more than 11,000 kilometers (7,000 miles) from her home in the U.S. state of Tennessee.

"It's really this invitation and this honor," said the 41-year-old Pakistani-American engineer, who lives near Nashville. "You just hope that you're worthy of that honor and that it's accepted from you."

Her tears flowed.

Undertaking the pilgrimage has been on Khaliq's mind for several years; she would read and watch videos about Hajj rituals and ask others who had gone about their experiences.

Her religious quest gained urgency during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The pandemic really put things in perspective," she said. "Life is short, and you have limited opportunities to do things that you really want to do."

This year, she applied for places on the Hajj for herself and her parents. While they've been to Mecca before, this will be the first Hajj for all three.

"This is kind of a big, lifelong dream and achievement for them," she said. "And I'm just grateful that I get to be part of the whole experience."

Khaliq was born in the United Kingdom. In the 1990s, her family moved to the United States and eventually to Tennessee, where her father is a mathematics professor.

As part of her preparations, she's trying to go in with a clean slate, from clearing financial obligations to working to make amends and seek forgiveness from family members or friends who she might have had issues with.

"It's very hard to stand there (in Mecca), if there's negativity in your heart ... if you made space for things that are resentment or anger," she said. "And I'm still working on cleansing that part of my heart."

As the date nears, she has experienced an array of emotions, including a sense of going into the unknown.

She marvels at the sense of unity and humility that comes as Muslims of diverse backgrounds from around the world pray next to one another. All of them, she said, are on a journey to God, seeking forgiveness.

"You are now standing before him without any of your social status, your wealth, and you come before him with some good deeds and some bad deeds," she said. "All you can do, as a Muslim, is hope that at the end of the day, this is pleasing to God."

IRAQ: He is taking no chances that could upend his pilgrimage

Two years ago, the pandemic wrecked Talal Mundhir's Hajj plans. So the 52-year-old Iraqi took no chances when he and his wife were confirmed for this year's pilgrimage.

He stopped playing soccer, one of his favorite pastimes, fearing he might get injured and be unable to go.

A resident of the central Iraqi city of Tikrit, Mundhir tried to go on Hajj several times over the past two decades, but never made the draw. Finally, he was accepted — in 2021, when no foreigners could go because of COVID-19.

It was a close call this year as well, since Mundhir is unemployed amid Iraq's economic crisis. But he and his siblings recently sold a property they inherited from their father. His portion of the proceeds covered the Hajj expenses.

Last week, Mundhir and his wife set off with their group for Mecca for an early arrival before the pilgrimage's official start on June 26. It was 36 grueling hours on a bus across the desert.

But he said all the exhaustion from the road vanished once he and his wife visited the Haram, the mosque in Mecca that houses the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site. Millions of pilgrims will walk seven times around the cube-shaped Kaaba to kick off their Hajj.

"I can't describe the feeling," Mundhir wrote in a text message from Mecca. "I felt such mental ease, but at the same time, tears. I don't know if they were tears of joy or of humility."

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War disrupts education of Ukrainian kids, even those who've found safety abroad

By VANESSA GERA and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Nine-year-old Milana Minenko doesn't play piano anymore. During the day, she attends public school in Poland, where she and her mother fled from the war in March 2022. In the evenings, her mother helps her follow Ukraine's curriculum to keep up with lessons back home. There's simply no time — and no money — for anything else.

Russian forces occupied Milana's hometown in the Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine, destroyed her house with a missile on the second day of the war, and uprooted her family. Milana and her family lost nearly everything they loved.

For Milana, that means school. The place that greeted her with balloons on her first day. Friends she can now only send text messages. The teacher who brought joy to learning.

It also means her music school, where she studied piano and singing after her other lessons. That building now lies in ruins. Milana's not sure what became of her primary school. She wonders whether it, too, was bombed by Russian forces targeting schools.

Russian forces have destroyed 262 educational institutions and damaged another 3,019 in their invasion of Ukraine, according to government figures. But the disruption to the education of Ukrainian children goes far beyond buildings turned to rubble. For those who've fled to other countries, schooling is suffering in unprecedented ways, according to families, educators, experts and advocates. The effects of war and relocation combined with the challenges of studying in a new country are compounding educational setbacks for young refugees.

At stake are the knowledge and skills of a generation needed to rebuild the nation after the war, Ukrainian officials say — a priority they've described since the war's early months. Officials report at least 500 children killed in the war, and thousands have been deported to Russia without consent. There's no telling how many of the 8 million refugees recorded across Europe will return.

About 1.5 million live in Poland, the most of any country. Many chose it for proximity to Ukraine and plan to go home someday. In Poland, children aren't required to enroll in local schools — an option not allowed in Germany and some other countries.

Fewer than half of the child refugees in Poland — 180,000 students — are enrolled in schools, according to UNICEF. Like Milana, most spoke no Polish when they arrived. Around 30% of children from Ukraine who are enrolled and studying in person in the Polish school system are also studying the Ukrainian curriculum online, UNICEF estimates.

Enrollment numbers drop with older students; just 22% of Ukrainian teens in Poland attend the country's schools.

"It's a disaster in slow motion," said Jędrzej Witkowski, CEO of the Polish nonprofit Center for Citizenship Education.

The detrimental effects on learning and socializing will be far-reaching, said Francesco Calcagno, of Poland's UNICEF refugee response office. That includes extracurricular activities like Milana's music that are key to development and mental health, according to experts.

"Come September, it will be the third school year outside of Ukraine and it will be the fourth year online for many," Calcagno said, citing educational setbacks of the coronavirus pandemic. "Learning face to face is missing. ... We need to bring these children back into school, back into classrooms."

But Polish schools were already struggling with severe teachers shortages. And language issues exacerbate problems for the refugee students; although Ukrainian and Polish are similar, it takes three years to master the latter at a level needed for scholastic work, Witkowski said.

Following curricula in two languages creates more stress for students dealing with the trauma of war and relocation. Many refugee families have moved several times since arriving in Poland, contributing to

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a feeling of instability.

"I have seen students who changed schools five times," said Rita Rabinek, an intercultural assistant trained by the Polish Migration Forum and the global relief group IRC to help Ukrainian kids adjust to Polish schools.

Students who try to keep up with Ukrainian work see the effects of war still playing out at home. Polina Plokhenko, a 16-year-old who left her Polish high school to focus on Ukrainian studies, is completing online lessons with her school on the frontline in Kherson. Bombs often send her teachers fleeing into shelters.

"It is hard because it is my last year of school, and I needed to learn a lot of information by myself," said Polina, who's wanted since age 11 to study acting at a Kyiv university. "A lot of students who don't have motivation like that or don't know who they want to be, they have bigger problems."

Polina is this month taking Ukraine's final state examination, which students must pass to enter universities there. It's being given in 47 cities in 30 countries, according to Maryna Demyanchuk, a professor helping to administer it at one of Warsaw's centers.

To prepare, Polina attends Saturday classes at one of three Ukrainian schools set up in Poland by the group Unbreakable Ukraine.

Founder Viktoriia Gnap said the schools' teachers — also refugees — consider the overall level of the students' knowledge quite low. The foundation's aim is to provide them with a high-quality education, even as its funding has been cut amid global economic struggles.

"There are kids ending high school now who don't know the chemical formula for water," said Gnap, whose schools have about 1,500 students.

Olha Andrieieva, 17, attended a Polish school and followed classes online for her former school in Balakliia, in Ukraine's Kharkiv region. Shelling and power outages often interrupted lessons.

She took Ukraine's final exam this month. The rite of passage felt surreal - there was no graduation ceremony, and everything seemed unclear. She was calm about the test but shaken by the news of the dam collapse in southern Ukraine, the war's latest humanitarian and environmental disaster.

"The thing to worry about is what is happening in Ukraine, not exams," Olha said, her voice trembling.

Some Ukrainian students are becoming more proficient in Polish, making plans to attend universities here, and forming relationships. Others still feel disconnected from Poland. Gnap and others said teachers see growing tensions between Poles and newcomers in schools. Some refugees have been bullied.

Milana can now translate for her parents. She boasts of a good grade on a recent Polish assignment. But it's hard: "I have to do homework and tests in both schools," she said of keeping up with both countries' curricula.

Piano or voice lessons are at the bottom of the family's list of needs. Her father, Oleksandr, was stuck for a year in Russian-occupied territory before joining his wife and daughter recently in Poland. There's no room for him in the temporary housing where Milana and her mother live. He awaits paperwork that would allow him to get a job and earn enough for the family to live together.

Her mother, Oksana, works as a manicurist. She wishes their small home could fit a keyboard. Videos of Milana performing are a distant memory of a life before the war — and of a place they hope to someday return.

"I really want to go home, to return to familiar walls, so that my child can go to her teacher and hug her," Oksana said. "That's what she dreams of."

Let it bee: The women on a mission to save Mexico City's bees

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — "Knife," Adriana Velíz says with the concentration of a brain surgeon.

Shrouded in a white bee suit, she lies stretched out on the ground in one of Mexico City's most buzzing districts. Taking the knife, she pries open the side of a light post and flashes a glowing red lantern on a humming bee hive.

Velíz is on a mission to save the approximately 20,000 bees inside.

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She heads a group of mostly women who are working hive by hive to relocate bees that would be exterminated if they remained in Mexico's crowded capital city.

The group, Abeja Negra SOS, was born in 2018 when Velíz — a veterinarian working for the city government at the time — noticed that when authorities received calls about beehives, the automatic response was to exterminate the bees.

She and other colleagues began looking for an alternative.

"We do these rescues because it's a species that's in danger of extinction," said Velíz, who works for Abeja Negra SOS. "We're an alternative so that the emergency teams don't exterminate them. We give them a second chance."

Globally, bee populations have been decimated in recent decades. The United States alone is estimated to have lost around 25% of its bees in the past 40 years. Earlier this year, beekeepers in southern Mexico mourned the "mass killing" of millions of bees by pesticides.

The drop is often blamed on human causes: the use of damaging chemicals, destruction of natural habitats and climate change. Scientists and world leaders warn that bee population decline could have a wide range of detrimental ripple effects.

In 2019, the United Nations raised an alarm that bee loss "poses a serious threat" to global food security. Others like Adriana Correa Benítez, a professor researching bees at National Autonomous University of Mexico, said loss of bees could make it more difficult for Mexico to mitigate climate change.

"They don't just pollinate what we eat," she said. "They also pollinate native plants that regulate the entire ecosystem. And now, with climate change, reforestation is so important and (bee pollination) really influences that."

Over the past five years, the group has traveled across the sprawling city of 9 million, saving bee colonies from trees, street gutters and lamp posts. They have relocated around 510 hives, with an average size of about 80,000 bees.

Late on a recent Thursday night, Velíz peers into the hive the size of a small melon lodged inside the street lamp.

She gently slices a knife along the side of the hive, letting out a gentle "shhh," as if calming a child. Knife dripping with honey, she pulls the honeycomb out and places it in a wooden square frame, which she slides into a wooden box.

Tonight, they are lucky, she says. This is a small colony and it's calm, Velíz explains, referring to the hive as "hippie bees."

As they go, they search for the queen, a key element to rehabilitating the bees and assuring the colony gets relocated smoothly.

"You hear that? That means we have the queen," she says, tilting her head toward the box where the bees' chaotic buzz turns into a purr.

Because many of the bees in Mexico come from African roots, they can be more aggressive than the average honeybee. This can create problems in big cities, where residents often associate the insects more with danger than their environmental importance.

Velíz said the group's dozen or so bee handlers are mostly women.

"We tried to work with men, but they seem to love the danger," Velíz said. "We began to see that it wasn't very viable, so we began to contract just women. We realized that we can do the exact same as them, and often even do it better."

Once a hive is safely stored inside the box, the group takes the bees to the rural outskirts of the city, where they can recover and grow strong. They later donate the bees to local bee farmers or release them into the wild.

The team has run into hurdles because they charge a bit more than \$300 for removing a hive, mainly to cover logistical costs. For many in the city, it's still easier to call firefighters to exterminate bees for free.

Yet, as the project has grown, Abeja Negra SOS has also generated a buzz, inspiring other groups to emerge and start doing the same work.

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"With what we do, we may not be changing the world, but we're at least changing the situation in our city," Veliz said.

Associated Press journalist Fernanda Pesce contributed to this report.

Today in History: June 16, Donald Trump launches campaign

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 16, the 167th day of 2023. There are 198 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 16, 1858, accepting the Illinois Republican Party's nomination for the U.S. Senate, Abraham Lincoln said the slavery issue had to be resolved, declaring, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

On this date:

In 1903, Ford Motor Co. was incorporated.

In 1933, the National Industrial Recovery Act became law with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signature. (The Act was later struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.) The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. was founded as President Roosevelt signed the Banking Act of 1933.

In 1941, National Airport (now Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport) opened for business with a ceremony attended by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1963, the world's first female space traveler, Valentina Tereshkova (teh-ruhsh-KOH'-vuh), 26, was launched into orbit by the Soviet Union aboard Vostok 6; Tereshkova spent 71 hours in flight, circling the Earth 48 times before returning safely.

In 1970, Kenneth A. Gibson of Newark, New Jersey, became the first Black politician elected mayor of a major Northeast city. Chicago Bears running back Brian Piccolo, 26, died at a New York hospital after battling cancer.

In 1977, Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev was named president, becoming the first person to hold both posts simultaneously.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter and Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos (toh-REE'-ohs) signed the instruments of ratification for the Panama Canal treaties during a ceremony in Panama City.

In 1999, Thabo Mbeki (TAH'-boh um-BEH'-kee) took the oath as president of South Africa, succeeding Nelson Mandela.

In 2011, U.S. Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y., announced his resignation from Congress, bowing to the furor caused by his sexually charged online dalliances with a former porn performer and other women. Osama bin Laden's longtime second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahri (AY'-muhn ahl-ZWAH'-ree), took control of al-Qaida.

In 2015, real estate mogul Donald Trump launched his successful campaign to become president of the United States with a speech at Trump Tower in Manhattan.

In 2016, President Barack Obama traveled to Orlando, Florida, the scene of a deadly nightclub shooting that claimed 49 victims; the president embraced grieving families and cheered on Democrats' push for new gun control measures. Walt Disney Co. opened Shanghai Disneyland, its first theme park in mainland China.

In 2020, federal authorities announced murder and attempted murder charges against an Air Force sergeant, Steven Carrillo, in the fatal shooting of a federal security officer outside a U.S. courthouse in Oakland, California. (Carrillo, who had ties to the far-right, anti-government "boogaloo" movement, pleaded guilty to a federal murder charge after prosecutors agreed not to seek the death penalty.)

Ten years ago: Riot police firing tear gas and water cannons repelled thousands of anti-government protesters attempting to converge on Istanbul's central Taksim Square while Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (REH'-jehp TY'-ihp UR'-doh-wahn) defended the crackdown at a rally of his supporters. Justin Rose captured his first major championship and became the first Englishman in 43 years to win the U.S. Open, shooting a closing 70 at Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, for a 1-over 281 total. Connecticut

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accountant Erin Brady won the Miss USA pageant in Las Vegas.

Five years ago: China announced 25 percent tariffs on \$34 billion in U.S. imports, including soybeans and beef, in response to President Donald Trump's tariff hike on a similar amount of Chinese goods; China also scrapped agreements to narrow its trade surplus with the United States. Officials in Hawaii said the lower Puna eruption had destroyed 467 homes. A 23-foot-long python swallowed a 54-year-old woman in central Indonesia, an extremely rare occurrence.

One year ago: Witnesses testified to the Jan. 6 committee that Donald Trump's closest advisers viewed his last-ditch efforts to pressure Vice President Mike Pence to reject the tally of state electors and overturn the 2020 election as "nuts," "crazy" and even likely to incite riots. Industry officials said thousands of cattle in feedlots in southwestern Kansas died of heat stress due to soaring temperatures, high humidity and little wind. Severe weather forced Abbott Nutrition to pause production at a Michigan baby formula factory that had just restarted amid a national shortage.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Eileen Atkins is 89. Actor Bill Cobbs is 89. Author Joyce Carol Oates is 85. Country singer Billy "Crash" Craddock is 85. R&B singer Eddie Levert is 81. Actor Joan Van Ark is 80. Actor Geoff Pierson is 74. Boxing Hall of Famer Roberto Duran is 72. Pop singer Gino Vannelli is 71. Actor Laurie Metcalf is 68. Actor Arnold Vosloo is 61. Actor Danny Burstein is 59. Model-actor Jenny Shimizu is 56. Actor James Patrick Stuart is 55. Rapper MC Ren is 54. Actor Clifton Collins Jr. is 53. Golfer Phil Mickelson is 53. Actor John Cho is 51. Actor Eddie Cibrian is 50. Actor Fred Koehler is 48. Actor China (chee-nah) Shavers is 46. Actor Daniel Bruhl is 45. Bluegrass musician Caleb Smith (Balsam Range) is 45. Actor Sibel Kekilli is 43. Actor Missy Peregrym (PEH'-rih-grihm) is 41. Actor Olivia Hack is 40. Singer Diana DeGarmo (TV: "American Idol") is 36. Actor Ali Stroker is 36. Tennis player Bianca Andreescu is 23.