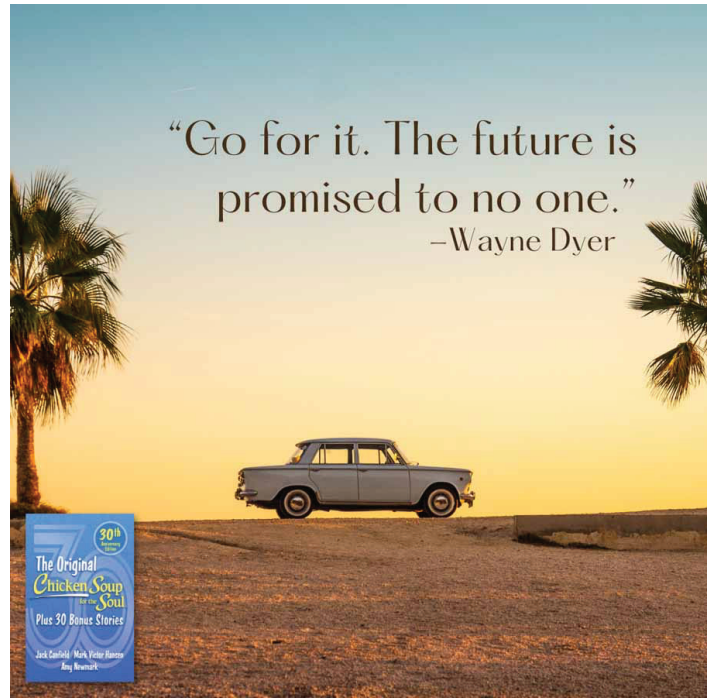


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## Groton Community Calendar

### Wednesday, July 5

Senior Menu: Beef stew, biscuit, Waldorf salad, muffin, tomato juice.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Circles potluck and joint Bible study, 6 p.m.; Game/Project night, 7 p.m.

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

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

Chamber Meeting, noon, at City Hall

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons

Jr. Legion hosts Watertown, DH, 5 p.m.

U12BB hosts Borge, DH, 5:30 p.m.

U10 R/W hosts Webster, DH, 6 p.m.

### Thursday, July 6

Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin potatoes, broccoli and cauliflower blend, fruit, cookie.

U8 R&B hosts Hannigan/Borge, DH, 5:30 p.m.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

### Friday, July 7

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tators, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Jr. Teeners at Vern Jark Memorial Tournament in Aberdeen

U12 State Tournament at Webster

T-Ball Scrimmage (B&G), 6 p.m.

### Saturday, July 8

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. ago 1 p.m.

Avantara Summer Event, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Jr. Teeners at Vern Jark Memorial Tournament in Aberdeen

U12 State Tournament at Webster

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

**OPEN:** **Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

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## Farm Hand Wanted

Farm hand (Groton, Brown, South Dakota): Plant, cultivate & harvest crops. Apply fertilizers & pesticides. Operate, maintain and repair farm equipment. Repair fences and farm buildings. Follow all work and food safety protocols. Req: 6 mns rel exp. Mail resume to Shawn Gengerke Farms, 12702 406th Ave., Groton, SD 57445.

## Help Wanted

THE GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT has openings for the following certified positions for the 23-24 school year: K-12 Vocal Music Teacher, HS Agriculture Teacher/FFA Advisor. Applicants should complete and submit the certified staff application form along with a current cover letter, resume, and three letters of recommendation. All materials should be submitted to Joe Schwan, Superintendent PO Box 410 Groton, SD 57445. EOE

## GROTON'S EVENTS



**July 4** Firecracker  
Tourney at Olive  
Grove Golf Course

**July 9** Summer  
Fest/Car Show at  
the City Park



**July 20** Pro Am  
Tourney at Olive  
Grove Golf Course

**July 20** Summer  
Downtown Sip &  
Shop



**Aug. 4** Wine on Nine  
at Olive Grove Golf  
Course

**Aug. 10** Family Fun  
Fest

## COME SPEND A WEEKEND IN GROTON!

- 5 camping spots with full-service hookups
- play centers and permanent corn hole boards
- swimming pool with slide and diving board
  - 3 diamond baseball complex
- 9-hole golf course • bowling alley

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce

120 N Main St., Groton, SD 57445

**605-397-8422**

**GrotonChamber.com**

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## Olive Grove Firecracker Golf Tournament

### Championship Flight

1st – Scott and Jackie Witlock – 62  
2nd – Steve and Kathy Onkka – 67  
3rd – Lance and Sammy Bonn – 67  
Mark Papstein and Suzie Souza – 68  
Jerry and Jermaine Eastman – 69  
Joe Gourneau and Jessica Gourneau – 70  
Brad and Dar Larson – 70



### First Flight

1st – Reid Johnson and Carlee Johnson – 68  
2nd – Joel Guthmiller and Carly Guthmiller – 69  
3rd – Dean and Connie Munsch – 69  
Cade Guthmiller and Tina Guthmiller – 71  
Austin and Deb Schuelke – 74  
Kyle and Tyhe Gerlach – 78



### Second Flight

1st – Randy and Sue Stanley – 71  
2nd – Blaine and Allison Snyder – 74  
3rd – Brad and Brenda Waage – 74  
Doug and Vicki Jorgensen – 75  
Mark and Teri Kline – 76  
Chad and Haley Ellingson – 76



### Fourth Flight

1st – Josh and Madison Claymore – 82  
2nd – Brad and Kristie Sombke – 83  
3rd – Steve and Betty Dunker – 84  
Jesse and Krissi Zak – 85  
Matt Kinney and Lexi Ferrell – 86  
Torre and Denise Raap – 87  
Greyson and Jamie Cutler – 89  
Larry and Shirlee Frohling – 90  
Craig and Abby Miller – 102  
Colton Sleister and Lily Cutler – 126

### Third Flight

1st – Tony Waage and Elise Hougesen – 76  
2nd – Nicole Johnson and Liam Johnson – 78  
3rd – Tony and Brenda Madsen – 79  
Lorin and Julie Flihs – 79  
Tom Mahan and Mavis Rossow – 79  
Lance and Cindy Frohling – 81  
Jonathan and Mandilyn Flihs – 82  
Travis and JJ Johnson – 83  
Jon and Jerrie Vedvei – 86



### Pin Prizes

Men Closest to the Pin #8 –  
Brad Larson  
Women Closest to the Pin  
#4 – Suzie Souza  
Longest Putt – Randy Stanley  
Putting Contest Winner –  
Mark Papstein

## The Life of Steven Herron



Memorial services for Steven Herron, 66, of Groton will be 11 a.m., Friday, July 7, 2023 at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Pastor Jeremy Yeadon will officiate. Inurnment will follow in Groton Union Cemetery.

Visitation will be held at the funeral home on Thursday from 5-7 p.m. Family requests casual dress for the services.

Steve passed away June 29, 2023 at his home in Groton.

Steven LeRoy Herron was born on May 3, 1957 in Aberdeen to LeRoy "Bud" and Henrietta (Suumeyer) Herron. He attended country school and later Groton High School. Following his graduation in 1975, he was employed at Juel Egg Company. He later worked for Olive Grove Golf Course and Kampa Construction. On May 31,

1985 he was united in marriage with Tami Kirnan at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Aberdeen.

In his younger years, Steve was a member of the Groton Lion's Club and enjoyed bowling. He was a passionate Minnesota Vikings fan and enjoyed hunting and gardening. In recent years, he helped to plant and harvest pumpkins for the Annual Pumpkin Fest.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Tami, sons, Zach and Cody, his brother, Terry (Lori) Herron and sister, Deb Protas, all of Groton.

Preceding him in death were his parents and his daughter, Kelsey Jo Herron.

Honorary Urn Bearers will be all of his Deer Camp Buddies.

[www.paetznick-garness.com](http://www.paetznick-garness.com)



## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-23



Photo from KSFY featuring Charle Imrie who was deployed to help out after Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017.

### Fruit of the Spirit

## *Ladies Luncheon & Program*

Wednesday, July 12 at Noon

Bethesda Lutheran Church, Bristol

Silent Auction 10:30 - 11:30

Door Prizes

**Charla Imrie from The American Red Cross  
will be the guest speaker**

**Advance tickets required \$15.00**

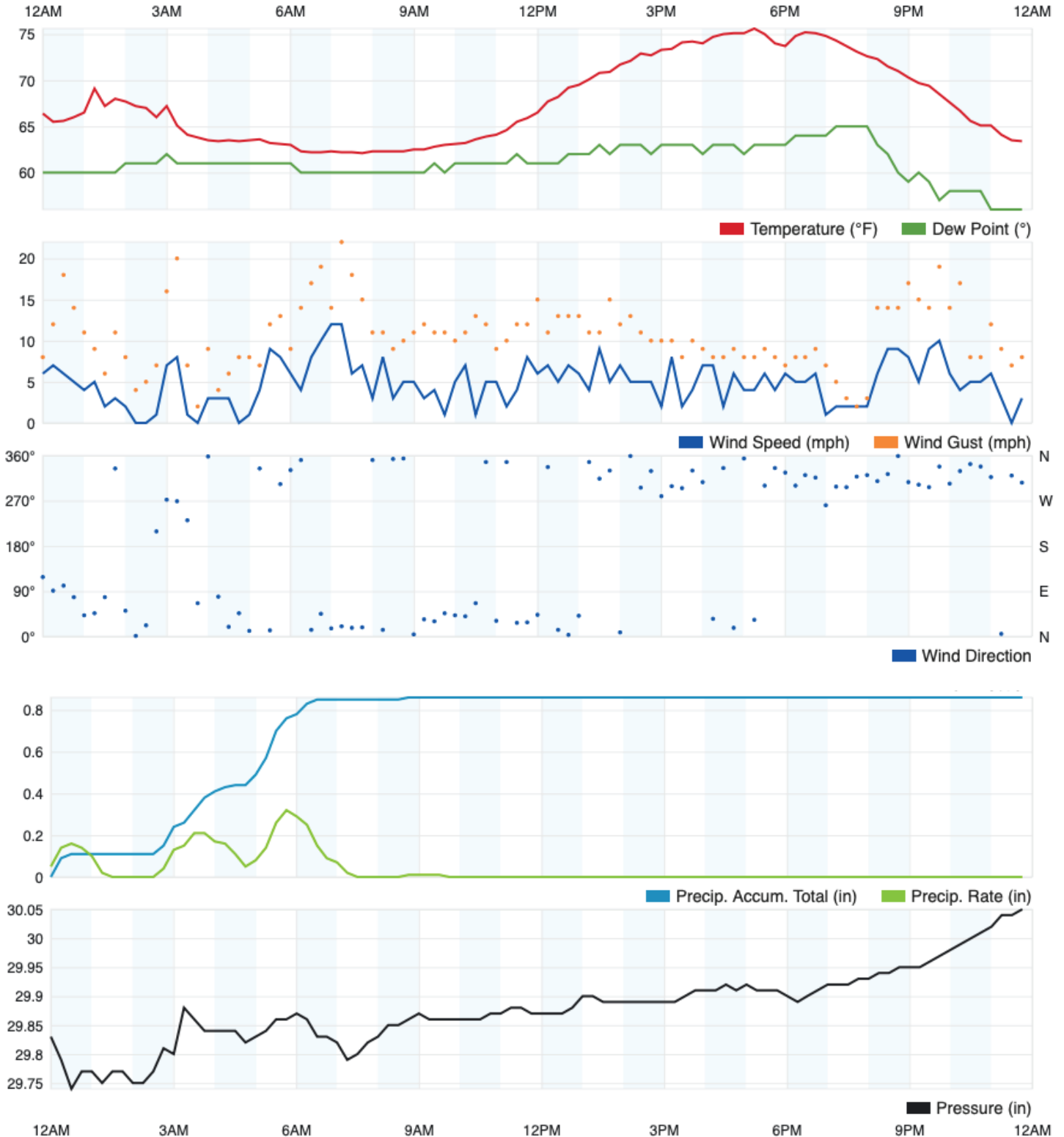
**Call Kay Espeland 605-492-3507 or**

**Jane Goehring 605-290-1420**

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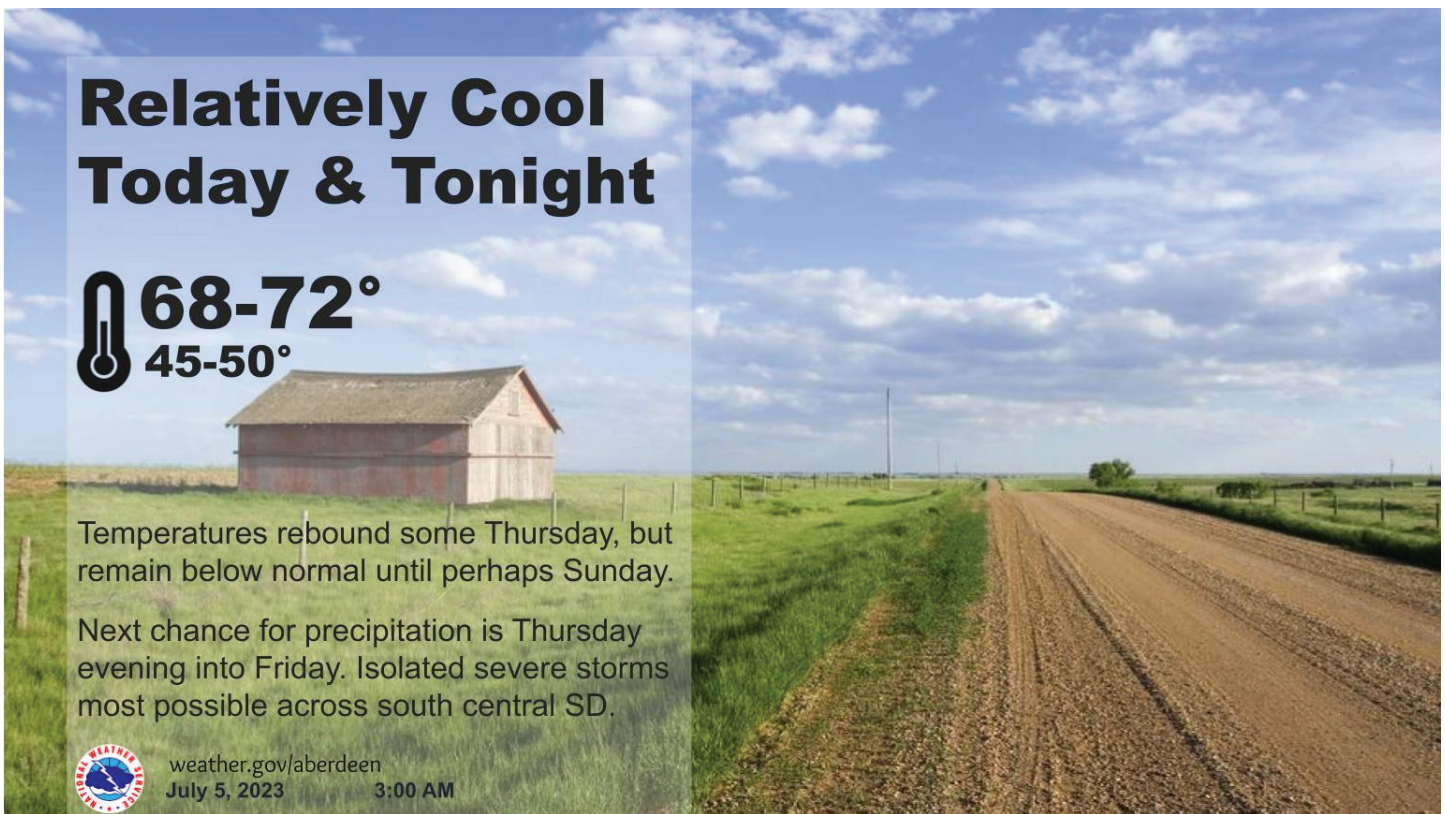
## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny
High: 70 °F	Low: 44 °F	High: 78 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 54 °F	High: 78 °F




## Relatively Cool Today & Tonight

 **68-72°**  
**45-50°**

Temperatures rebound some Thursday, but remain below normal until perhaps Sunday.

Next chance for precipitation is Thursday evening into Friday. Isolated severe storms most possible across south central SD.

 weather.gov/aberndeen  
July 5, 2023 3:00 AM

After temperatures struggle to reach the low 70s today and drop into the 40s tonight, they'll rebound closer to normal through the rest of the week. Dry until possibly Thursday evening into Friday, with a 30-50% chance for showers and storms.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 76 °F at 6:38 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:28 AM

Wind: 22 mph at 7:12 AM

Day length: 15 hours, 36 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 108 in 1936

Record Low: 35 in 1915

Average High: 84

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in July.: 0.59

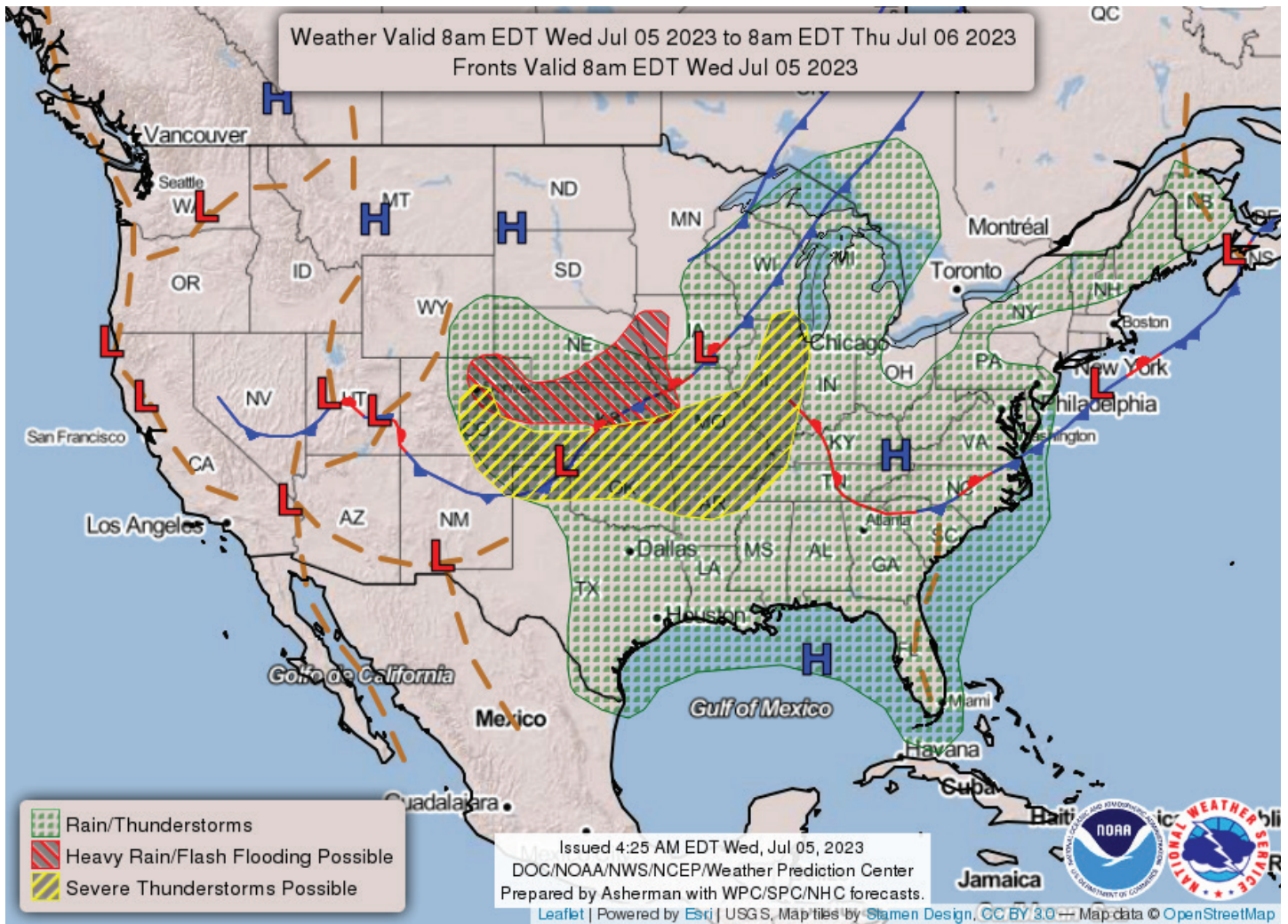
Precip to date in July.: 1.09

Average Precip to date: 11.60

Precip Year to Date: 12.44

Sunset Tonight: 9:25:25 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49:20 AM





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## Today in Weather History

July 5, 1936: Three record high temperatures were set on this day. Near Gann Valley, the temperature reached 120 degrees, setting the state record. The state record was tied on July 15, 2006, at 17 miles WSW of Fort Pierre. Other record highs on this date include 119 degrees in Kennebec and 116 degrees in Murdo. The record highs near Gann Valley, Kennebec, and Murdo are all-time highs for each location.

July 5, 1996: A powerful thunderstorm packing over 100 mph winds and grapefruit-sized hail tracked from Belle Fourche Reservoir to Wall. The storm caused an estimated \$4.5 million in crop damage, killed numerous livestock, and stripped vegetation bare.

1891 - Sixteen horses were killed by hail, and many more have to be put to death due to injuries from a hailstorm at Rapid City, SD. (The Weather Channel)

1900 - A spectacular three day fire began when a bolt of lightning struck a refinery in Bayonne NJ. (David Ludlum)

1916 - A hurricane produced 82 mph winds, an 11.6 foot tide, and a barometric pressure of 28.92 inches at Mobile, AL. (David Ludlum)

1925: A large hailstone weighing a half pound fell at Plumstead, just outside of London, England. This hailstone was the heaviest hailstone ever recorded in the United Kingdom.

1937 - The temperature at Medicine Lake, MT, soared to 117 degrees to establish a state record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1937 - Midale and Yellow Grass in Saskatchewan hit 113 degrees to establish an all-time record high for Canada that same day. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - The morning low at Death Valley CA was 103 degrees, and the high that afternoon was 120 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980: The "More Trees Down" started in western Iowa and tracked eastward affecting several states along its path before dissipating in eastern Virginia.

1987 - Severe thunderstorms raked south central Kansas for the second morning in a row. Thunderstorm winds again gusted to 80 mph at Clearwater, and in the Wichita area reached 100 mph. Twenty-five persons were injured at a trailer park at El Dorado Lake. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes in Montana and three in North Dakota. Baseball size hail was reported at Shonkin, MT, and wind gusts to 85 mph were reported south of Fordville, ND. Twenty cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Fargo ND with a reading of 106 degrees. Muskegon, MI, equalled their July record with a high of 95 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Moisture from what once was Tropical Storm Allison triggered thunderstorms over the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, which deluged Wilmington, DE, with a record 6.83 inches of rain in 24 hours, including 6.37 inches in just six hours. Up to ten inches of rain was reported at Claymont, northeast of Wilmington. July 1989 was thus the wettest month in seventy years for Wilmington, with a total of 12.63 inches of rain. Alamosa CO reported an all-time record high of 94 degrees, and Pierre, SD, hit 113 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Early in life, Michael Johnson was taught how to plan for success. Each time he would share his dreams with his father, he was asked, "How do you plan to do that?" He was then expected to list each step involved in reaching his goals, research everything that was involved to accomplish his goals, and list every step involved in attaining his goals. Life was all about "the goals!"

When he became a sprinter, he applied the same rules to running. As a result of his goal-setting skills, his careful planning, and extensive training, he won four gold medals as a sprinter in the Olympics. After his victorious achievements, he was "crowned" the world champion sprinter eight times and still holds two world records. In the world of running, everyone acknowledges his success.

For the Christian, success is victorious living and honoring God with the gifts He has given us. We must take our goals and plans to God and ask for His blessings on them. We must make certain that they are deeply rooted in God's Word, that He can empower them with His blessings, have integrity and honesty, and be consistent with God's will for our lives and His world. There is a vast difference in worldly success and Godly success, however. Godly success comes to the Christian when we honor Him in everything we do. And, we can be assured that we are honoring Him when He blesses our lives for being faithful to Him. We may never set any world records or receive a single one of this world's medals, but we will inherit the "Crown of Life" if we are faithful.

Prayer: Lord, may we always set goals and make plans that You can bless. May we strive to honor You in all that we do. May each achievement in our lives be blest by You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
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## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.04.23

21 33 54 61 67 12

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$427,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 4  
DRAW: Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.03.23

12 27 37 42 43 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$5,070,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 19 Mins 28  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.04.23

3 6 21 41 42 10

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 34 Mins 27  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.01.23

14 19 20 26 27

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$130,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 34 Mins 27  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.03.23

15 37 50 55 69 9

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

NEXT 17 Hrs 3 Mins 27  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
07.03.23

15 26 31 38 61 3

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$546,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 3 Mins 28  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Israel ends West Bank raid calling it a blow to militants. Palestinians grapple with destruction**

By MAJDI MOHAMMED and IMAD ISSEID Associated Press

JENIN REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank (AP) — Israel withdrew troops from a West Bank militant stronghold Wednesday but warned that its most intense military operation in the occupied territory in nearly two decades could be repeated. Twelve Palestinians and an Israeli soldier were killed in the two-day raid.

Residents of the Jenin refugee camp emerged from their homes to find alleys lined by piles of rubble and flattened or scorched cars. Shopkeepers and bulldozers started clearing the debris. Thousands who had fled the fighting began returning.

Kefah Dabayyah, a 33-year-old Jenin refugee camp resident, said that he and his family had returned Wednesday to find widespread destruction.

"Roads were destroyed and many houses were affected, glass from windows was everywhere," he said. His home was not hit, but there is neither water, nor electricity or internet.

The army claimed to have inflicted heavy damage on militant groups in the operation, which included a series of airstrikes and hundreds of ground troops. But it remained unclear whether there would be any lasting effect after nearly a year and a half of heavy fighting in the West Bank.

Ahead of the withdrawal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to carry out similar operations if needed.

"At these moments we are completing the mission, and I can say that our extensive operation in Jenin is not a one-off," he said during a visit to a military post on the outskirts of Jenin. "We will eradicate terrorism wherever we see it and we will strike at it."

The Jenin raid was one of the most intense Israeli military operations in the West Bank since an armed Palestinian uprising against Israel's open-ended occupation ended two decades ago.

Some of the scenes from Jenin, including massive army bulldozers tearing through camp alleys, were eerily similar to those from a major Israeli incursion in 2002, which lasted for eight days and became known as the battle of Jenin.

Both operations, two decades apart, were meant to crush militant groups in the camp and deter and prevent attacks on Israelis emanating from the camp. In each case, the army claimed success.

However, the continued cycle of army raids and Palestinian attacks raised new questions about Israel's tactics. This week's raid had wide support across Israel's political spectrum, but some critics in Israel argued the impact is short-lived, with slain gunmen quickly replaced by others.

"As usual, these things are best taken in proportion. To the security establishment, this is a successful operation thus far, but it holds no real chance of effecting a fundamental change in the state of affairs in the West Bank," wrote Amos Harel, military affairs commentator for the Haaretz daily.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose autonomy government administers parts of the West Bank, has rejected violence against Israelis, but has effectively lost control over several strongholds of gunmen. Amateur videos posted on social media appeared to show angry residents of Jenin hurling stones at the Palestinian Authority police headquarters after the Israeli military's withdrawal.

Many Palestinians see the actions of the gunmen as an inevitable result of 56 years of occupation and the absence of any political process with Israel. They also point to increased West Bank settlement construction and violence by extremist settlers.

Palestinian health officials said 12 Palestinians were killed in Jenin and more than 140 were wounded, including 83 who needed treatment in hospitals. Another Palestinian man was killed by Israeli forces in an unrelated incident near the West Bank city of Ramallah. Dr. Wissam Bakr, the head of Jenin Hospital, said most of the wounded were shot in the head and chest, and that 20 suffered severe injuries.

The Israeli military has claimed it killed only militants, but it has not provided details.

Summing up the raid, the military said it had confiscated thousands of weapons, bomb-making materials and caches of money. Weapons were found in militant hideouts and civilian areas alike, in one case beneath a mosque, the military said.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the army had inflicted a heavy blow on militants, saying those who try to harm Israelis "will meet an iron wall and the strength of the military and security forces, and will be held responsible for their actions."

The withdrawal came hours after a Hamas militant rammed his car into a crowded Tel Aviv bus stop and began stabbing people, wounding eight, including a pregnant woman who reportedly lost her baby. The attacker was killed by an armed bystander. Hamas said the attack was revenge for the Israeli offensive.

Early Wednesday, militants from Hamas-ruled Gaza also fired five rockets toward Israel, which Israel said were intercepted. Israeli jets struck several sites in Gaza.

The large-scale raid comes amid a more than yearlong spike in violence that has created a challenge for Netanyahu's far-right government, which is dominated by ultranationalists who have called for tougher action against Palestinian militants only to see the fighting worsen.

Over 140 Palestinians have been killed this year in the West Bank, and Palestinian attacks targeting Israelis have killed at least 25 people, including a shooting last month that killed four settlers.

The sustained operation has raised warnings from humanitarian groups of a deteriorating situation.

Doctors Without Borders accused the army of firing tear gas into a hospital, filling the emergency room with smoke and forcing emergency patients to be treated in a main hall.

The U.N.'s human rights chief said the scale of the operation "raises a host of serious issues with respect to international human rights norms and standards, including protecting and respecting the right to life."

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek those territories for their hoped-for independent state.

"At the end of day the refugee camp emerged victorious," refugee camp resident Dabbayah said, calling it "a great victory for the people of Jenin."

## **France sees itself as blind to race. After a teen is killed by police, how does one discuss racism?**

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NANTERRE, France (AP) — The race of the police officer who fatally shot a French teenager during a traffic stop last week hasn't been disclosed, and there's no reason why it would be. Officially, race doesn't exist in France.

But the death of the French-born 17-year-old with North African roots, which sent rioters into the streets, has again exposed deep feelings about systemic racism that lies under the surface of the country's ideal of colorblind equality.

With his killing captured on video, what could be seen as France's George Floyd moment has produced a very French national discussion that leaves out what many Americans would consider the essential point: color.

One can't address race, much less racism, if it doesn't exist, according to French policy. The Paris police chief, Laurent Nunez, said Sunday he was shocked by the U.N. human rights office's use of the term "racism" in its criticism of French law enforcement. The police have none of it, he said.

France, especially white France, doesn't tend to frame discussion of discrimination and inequality in black-and-white terms. Some French consider it racist to even discuss skin color. No one knows how many people of various races live in the country, as such data is not recorded.

"They say we are all French ... so for them, it's racist to do something like that," said Iman Essaifi, a 25-year-old resident of Nanterre, the Paris suburb where the teen, Nahel, was killed.

While the subject of race remains taboo, Essaifi believes the events of the past week were a step toward speaking more openly about it. She noted that the people who marched in the streets of Nanterre after Nahel's death were "not necessarily Arabs, not necessarily Blacks. There were whites, there were the 'vrai

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Français," – the "real French."

France's Constitution says the French Republic and its values are considered universal, meaning that all citizens have the same rights regardless of origin, race or religion.

Trying to discuss racial inequality without mentioning race leads to some linguistic gymnastics. Instead of terms like Black or mixed-race neighborhoods, French people instead often speak of "communities" or "banlieues" (suburbs) and "quartiers" (neighborhoods). They're widely understood to mean often disadvantaged urban areas of housing projects and large immigrant populations.

Amid the unrest after Nahel's death, such nonspecific language has ranged from supportive to insulting. Nanterre's mayor, Patrick Jarry, spoke on Monday of the suburb "in all its diversity." A statement last week by a large police union, the Alliance Police Nationale, described the rioters as "vermin."

Of course there's racism in France, some people said.

"For example, if your parents come from another country, even you are poorly accepted," said Stella Assi, a 17-year-old born in Paris who was passing by the city hall in Nanterre. "If I were white, that wouldn't happen."

France's legacy of colonialism, largely in Africa and the Caribbean, plays out in some attitudes that continue generations later. More recently, migration has caused debate and division. The result is a government that openly addresses certain issues around race, but not necessarily in relation to its citizens' daily lives.

On Wednesday, for example, a court in France is scheduled to review a request for reparations for the descendants of enslaved people. And on a notice board in Nanterre, now scrawled with graffiti saying "Cops, get out of our lives," a city hall announcement from May advertised a ceremony commemorating the abolition of slavery.

Ahmed Djamai, 58, the president of an organization in Nanterre that connects youth with work opportunities, recalled being stopped by police recently and asked for his residence permit. He was born in France.

"Our second-, third- and fourth-generation children face the same problem when they go out to get a job," he said. "People lump them together with things that happen in the suburbs. They're not accepted. So, to date, the problem is social, but it's also one of identity."

The stunning procession of hundreds of men who walked from a mosque in Nanterre to the cemetery for Nahel's burial stood out in France not only because many were Black or Arab, but because even the demonstration of religious identity can be sensitive. In addition to being officially colorblind, France is officially secular, too.

Some people with immigrant roots fear that France's success stories of generations of assimilation under that policy are being lost amid the rioting and criticism.

Gilles Djeyaramane is a municipal councilor in Poissy, a town west of Paris. His French-born wife is of Madagascan origin. He was born in French Guiana, of parents from India, and moved to France when he was 18.

"I'm always saying to my children, "Your mom and dad would never have met if France didn't exist," he said. "I'm not at all utopian. I know there's work to do in some areas. But we are on the right path."

Those who knew Nahel, and some who identify with him, said it's not fair to pretend that differences, and discrimination, don't exist. With anger, some pointed out that a funding campaign for the family of the police officer accused of shooting Nahel already topped 1 million euros (\$1.09 million).

The frustration and violence in many communities come from other issues as well, including the rising cost of living and policing in general. In 2021, Amnesty International and five other rights groups filed a class-action lawsuit against the French state alleging ethnic profiling by police during ID checks.

Police officers reject accusations that some single out people because of their color. Officer Walid Hrar, who is of Moroccan descent and Muslim, said that if it sometimes seems that people of color are stopped more than others, it's a reflection of the mixed-race density of populations in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods.

In rural France, with fewer people with immigrant backgrounds, police also stop people but "they are called François, Paul and Pierre and Jacques," Hrar said.



But Mariam Lambert, a 39-year-old who said Nahel was a friend of her son, stressed the pressure of feeling that she and others, including fellow Muslims, had to muffle their identity.

"If I put a scarf on my head ... they would see me as from another world, and everything would change for me," said Lambert, who thinks she would be insulted in the streets. She spoke on the margins of a gathering at Nanterre city hall as events were held there and across France on Monday in support of authorities and a return to calm.

Lambert mused about moving to Morocco if France doesn't change. "There are plenty of people leaving," she said. "Because who protects us from the police?"

John Leicester and Nicolas Garriga contributed to this report from Paris.

## Ransomware criminals are dumping kids' private files online after school hacks

By FRANK BAJAK, HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and LARRY FENN Associated Press

The confidential documents stolen from schools and dumped online by ransomware gangs are raw, intimate and graphic. They describe student sexual assaults, psychiatric hospitalizations, abusive parents, truancy — even suicide attempts.

"Please do something," begged a student in one leaked file, recalling the trauma of continually bumping into an ex-abuser at a school in Minneapolis. Other victims talked about wetting the bed or crying themselves to sleep.

Complete sexual assault case files containing these details were among more than 300,000 files dumped online in March after the 36,000-student Minneapolis Public Schools refused to pay a \$1 million ransom. Other exposed data included medical records, discrimination complaints, Social Security numbers and contact information of district employees.

Rich in digitized data, the nation's schools are prime targets for far-flung criminal hackers, who are assiduously locating and scooping up sensitive files that not long ago were committed to paper in locked cabinets. "In this case, everybody has a key," said cybersecurity expert Ian Coldwater, whose son attends a Minneapolis high school.

Often strapped for cash, districts are grossly ill-equipped not just to defend themselves but to respond diligently and transparently when attacked, especially as they struggle to help kids catch up from the pandemic and grapple with shrinking budgets.

Months after the Minneapolis attack, administrators have not delivered on their promise to inform individual victims. Unlike for hospitals, no federal law exists to require this notification from schools.

The Associated Press reached families of six students whose sexual assault case files were exposed. The message from a reporter was the first time anyone had alerted them.

"Truth is, they didn't notify us about anything," said a mother whose son's case file has 80 documents.

Even when schools catch a ransomware attack in progress, the data are typically already gone. That was what Los Angeles Unified School District did last Labor Day weekend, only to see the private paperwork of more than 1,900 former students — including psychological evaluations and medical records — leaked online. Not until February did district officials disclose the breach's full dimensions, noting the complexity of notifying victims with exposed files up to three decades old.

The lasting legacy of school ransomware attacks, it turns out, is not in school closures, recovery costs or even soaring cyberinsurance premiums. It is the trauma for staff, students and parents from the online exposure of private records — which the AP found on the open internet and dark web.

"A massive amount of information is being posted online, and nobody is looking to see just how bad it all is. Or, if somebody is looking, they're not making the results public," said analyst Brett Callow of the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft.

Other big districts recently stung by data theft include San Diego, Des Moines and Tucson, Arizona. While the severity of those hacks remains unclear, all have been criticized either for being slow to admit

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to being hit by ransomware, dragging their feet on notifying victims — or both.

## ON CYBER SECURITY, SCHOOLS HAVE LAGGED

While other ransomware targets have fortified and segmented networks, encrypting data and mandating multi-factor authentication, school systems have been slower to react.

Ransomware likely has affected well over 5 million U.S. students by now, with district attacks on track to rise this year, said analyst Allan Liska of the cybersecurity firm Recorded Future. Nearly one in three U.S. districts had been breached by the end of 2021, according to a survey by the Center for Internet Security, a federally funded nonprofit.

"Everyone wants schools to be more secure, but very few want to see their taxes raised to do it," Liska said.

Parents have instead pushed to use limited funds on things like bilingual teachers and new football helmets, said Albuquerque schools superintendent Scott Elder, whose district suffered a January 2022 ransomware attack.

Just three years ago, criminals did not routinely grab data in ransomware attacks, said TJ Sayers, cyberthreat intelligence manager at the Center for Internet Security. Now, it's common, he said, with much of it sold on the dark web.

The criminals in the Minneapolis theft were especially aggressive. They shared links to the stolen data on Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and the dark web, which standard browsers can't access. A handwritten note naming three students involved in one of the sexual abuse complaints was featured for a time on YouTube competitor Vimeo, which promptly took down the video.

The cybercrime syndicate behind the Los Angeles United attack was less brazen. But the 500 gigabytes it dumped on its dark web "leak site" remained freely available for download in June. They include financial records and personnel files with scanned Social Security cards and passports.

The public disclosure of psychological records or sexual assault case files, complete with students' names, can fray psyches and thwart careers, psychologists say. One file stolen from Los Angeles United described how a middle-schooler had attempted suicide and been in and out of the psychiatric hospital a dozen times in a year.

The mother of a 16-year-old with autism recently got a letter from the San Diego Unified School District saying her daughter's medical records may have been leaked online in an Oct. 25 breach.

"What," Barbara Voit asked, "if she doesn't want the world to know that she has autism?"

## IN A TRICKLE, THE EXTENT OF A BREACH EMERGES

The Minneapolis parents informed by the AP of the leaked sexual assault complaints feel doubly victimized. Their children have battled PTSD, and some even left their schools. Now this.

"The family is beyond horrified to learn that this highly sensitive information is now available in perpetuity on the internet for the child's future friends, romantic interests, employers, and others to discover," said Jeff Storms, an attorney for one of the families. It is AP policy not to identify sexual abuse victims.

Teachers, meanwhile, want to know why they have to call the district and report problems in order to receive the promised free credit monitoring and identity theft protection after their Social Security numbers were leaked.

"Everything they've learned about this is from the news," said Greta Callahan, of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers.

Minneapolis Schools spokeswoman Crystina Lugo-Beach would not say how many people have been contacted so far or answer any other AP questions about the attack.

School nurse Angie McCracken had by early April already received 10 alerts through her credit card that her Social Security number and birth date were circulating on the dark web. She wondered about her graduating 18-year-old. "If their identity is stolen, just how hard is that going to make my kid's life?"

Despite parents' and teachers' frustration, schools are routinely advised by incident response teams concerned about legal liability issues and ransom negotiations against being more transparent, said Callow of Emsisoft. Minneapolis school officials apparently followed that playbook, initially describing the Feb. 17

attack cryptically as a "system incident," then as "technical difficulties" and later an "encryption event."

The extent of the breach became clear though when a ransomware group posted video of stolen data more than two weeks later, giving the district 10 days to pay the ransom before leaking files.

The district declined to pay, following the standing advice of the FBI, which says ransoms encourage criminals to target more victims.

## SCHOOLS SPEND TECH BUDGETS ON LEARNING TOOLS, NOT SECURITY

During the COVID-19 pandemic, districts prioritized spending on internet connectivity and remote learning. Security got short shrift as IT departments invested in software to track student engagement and performance, often at the expense of privacy and safety, University of Chicago and New York University researchers found.

In a 2023 survey, the Consortium for School Networking, a tech-oriented nonprofit, found just 16% of districts had full-time network security staff, with nearly half devoting 2% or less of their IT budgets to security.

With a deficit in private sector cybersecurity talent, districts struggle to hang onto it. Districts who do hire someone often see them snatched away by businesses that can double their salaries, said Keith Krueger, CEO of the consortium.

Cybersecurity money for public schools is limited. As it stands, districts can only expect slivers of the \$1 billion in cybersecurity grants that the federal government is distributing over four years.

Minnesota's chief information security officer, John Israel, said his state got \$18 million of it this year to divvy among 3,600 different entities, including cities and tribal governments. State lawmakers provided an additional \$22.5 million in grants for cyber and physical security in schools.

Schools also want to tap a federal program called E-Rate that is designed to improve broadband connections to schools and libraries. More than 1,100 wrote the Federal Communications Commission after the Los Angeles Unified breach asking that E-Rate be modified to free up funds for cybersecurity. The FCC is still considering the request.

It's already too late for the mother of one of the Minneapolis students whose confidential sexual assault complaint was released online. She almost feels "violated again."

"All the stuff we kept private," she said, "it's out there. And it's been out there for a very long time."

## A troubled new power plant leaves Jordan in debt to China, raising concerns over Beijing's influence

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

ATTARAT, Jordan (AP) — Jordan's Attarat power plant was envisioned as a landmark project promising to provide the desert kingdom with a major source of energy while solidifying its relations with China.

But weeks after its official opening, the site, a sea of black, crumbly rock in the barren desert south of Jordan's capital, is instead a source of heated controversy. Deals surrounding the plant put Jordan on the hook for billions of dollars in debt to China — all for a plant that is no longer needed for its energy, because of other agreements made since the project's conception.

The result is fueling tensions between China and Jordan and causing grief for the Jordanian government as it tries to contest the deal in an international legal battle. As Chinese influence grows in the Middle East and America withdraws, the \$2.1 billion shale oil station has come to characterize China's wider model that has burdened many Asian and African states with crippling debt and served as a cautionary tale for the region.

"Attarat is a representation of what the Belt and Road Initiative was and has become," said Jesse Marks, a nonresident fellow at the Washington-based Stimson Center, referring to China's scheme to build global infrastructure and boost Beijing's political sway.

"Jordan evolves as an interesting case study not for China's success in the region but for how China engages in middle-income countries," he said.

First conceived some 15 years ago as a way to fulfill national ambitions of energy independence, the

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Attarat shale oil plant is now causing anger in Jordan because of its enormous price tag. If the original agreement holds, Jordan would have to pay China a staggering \$8.4 billion over 30 years to buy the electricity generated by the plant.

Laborers flown from rural China toil in the shadow of the giant station, some 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Amman.

When Shi Changqing arrived in the Jordanian desert earlier this year from the Jilin province in China's northeast, fears were mounting in the workers' dormitories that the project could grind to a halt, leaving everyone in the lurch, the 36-year-old welder said.

"It's very strange to feel that, being from China, you are not wanted here," he said.

With its meager natural resources in a region awash with oil and gas, Jordan seemed to have drawn a losing ticket. Then in the 2000s, it struck shale oil trapped in the black rock that underlies the country. With the fourth-largest concentration of shale oil in the world, Jordan had high hopes for a big pay-off.

In 2012, the Jordanian Attarat Power Company proposed to the government to extract shale oil from the desert and build a plant using it to provide 15% of the country's electricity supply. The proposal fit the government's intensifying desire for energy self-sufficiency amid the turmoil of the 2011 Arab uprisings, company officials say.

But extraction proved expensive, risky and technologically challenging. As the project lagged, Jordan struck a \$15 billion agreement to import vast amounts of natural gas at competitive prices from Israel in 2014. Interest in Attarat waned.

Attarat Power Co. CEO Mohammed Maaitah said he pitched the project the world over — from the United States and Europe to Japan and South Korea. No one bit, he said.

To Jordan's surprise, Chinese banks offered Jordan over \$1.6 billion in loans to finance the plant in 2017. A Chinese state-owned firm, Guangdong Energy Group, bought a 45% stake in the Attarat Power Co., turning the white elephant into the largest private enterprise to come out of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative outside China, according to the company.

Guangdong Energy Group did not respond to requests for comment.

The investment was part of China's wider push into an Arab world hungry for foreign investment, experts say. The money for large infrastructure projects came with few political strings attached.

"China doesn't bring with it the baggage of the United States in that we actually have some concern about democratic processes, transparency, corruption," said David Schenker, a former U.S. assistant secretary of state for Middle East policy. "For authoritarian states, there's some appeal in China."

As talk grew of American unreliability, China turned to acquiring strategic assets in the Middle East, even in economically troubled states. It bought lots of Iraqi oil, tendered a port in northern Lebanon and poured money into President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi's new capital in Egypt.

With Syrian President Bashar Assad in 2017 gaining the upper hand in his country's civil war, China had an interest in investing in the Attarat project in neighboring Jordan as a springboard, anticipating a Syrian reconstruction boom that could unlock billions of dollars in investments, experts say.

Under their 30-year power purchase deal, Jordan's state-run electricity company will have to buy electricity from the now effectively Chinese-led Attarat at an exorbitant rate that means the Jordanian government would lose \$280 million annually, the treasury estimated. To cover the payments, Jordan would have to raise electricity prices for consumers by 17%, energy experts said — a severe blow to an economy already saddled with debt and inflation.

The extent of losses to China appalled the Jordanian government. Jordan's Ministry of Energy launched international arbitration against Attarat Power Co. in 2020 "on the grounds of gross unfairness."

When asked why Jordan had agreed to such a lopsided contract to begin with, Jordan's Ministry of Energy declined to comment, as did the National Electricity Co. As of June, hearings were being held at an arbitration tribunal of the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce.

Musa Hantash, a geologist on the parliamentary energy committee, described the deal as the natural outcome of corruption and a lack of technical expertise.

"It's very difficult to convince these big companies to invest in Jordan. There are things to help certain people make a profit," he said, without elaborating.

American officials portrayed the Attarat contract as a case of Beijing's "debt trap diplomacy."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry declined to comment on the Attarat project. But it defended Beijing's investment in developing countries, denying allegations it ensnares partners in debt and arguing that China never compels "others to borrow from us forcibly."

"We never attach any political strings to loan agreements," the ministry said, urging international financial institutions to help provide debt relief.

Attarat Power said it expects a decision in the case later this year. Rulings by the world business organization are legally binding and enforceable.

Maaitah and other company officials dismissed Jordan's claims of unjustly inflated prices, accusing Jordan of backtracking on its agreement due to anti-China sentiment.

Since the first of two power units went live last fall, the Jordanian government has paid only half its monthly dues, Maaitah said.

In Jordan and other poorer Arab states allied with the U.S., the pace of Chinese investment in recent years has slowed.

Faced with pushback abroad and rising concerns at home, China is shifting its approach in the region, said Amman-based China expert Samer Khraïno, focusing on the oil-rich Persian Gulf. Wealthy states like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have no issue paying back China's big loans.

For now, Jordan appears unwilling to take any more chances with China.

In May, Jordan's telecommunications company Orange signed a new agreement for 5G equipment. It had long been a customer of Huawei, the Chinese telecoms giant under American sanctions.

This time, it chose Nokia.

## Armed mobs rampage through villages and push remote Indian region to the brink of civil war

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

KANGVAI, India (AP) — Zuan Vaiphei is armed and prepared to kill. He is also ready to die.

Vaiphei spends most of his days behind the sandbag walls of a makeshift bunker, his fingers resting on the trigger of a 12-gauge shotgun. Some 1,000 yards ahead of him, between a field of tall green grass and wildflowers, is the enemy, peering from parapets of similar sandbag fortifications, armed and ready.

"The only thing that crosses our mind is will they approach us; will they come and kill us? So, if they happen to come with weapons, we have to forget everything and protect ourselves," the 32-year-old says, his voice barely audible amid an earsplitting drone of cicadas in Kangvai village that rests along the foothills of India's remote northeastern Manipur state.

Dozens of such fortifications mark one of the many front lines that don't exist on any map and yet dissect Manipur in two ethnic zones — between people from hill tribes and those from the plains below. There, amid endless groves of bamboo and oak, young men walk by with rifles slinging from their shoulders.

"Our mothers, our sisters, they fast for us, praying to God," Vaiphei says, standing at the mouth of his bunker where he keeps a copy of the Bible alongside him.

Two months ago, Vaiphei was teaching economics to students when the simmering tensions between the two communities exploded in a bloodletting so horrific that thousands of Indian troops who were sent to quell the unrest remain near paralyzed by it.

The two warring factions have formed armed militias, laying bare the ethnonationalist fissures that have long threatened to worsen instability in India's restive northeastern region.

Tucked in the mountains on the border with Myanmar, Manipur was once ruled by a patchwork of kings and tribal confederations. It appears to be a different world from the rest of India, a culture that borrows heavily from East Asia. Manipur is also a state that has never been fully reconciled to central rule and some guerrilla groups still pursue an effort to break away from India.

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Ethnic clashes between different groups have occasionally erupted in the past, mostly pitting the minority Christian Kukis against mostly Hindu Meiteis, who form a narrow majority in the state. But no one was prepared for the killings, arson and a rampage of hate that followed in May, after Meiteis had demanded a special status that would allow them to buy land in the hills populated by Kukis and other tribal groups, as well as a share of government jobs.

Police armories were looted. Within days, both sides were armed to unleash havoc.

Witnesses interviewed by The Associated Press described how angry mobs and armed gangs swept into villages and towns, burning down houses, massacring civilians, and driving tens of thousands from their homes. More than 50,000 people have fled to packed relief camps. Those who fought back were killed, sometimes bludgeoned to death or beheaded, and the injured tossed into raging fires, according to witnesses and others with first-hand knowledge of the events.

The deadly clashes, which have left at least 120 dead by the authorities' conservative estimates, persist despite the army's presence. Isolated villages are still raked with gunfire. Wide swathes have turned into ghost towns, scorched by fire so fierce that it left tin roofs melted and twisted. Burnt buildings and churches stare out at the narrow dirt roads. In front-line neighborhoods, women join night patrols with flaming torches.

Manipur is India's unseen war – barely visible on the country's countless TV news channels and newspapers, a conflict hidden behind the blanket shutdown of the internet that the government said was used to fuel the violence by spreading disinformation and rumors. The internet ban has severed communications in Manipur, locked out reporters and left the state's 3.7 million people scrambling for a sliver of information.

"It is as close to civil war as any state in independent India has ever been," said Sushant Singh, a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in India and an Indian army veteran. He said the armed civilians were not organized as militant or terrorist groups, but "these are local people, people of one ethnicity, fighting against other ethnicity."

The conflict has also divided state forces, with many defecting to their communities along with their arms and in some cases more sophisticated weaponry like snipers, light machine guns and mortars. A number of former army soldiers and policemen have been shot dead by either faction.

The unrest has been met with nearly two months of silence from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose Bharatiya Janata Party rules Manipur. Modi's powerful home minister, Amit Shah, visited the state in May and tried to make peace between the two sides. Since then, state lawmakers — many of whom escaped after their homes were torched by mobs — have huddled in New Delhi to try to find a solution.

The state government, nonetheless, has assured Manipur is returning to normalcy. On June 25, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said that the government and armed forces had been "able to control the violence to a great extent in the past week." However, Singh's visit on Sunday to a front line coincided with fresh clashes that left three people dead, officials said.

In some ways, the bitter fight between the two factions is driven by deeply rooted problems that have festered for years.

Meiteis have long blamed minority Kukis for the state's rampant drug problems and accused them of harboring migrants from Myanmar. The administration, mostly made up of Meiteis, also appears to be coming down heavily on Kukis after Singh alleged that some of those involved in the latest clashes were "terrorists."

However, India's top military officer, Gen. Anil Chauhan, who visited the state in May, had a different view, saying "this particular situation in Manipur has nothing to do with counter-insurgency and is primarily a clash between two ethnicities."

Some Meiteis fear that the hill tribes are using illegal drugs to finance a war to finish them off. On the other side, Kukis worry for their safety and now seek federal rule over the state and administrative autonomy for the community.

Such concerns gave way to violence on May 3, when clashes first erupted in Manipur's Churachandpur district and soon spread to other parts of the state as frenzy mobs attacked one village after another.

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It reached A. Ramesh Singh's home on May 4 in Phayeng, a predominantly Meitei village some 17 kilometers (10 miles) from the state capital Imphal.

The previous day, Singh had kept a vigil outside his village whose residents, more than 200 of them, were expecting mobs of Kukis to descend from an adjacent hill. A former soldier, Singh carried a licensed gun with him, his son, Robert Singh, said.

The night of the raid, Singh fired shots, some in the air and some at the mobs, but was hit in his leg. Wounded and unable to walk, he watched his village being ransacked, before he was abducted with four other people and dragged up the hills, his son said.

The entire village gathered in a nearby open area, praying for the return of their neighbors.

"We didn't know if he was dead, but we prayed. We prayed he would return," Robert, 26, said on a recent afternoon at his house.

Robert joined the search for his father, shouting his name as they hiked up the hill. No one answered.

The next day, Robert was told his father's body was found in a grove. He was shot in the head.

"Please save us. This is our last word to the world," Robert pleaded, folding his hands, his head shaved in a sign of bereavement.

Singh's body was burned according to Hindu rituals and the remains were buried in a grave nearby. On a recent afternoon, his wife, Lilapati Devi, and Robert trudged towards it to pay their respects. As Singh's grave became visible from a distance, Devi began to howl and called her husband's name. "Are you at peace, my love?" she wailed.

The anguish of victims also resonates quietly through hundreds of relief camps where displaced Kukis – who have suffered most deaths and destruction of homes and churches – are taking shelter.

Kim Neineng, 43, and her husband had enjoyed years of peace in Lailampat village. He farmed the fields. She sold the produce in the market. They were welded to each other by love.

On the afternoon of May 5, Neineng went outside her house to check on noise. Out of breath, she rushed inside and told her husband what she had seen: a Meitei mob, many of them armed, had descended on their village, screaming and hurling abuses.

Neineng's husband knew what it meant. He asked her to escape with their four children and not look back, promising he would take care of the cattle and their home. She quickly packed her belongings and ran to a nearby relief camp.

A day later, more of her neighbors reached the shelter and told Neineng what had happened to her husband.

When the mob reached their house, the husband tried to reason with them, but they wouldn't listen. Soon, they started beating him with iron bars. More armed men arrived and chopped off his legs. Then they picked him up and tossed him in the raging fire that had already engulfed his home.

Neighbors found his charred body on the scorched floor.

"They tortured and treated him like an animal, without any humanity. When I think of his last moments, I can't comprehend what he must have felt," Neineng said, barely choking out words.

No one in Neineng's relief camp wants to return home. But she says she would still like to go one last time and visit the place where her husband was killed.

"Maybe I will just go to feel his presence. So that his soul is at peace," she said.

Manipur's war and its ugliness spell horror for the victims and signify something deeper: This remote region is slowly cracking apart.

Two months since the conflict began, hundreds of roadblocks and sandbag bunkers dot highways across the torn Manipur lands. Most of these imaginary borders are controlled by the warring communities. Those left unattended have been taken over by Indian forces who peep from binoculars into each side where armed bands in camouflage rev motorcycles.

Surveillance drones sometimes circle high overhead over the checkpoints. Those who belong to the wrong ethnic group cannot pass through. Convoys with food and other essential supplies are escorted by the army. There is a curfew in place.

Some villagers have set up fortifications made of bamboo around their houses, chiseling its edges in the

shape of spears to keep mobs away. Others have painted their ethnicity on doors of their homes in fears that they could be burned due to mistaken identity.

Bursts of gunfire are followed by long lulls in which the armed opponents take smoke breaks and drink beer.

Yet, there are signs it could get worse as each side is vying for control of villages or seizing them back – a guerrilla tactic that sometimes leads to deadly gunfights, use of mortar shells and in one instance a car bombing that left three people critically injured.

Both Kukis and Meiteis are asking questions they thought they would never ask: Should they also pick up arms and fight?

Vaiphei, the economics teacher who has taken up arms, is certain it will be a long-drawn fight. For each one who is killed, another will take his place, he says.

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Associated Press journalists Altaf Qadri and Shonal Ganguly contributed to this report.

## **Armed mobs rampage through villages and push remote Indian region to the brink of civil war**

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

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The two warring factions have formed armed militias, laying bare the ethnonationalist fissures that have long threatened to worsen instability in India’s restive northeastern region.

Tucked in the mountains on the border with Myanmar, Manipur was once ruled by a patchwork of kings and tribal confederations. It appears to be a different world from the rest of India, a culture that borrows heavily from East Asia. Manipur is also a state that has never been fully reconciled to central rule and some guerrilla groups still pursue an effort to break away from India.

Ethnic clashes between different groups have occasionally erupted in the past, mostly pitting the minority Christian Kukis against mostly Hindu Meiteis, who form a narrow majority in the state. But no one was prepared for the killings, arson and a rampage of hate that followed in May, after Meiteis had demanded a special status that would allow them to buy land in the hills populated by Kukis and other tribal groups, as well as a share of government jobs.

Police armories were looted. Within days, both sides were armed to unleash havoc.

Witnesses interviewed by The Associated Press described how angry mobs and armed gangs swept into villages and towns, burning down houses, massacring civilians, and driving tens of thousands from their homes. More than 50,000 people have fled to packed relief camps. Those who fought back were killed,



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"We didn't know if he was dead, but we prayed. We prayed he would return," Robert, 26, said on a recent afternoon at his house.

Robert joined the search for his father, shouting his name as they hiked up the hill. No one answered.

The next day, Robert was told his father's body was found in a grove. He was shot in the head.

"Please save us. This is our last word to the world," Robert pleaded, folding his hands, his head shaved in a sign of bereavement.

Singh's body was burned according to Hindu rituals and the remains were buried in a grave nearby. On a recent afternoon, his wife, Lilapati Devi, and Robert trudged towards it to pay their respects. As Singh's grave became visible from a distance, Devi began to howl and called her husband's name. "Are you at peace, my love?" she wailed.

The anguish of victims also resonates quietly through hundreds of relief camps where displaced Kukis – who have suffered most deaths and destruction of homes and churches – are taking shelter.

Kim Neineng, 43, and her husband had enjoyed years of peace in Lailampat village. He farmed the fields. She sold the produce in the market. They were welded to each other by love.

On the afternoon of May 5, Neineng went outside her house to check on noise. Out of breath, she rushed inside and told her husband what she had seen: a Meitei mob, many of them armed, had descended on their village, screaming and hurling abuses.

Neineng's husband knew what it meant. He asked her to escape with their four children and not look back, promising he would take care of the cattle and their home. She quickly packed her belongings and ran to a nearby relief camp.

A day later, more of her neighbors reached the shelter and told Neineng what had happened to her husband.

When the mob reached their house, the husband tried to reason with them, but they wouldn't listen. Soon, they started beating him with iron bars. More armed men arrived and chopped off his legs. Then they picked him up and tossed him in the raging fire that had already engulfed his home.

Neighbors found his charred body on the scorched floor.

"They tortured and treated him like an animal, without any humanity. When I think of his last moments, I can't comprehend what he must have felt," Neineng said, barely choking out words.

No one in Neineng's relief camp wants to return home. But she says she would still like to go one last time and visit the place where her husband was killed.

"Maybe I will just go to feel his presence. So that his soul is at peace," she said.

Manipur's war and its ugliness spell horror for the victims and signify something deeper: This remote region is slowly cracking apart.

Two months since the conflict began, hundreds of roadblocks and sandbag bunkers dot highways across the torn Manipur lands. Most of these imaginary borders are controlled by the warring communities. Those left unattended have been taken over by Indian forces who peep from binoculars into each side where armed bands in camouflage rev motorcycles.

Surveillance drones sometimes circle high overhead over the checkpoints. Those who belong to the wrong ethnic group cannot pass through. Convoys with food and other essential supplies are escorted by the army. There is a curfew in place.

Some villagers have set up fortifications made of bamboo around their houses, chiseling its edges in the shape of spears to keep mobs away. Others have painted their ethnicity on doors of their homes in fears that they could be burned due to mistaken identity.

Bursts of gunfire are followed by long lulls in which the armed opponents take smoke breaks and drink beer.

Yet, there are signs it could get worse as each side is vying for control of villages or seizing them back – a guerrilla tactic that sometimes leads to deadly gunfights, use of mortar shells and in one instance a car bombing that left three people critically injured.

Both Kukis and Meiteis are asking questions they thought they would never ask: Should they also pick

up arms and fight?

Vaiphei, the economics teacher who has taken up arms, is certain it will be a long-drawn fight. For each one who is killed, another will take his place, he says.

Associated Press journalists Altaf Qadri and Shonal Ganguly contributed to this report.

## US citizenship test changes are coming, raising concerns for those with low English skills

By TRISHA AHMED Associated Press/Report for America

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — The U.S. citizenship test is being updated, and some immigrants and advocates worry the changes will hurt test-takers with lower levels of English proficiency.

The naturalization test is one of the final steps toward citizenship — a monthslong process that requires legal permanent residency for years before applying.

Many are still shaken after former Republican President Donald Trump's administration changed the test in 2020, making it longer and more difficult to pass. Within months, Democratic President Joe Biden took office and signed an executive order aimed at eliminating barriers to citizenship. In that spirit, the citizenship test was changed back to its previous version, which was last updated in 2008.

In December, U.S. authorities said the test was due for an update after 15 years. The new version is expected late next year.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services proposes that the new test adds a speaking section to assess English skills. An officer would show photos of ordinary scenarios — like daily activities, weather or food — and ask the applicant to verbally describe the photos.

In the current test, an officer evaluates speaking ability during the naturalization interview by asking personal questions the applicant has already answered in the naturalization paperwork.

"For me, I think it would be harder to look at pictures and explain them," said Heaven Mehreta, who immigrated from Ethiopia 10 years ago, passed the naturalization test in May and became a U.S. citizen in Minnesota in June.

Mehreta, 32, said she learned English as an adult after moving to the U.S. and found pronunciation to be very difficult. She worries that adding a new speaking section based on photos, rather than personal questions, will make the test harder for others like her.

Shai Avny, who immigrated from Israel five years ago and became a U.S. citizen last year, said the new speaking section could also increase the stress applicants already feel during the test.

"Sitting next to someone from the federal government, it can be intimidating to talk and speak with them. Some people have this fear anyway. When it's not your first language, it can be even more difficult. Maybe you will be nervous and you won't find the words to tell them what you need to describe," Avny said. "It's a test that will determine if you are going to be a citizen. So there is a lot to lose."

Another proposed change would make the civics section on U.S. history and government multiple-choice instead of the current oral short-answer format.

Bill Bliss, a citizenship textbook author in Massachusetts, gave an example in a blog post of how the test would become more difficult because it would require a larger base of knowledge.

A current civics question has an officer asking the applicant to name a war fought by the U.S. in the 1900s. The applicant only needs to say one out of five acceptable answers — World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War or Gulf War — to get the question right.

But in the proposed multiple-choice format, the applicant would read that question and select the correct answer from the following choices:

- A. Civil War
- B. Mexican-American War
- C. Korean War
- D. Spanish-American War

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The applicant must know all five of the wars fought by the U.S. in the 1900s in order to select the one correct answer, Bliss said, and that requires a "significantly higher level of language proficiency and test-taking skill."

Currently, the applicant must answer six out of 10 civics questions correctly to pass. Those 10 questions are selected from a bank of 100 civics questions. The applicant is not told which questions will be selected but can see and study the 100 questions before taking the test.

Lynne Weintraub, a citizenship coordinator at Jones Library's English as a Second Language Center in Massachusetts, said the proposed format for the civics section could make the citizenship test harder for people who struggle with English literacy. That includes refugees, elderly immigrants and people with disabilities that interfere with their test performance.

"We have a lot of students that are refugees, and they're coming from war-torn countries where maybe they didn't have a chance to complete school or even go to school," said Mechelle Perrott, a citizenship coordinator at San Diego Community College District's College of Continuing Education in California.

"It's more difficult learning to read and write if you don't know how to do that in your first language. That's my main concern about the multiple-choice test; it's a lot of reading," Perrott said.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services said in a December announcement that the proposed changes "reflect current best practices in test design" and would help standardize the citizenship test.

Under federal law, most applicants seeking citizenship must demonstrate an understanding of the English language – including an ability to speak, read and write words in ordinary usage – and demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history and government.

The agency said it will conduct a nationwide trial of the proposed changes in 2023 with opportunities for public feedback. Then, an external group of experts — in the fields of language acquisition, civics and test development — will review the results of the trial and recommend ways to best implement the proposed changes, which could take effect late next year.

The U.S. currently has the easiest citizenship test compared to other Western countries — including Germany, Canada and the United Kingdom — according to Sara Goodman, a political science professor at the University of California, Irvine.

Goodman said she uses the following metrics to determine the difficulty of a test: the number of questions required to pass and the number of questions overall, the percentage of applicants who pass the test, the language level of the test, and whether or not questions with answers are made available to study before taking the test.

In the U.S. test, applicants must answer six out of 10 questions correctly to pass. About 96% of applicants pass the test, according to recent estimates. The test is at a "high beginner" level of English, Goodman said, and a question bank with answers is made available to study beforehand.

But in the German test, Goodman said applicants must answer 17 out of 33 questions correctly to pass. About 90% of applicants pass the test, according to recent estimates. The test is at an "intermediate" level of German, according to Goodman. And a question bank with answers is made available.

The Canada and United Kingdom tests are even harder, and a question bank is not provided in the latter, Goodman said.

Elizabeth Jacobs, director of regulatory affairs and policy at the Center for Immigration Studies – a nonprofit research organization that advocates for less immigration – said the proposed changes would make the U.S. citizenship test even easier for many people.

"We think that's in the wrong direction," Jacobs said on behalf of the organization.

The proposed multiple-choice format for the civics section would put the answer to each question in front of applicants, Jacobs said, and would get rid of the memory challenge that's in the current test.

Jacobs said her organization would prefer a test that includes more material and emphasizes American values, such as religious freedom and freedom of speech, more.

She added that most people who naturalize in the U.S. are not in the country because of merit or refugee status, but because of family sponsorship, where someone in their family became a U.S. citizen before

them and petitioned for them to naturalize.

Jacobs said having a stricter test would help ensure that new citizens integrate into American society – and the economy – with sufficient English language skills, as well as promote a healthy democracy with civics knowledge and engagement.

Not everyone agrees.

“Is it important for us to even have a civics test in the first place? I don’t know the answer to that question,” said Corleen Smith, director of immigration services at the International Institute of Minnesota, a nonprofit that connects immigrants to resources.

Smith said USCIS already evaluates whether applicants have past criminal histories, pay taxes and support their children financially.

“They’re already evaluating that portion of your background. Is it also important to know this information about history and government and be able to memorize it?” Smith said, adding: “People that were born in the U.S. and are natural-born citizens — a lot of those folks don’t know many of these answers to the history of government questions.”

More than 1 million people became U.S. citizens in fiscal year 2022 — one of the highest numbers on record since 1907, the earliest year with available data — and USCIS reduced the huge backlog of naturalization applications by over 60% compared to the year before, according to a USCIS report also released in December.

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Trisha Ahmed is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues. Follow Trisha Ahmed on Twitter: @TrishaAhmed15

## **Conservatives go to red states, Democrats to blue as the country grows more polarized**

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

STAR, Idaho (AP) — Once he and his wife Jennifer moved to a Boise suburb last year, Tim Kohl could finally express himself.

Kohl did what the couple never dared at their previous house outside Los Angeles — the newly-retired Los Angeles police officer flew a U.S. flag and a Thin Blue Line banner representing law enforcement outside his house.

“We were scared to put it up,” Jennifer Kohl acknowledged. But the Kohls knew they had moved to the right place when neighbors complimented him on the display.

Leah Dean is on the opposite end of the political spectrum, but she knows how the Kohls feel. In Texas, Dean had been scared to fly an abortion rights banner outside her house. Around the time the Kohls were house-hunting in Idaho, she and her partner found a place in Denver, where their LGBTQ+ pride flag flies above the banner in front of their house that proclaims “Abortion access is a community responsibility.”

“One thing we have really found is a place to feel comfortable being ourselves,” Dean said.

Americans are segregating by their politics at a rapid clip, helping fuel the greatest divide between the states in modern history.

One party controls the entire legislature in all but two states. In 28 states, the party in control has a supermajority in at least one legislative chamber — which means the majority party has so many lawmakers that they can override a governor’s veto. Not that that would be necessary in most cases, as only 10 states have governors of different parties than the one that controls the legislature.

The split has sent states careening to the political left or right, adopting diametrically opposed laws on some of the hottest issues of the day. In Idaho, abortion is illegal once a heartbeat can be detected in a fetus — as early as five or six weeks — and a new law passed this year makes it a crime to help a minor travel out of state to obtain one. In Colorado, state law prevents any restrictions on abortion. In Idaho,

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a new law prevents minors from accessing gender-affirming care, while Colorado allows youths to come from other states to access the procedures.

Federalism — allowing each state to chart its own course within boundaries set by Congress and the Constitution — is at the core of the U.S. system. It lets the states, in the words of former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, be “laboratories of democracy.”

Now, some wonder whether that’s driving Americans apart.

“Does that work as well in a time when we are so politically divided, or does it just become an accelerant for people who want to re-segregate?” asked Rob Witwer, a former Republican Colorado state lawmaker.

Colorado and Idaho represent two poles of state-level political homogenization. Both are fast-growing Rocky Mountain states that have been transformed by an influx of like-minded residents. Life in the two states can be quite similar — conversations revolve around local ski areas, mountain bike trails, and how newcomers are making things too crowded. But, politically, they increasingly occupy two separate worlds.

Witwer watched Colorado steadily swing to the left as affluent, college-educated people fled the coasts for his home state starting in the late 1990s. For two decades, it was one of the nation’s fastest-growing states, and during the Trump era it swung sharply to the left. Democrats control all statewide offices and have their largest majorities in history in the legislature, including a supermajority in the lower house.

In contrast, Idaho has become one of the nation’s fastest-growing states during the past decade without losing its reputation as a conservative haven. It has moved even more sharply to the right during that time and become a beacon to those, like the Kohls, fleeing blue states where they no longer feel welcome.

The states’ swings aren’t simply due to transplants, of course. The increasing clustering of Americans into like-minded enclaves — dubbed “The Big Sort” — has many causes. Harvard professor Ryan Enos estimates that, at least before the pandemic, only 15% of the homogeneity was due to people moving. Other causes include political parties polarizing on hot-button issues that split neatly on demographic lines, such as guns and abortion, and voters adopting their neighbors’ partisanship.

“A lot of this is driven by other sorting that is going on,” Enos said.

When Americans move, politics is not typically the explicit reason. But the lifestyle choices they make place them in communities dominated by their preferred party.

“Democrats want to live in places with artistic culture and craft breweries, and Republicans want to move to places where they can have a big yard,” said Ryan Strickler, a political scientist at Colorado State University-Pueblo.

But something may have changed as the country has become even more polarized. Businesses catering to conservatives fleeing blue states have sprouted, such as Blue Line Moving, which markets to families fleeing from blue states to Florida. In Texas, a “rainbow underground railroad” run by a Dallas realtor helps LGBTQ+ families flee the state’s increased restrictions targeting that population.

The switch might have been flipped during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, which created a class of mobile workers no longer bound to the states where their companies were based. Those who are now mobile are predominantly white-collar workers and retirees, the two most politically engaged parts of the national population.

Mike McCarter, who has spearheaded a quixotic campaign to have conservative eastern Oregon become part of Idaho, said most people didn’t pay much attention to state government until the pandemic.

“Then it was like ‘Oh, they can shut down any church and they can shut down my kids’ school?’” McCarter said. “If state-level government has that much power, you’d better be sure it reflects your values, and not someone else’s values that are forced on you.”

The pandemic helped push Aaron and Carrie Friesen to Idaho. When the pandemic hit, they realized they could take their marketing firm remote from its base near Hilton Head, South Carolina. They’d always planned to return to the West, but California, where Aaron, now 39, was born and raised, was disqualified because of its cost and progressive politics.

The Friesens and their three children settled on Boise. They loved the big skies, the mountains rearing up behind the town, the plethora of outdoor activities.

And they liked Idaho’s pandemic policies. When the Friesens visited, almost no one was wearing masks,

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sometimes bludgeoned to death or beheaded, and the injured tossed into raging fires, according to witnesses and others with first-hand knowledge of the events.

The deadly clashes, which have left at least 120 dead by the authorities' conservative estimates, persist despite the army's presence. Isolated villages are still raked with gunfire. Wide swathes have turned into ghost towns, scorched by fire so fierce that it left tin roofs melted and twisted. Burnt buildings and churches stare out at the narrow dirt roads. In front-line neighborhoods, women join night patrols with flaming torches.

Manipur is India's unseen war – barely visible on the country's countless TV news channels and newspapers, a conflict hidden behind the blanket shutdown of the internet that the government said was used to fuel the violence by spreading disinformation and rumors. The internet ban has severed communications in Manipur, locked out reporters and left the state's 3.7 million people scrambling for a sliver of information.

"It is as close to civil war as any state in independent India has ever been," said Sushant Singh, a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in India and an Indian army veteran. He said the armed civilians were not organized as militant or terrorist groups, but "these are local people, people of one ethnicity, fighting against other ethnicity."

The conflict has also divided state forces, with many defecting to their communities along with their arms and in some cases more sophisticated weaponry like snipers, light machine guns and mortars. A number of former army soldiers and policemen have been shot dead by either faction.

The unrest has been met with nearly two months of silence from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose Bharatiya Janata Party rules Manipur. Modi's powerful home minister, Amit Shah, visited the state in May and tried to make peace between the two sides. Since then, state lawmakers — many of whom escaped after their homes were torched by mobs — have huddled in New Delhi to try to find a solution.

The state government, nonetheless, has assured Manipur is returning to normalcy. On June 25, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said that the government and armed forces had been "able to control the violence to a great extent in the past week." However, Singh's visit on Sunday to a front line coincided with fresh clashes that left three people dead, officials said.

In some ways, the bitter fight between the two factions is driven by deeply rooted problems that have festered for years.

Meiteis have long blamed minority Kukis for the state's rampant drug problems and accused them of harboring migrants from Myanmar. The administration, mostly made up of Meiteis, also appears to be coming down heavily on Kukis after Singh alleged that some of those involved in the latest clashes were "terrorists."

However, India's top military officer, Gen. Anil Chauhan, who visited the state in May, had a different view, saying "this particular situation in Manipur has nothing to do with counter-insurgency and is primarily a clash between two ethnicities."

Some Meiteis fear that the hill tribes are using illegal drugs to finance a war to finish them off. On the other side, Kukis worry for their safety and now seek federal rule over the state and administrative autonomy for the community.

Such concerns gave way to violence on May 3, when clashes first erupted in Manipur's Churachandpur district and soon spread to other parts of the state as frenzy mobs attacked one village after another.

It reached A. Ramesh Singh's home on May 4 in Phayeng, a predominantly Meitei village some 17 kilometers (10 miles) from the state capital Imphal.

The previous day, Singh had kept a vigil outside his village whose residents, more than 200 of them, were expecting mobs of Kukis to descend from an adjacent hill. A former soldier, Singh carried a licensed gun with him, his son, Robert Singh, said.

The night of the raid, Singh fired shots, some in the air and some at the mobs, but was hit in his leg. Wounded and unable to walk, he watched his village being ransacked, before he was abducted with four other people and dragged up the hills, his son said.

The entire village gathered in a nearby open area, praying for the return of their neighbors.

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which they took as a good sign — they were happy to mask up when sick, but found constant masking pointless.

“This was a place that had like-minded people,” Carrie Friesen said.

The Friesens are happy with the direction of their new state and the abortion and transgender restrictions out of the latest legislative session. But they don’t see themselves as part of what they called “the crazy right,” referring to the families displaying Trump yard signs in the less-politically-mixed Boise suburbs. They like living close to the center of Boise, one of the more liberal areas in the state.

They try not to make too many decisions based on politics — to a point.

“With the temperature of politics nowadays, if people choose to move somewhere, they are going to choose to move to a place with like-minded people,” Aaron Friesen said.

That’s apparently been happening in Idaho, said Mathew Hay, who oversees a regular survey of new arrivals for Boise State University. Historically, transplants mirrored the conservative population’s leanings, with about 45% describing themselves as “conservative,” and the rest evenly split between liberal and moderate.

But something changed last year — the share of newcomers that said they lived in Idaho for the politics jumped to 9%, compared to 5% for long-timers. The percentage describing themselves as “very conservative” also rose.

When Melissa Wintrow rode her motorcycle across the U.S. in 1996, she was captivated by Idaho.

“It was this grounded, commonsense, reasonable group,” Wintrow said. “Of course they were conservative, but they weren’t going to say openly racist and homophobic things.”

Now a Democratic state senator, Wintrow is aghast at how her adopted state has become more hardline.

“The state has just moved to a more extreme view,” she said. “It’s a certain group of people that is afraid their ‘way of life’ is diminishing in the world.”

In Colorado, the reverse may be happening.

Bret Weinstein, owner of a realty firm in Denver, said politics has become the top issue for people buying a home.

“It’s brought up in our initial conversations,” Weinstein said. “Three years ago, we didn’t have those conversations, ever.”

Now, many entering the state tell him they’re looking for a way to escape their red state — and homeowners leaving Colorado say they’re fed up with it turning blue. Even within Colorado, Weinstein said, homebuyers are picking based on politics, with some avoiding conservative areas where debates on mask mandates and curriculum has dominated school board meetings.

One of those politically motivated migrants is Kathleen Rickerson, who works in human resources for Weinstein’s firm. Rickerson, 35, lived in Minnesota for seven years, but during the pandemic grew weary of the blue state’s vocal anti-masking, anti-vaccine minority.

Rickerson’s parents and sister urged her to join them in Texas, but that was out of the question. Ready for a change, Rickerson instead zeroed in on Colorado. She moved to a Denver suburb in December 2021.

Cheered by the state’s strong stance to protect abortion rights, Rickerson wants Colorado Democrats to go further.

“Colorado isn’t as quick to take a stand on things, and I’d like to see that happen a bit more,” she said.

That was a sentiment shared by Colorado progressives, who were frustrated their party didn’t muscle through an assault weapons ban and other priorities of the left during the most recent legislative session.

“There is a point at which we need to stop acting like trying to get along with our enemies is going to preserve our institution,” progressive state Rep. Stephanie Vigil said at the end of the session, after the chamber’s Democratic leader said it was important that Republicans still feel like they have a voice.

The increasing political homogeneity in states makes it harder for both parties to feel invested, said Thad Kousser, a political scientist at the University of California, San Diego.

“It gives one party the ability to move a state further when they’re doing exactly what their constituency wants,” he said.

The system works as a sort of escape valve, Kousser said, letting the majority in the state feel in power

regardless of what's happening in Washington, D.C. But the local minority party gets shortchanged.

The Kohls felt shortchanged in California. They said they watched their native state deteriorate before their eyes, and no one was willing to fix the problems. Trash piled up with homeless encampments. Tax money seemed to go to immigrants who had entered the country illegally rather than U.S. citizens. Jennifer's mother qualified for government assistance due to her low income, but was on dozens of wait lists that were seven years long. Tim's police station, in a former hippie colony in the mountains running through West Los Angeles, was firebombed during the George Floyd protests in 2020.

The Kohls wanted to live in a red state, but Jennifer said they're not just party-line voters. A nurse, she hasn't registered with either party and has a wide range of beliefs, including that abortion is sometimes necessary.

"I believe so many different things," she said.

On balance, they feel more comfortable in a more conservative place.

"Here, the tax dollars naturally goes to the citizens, not the immigrants," said Tim Kohl, who can understand why Idaho is growing so fast. "Most of the people we've met here are from California originally."

In Denver, Dean has found other people who fled red states. She and her partner, Cassidy Dean, discovered that their neighbors fled Florida after the state's hard turn to the political right.

Leah Dean was a 19-year-old cosmetology college student in San Antonio in 2008 when she had an abortion. She chafed at the obstacles she faced — the state-mandated waiting period before the procedure, having to get a sonogram before the procedure — and became a committed Democratic activist. She met her partner at the Texas state party convention in 2016, and every year since then she's felt the Republican state legislature and governor make the state less and less hospitable to people like her.

Now in Colorado, she and her partner both work from home, telecommuting to their old Texas jobs. They have limited social outlets, but took care of that by throwing themselves into politics again, with Leah Dean becoming vice chair of Denver Democrats.

"It's also how we meet people," she said. "We don't have any other way to do that."

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## **The Texas shooter in a racist Walmart attack is going to prison.**

### **Here's what to know about the case**

By MORGAN LEE and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — A white Texas gunman who killed 23 people at a Walmart in 2019 returns to court Wednesday for sentencing in a mass shooting that targeted Hispanic shoppers in the border city of El Paso.

Patrick Crusius, 24, is set to receive multiple life sentences after pleading guilty to federal hate crime and weapons charges in one of the deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history. Although the federal government did not seek the death penalty, Texas prosecutors have not taken lethal injection off the table under a separate case in state court.

Investigators say the shooting was preceded by Crusius posting a racist screed online.

The sentencing phase could last several days. It is the first time that relatives of the victims, who included citizens of Mexico, will have an opportunity to address Crusius face-to-face in court.

Some things to know about the shooting and the case:

**WHO IS PATRICK CRUSIUS?**

Crusius was 21 years old when authorities say he drove more than 10 hours from his home in an upper-class Dallas suburb to El Paso and opened fire.

The son of a licensed therapist and nurse, Crusius had been enrolled as a student at Collin College, near Dallas, and had no criminal convictions before the shooting. On social media, Crusius appeared consumed



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by the nation's immigration debate, tweeting #BuildtheWall and posts that praised then-President Donald Trump's hardline border policies.

His views went further in a document posted to an online message board about 20 minutes before the massacre in which he said the shooting was "in response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas."

In American politics, Republicans have continued using the word "invasion" to describe migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, waving off critics who say the rhetoric fuels anti-immigrant views and violence.

## THE SHOOTING

Prosecutors say the Aug. 3, 2019, attack began in the parking lot on a busy weekend at a Walmart that is popular with shoppers from both Mexico and the U.S. Approaching the store, Crusius shot participants in a fundraiser for a girls' soccer team.

Inside, Crusius continued firing with an AK-47-style rifle, corning shoppers at a bank near the entrance where nine were killed, before shooting at the checkout area and people in aisles.

Crusius was apprehended shortly after the attack and confessed to officers who stopped him at an intersection, according to police.

More than two dozen people were injured and numerous others were severely traumatized as they hid or fled.

## THE VICTIMS

The people who were killed range in age from a 15-year-old high school athlete to several elderly grandparents.

They included immigrants, a retired city bus driver, teachers, tradesmen including a former iron worker, and several Mexican nationals who had crossed the U.S. border on routine shopping trips. Witnesses recounted moments of terror, anguish and heroism.

An infant boy named Paul Anchondo narrowly survived with a broken hand as his parents were gunned down. Mother Jordan Anchondo is credited by relatives with shielding her baby.

David Johnson, 63, was killed after pushing his wife and 9-year-old granddaughter under a counter. The woman and child survived.

The funeral for one victim, 63-year-old Margie Reckard, drew thousands of sympathizers after her husband announced he had few relatives left and invited the world to attend.

## TEST CASE

The sentencing arrives amid efforts by the Justice Department under President Joe Biden to more aggressively identify hate crimes and deliver meaningful results in the highest-profile cases.

The 2019 Walmart attack is the deadliest of a dozen mass shootings in the U.S. linked hate crimes since 2006, according to a database of mass killings in the U.S. compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University.

Crusius agreed in February to accept up to 90 consecutive life sentences, avoiding the possible death penalty on charges of using a firearm in a crime of violence that causes death. Companion hate crime convictions against Crusius don't carry the death penalty.

Federal prosecutors haven't formally explained their decision, but have acknowledged that Crusius suffered from schizoaffective disorder that can be marked by hallucinations, delusions and mood swings.

Adria Gonzalez, a 41-year-old El Paso native who survived the Walmart attack even as she helped panicked shoppers toward exits, says she fears that a life sentence won't be enough to rein in racist attacks on Latinos.

"It's not only him. There are other people, other groups that could hurt us," she said.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Crusius still faces capital murder charges in state court and could receive the death penalty if convicted.

It is unclear when that case will proceed. In November, El Paso County's former district attorney resigned over mounting criticism about her performance on the job, which included accusations that problems in her office were slowing down Crusius' case.

Also, victims' relatives have sued Walmart. Such lawsuits are common following mass shootings in the

U.S. but typically face high hurdles to succeed.

Weber reported from Austin, Texas. Associated Press reporter Michael Tarm in Chicago also contributed.

## North Korean satellite wasn't advanced enough to conduct reconnaissance from space, Seoul says

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The satellite North Korea failed to put into orbit wasn't advanced enough to conduct military reconnaissance from space as it claimed, South Korea's military said Wednesday after retrieving and studying the wreckage.

North Korea had tried to launch its first spy satellite in late May, but the long-range rocket carrying it plunged into the waters off the Korean Peninsula's west coast soon after liftoff. The satellite was to be part of a space-based reconnaissance system North Korea says it needs to counter escalating security threats from South Korea and the United States.

South Korea mobilized navy ships, aircraft and divers to recover debris from the rocket and satellite in a 36-day operation that ended Wednesday, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

"Numerous" and "key" parts of the rocket and the satellite were recovered and the South Korean and U.S. experts who jointly examined them concluded the satellite wasn't capable of conducting military reconnaissance works at all, the statement said.

North Korea didn't immediately respond to the South Korean announcement.

The day the launch failed, North Korea's state media said the rocket lost thrust following the separation of its first and second stages, then crashed into the sea. At a ruling party meeting last month, North Korea called the failed launch "the most serious" shortcoming this year and harshly criticized those responsible.

Top North Korean officials have repeatedly vowed to attempt a second launch after learning what went wrong with the failed launch.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has said acquiring a military spy satellite is crucial to beef up his country's defense capability. He's said North Korea also needs to introduce other high-tech weapons systems such as multi-warhead nuclear missiles, solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear-powered submarines.

Months before its failed satellite launch, North Korea launched a test satellite and publicized photos showing South Korean cities as viewed from space. Some civilian experts said at the time the photos were too crude for a surveillance purpose and that they were likely capable of only recognizing big targets like warships at sea or military installations on the ground.

North Korea had responded to that skepticism by saying there was no reason to use a sophisticated camera for one test.

The U.S., South Korea and others denounced North Korea's rocket launch as a security risk and a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban the country's use of ballistic missile technology. But further sanctions are unlikely since permanent council members Russia and China oppose new action.

## Revelers across the US brave heat and rain to celebrate Fourth of July

By STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Revelers across the U.S. braved heat and heavy rain to take part in Fourth of July activities Tuesday — celebrating the nation's founding with parades, fireworks and hot dog eating contests at a time of lingering political divisions and concerns about the country's future.

In Boston, people dodged raindrops to nab a coveted space on the grassy oval in front of the Hatch Shell along the Charles River ahead of the traditional Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular. Hundreds of thousands of partygoers typically line both sides of the river for the fireworks spectacular that follows a concert.

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At another longstanding celebration, fans of competitive eating crowded to watch Nathan's Famous Fourth of July hot dog eating contest held in the Coney Island section of New York City.

Heavy downpours interrupted the contest, but after the pause, Joey "Jaws" Chestnut swallowed 62 franks and buns in 10 minutes.

"What a roller coaster, emotionally," Chestnut said. The 39-year-old from Westfield, Indiana, first competed for the title in 2005 and hasn't lost since 2015.

The unsettled weather moved on before the start of Macy's annual Fourth of July fireworks show, which launched some 60,000 pyrotechnics into the sky, bursting in bouquets of colorful light over New York City's East River.

New York wasn't the only state where weather factored into events.

The 10-kilometer Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race that typically draws thousands of runners in humid summer weather was cut short because of possible thunderstorms.

Farther north, a fireworks show in Yankton, South Dakota, was postponed until Wednesday night because lightning prevented crews from setting up the display. In Nebraska, the Omaha Symphony's Independence Day Celebration that includes a concert and fireworks shows were also postponed until Wednesday night.

New Orleans residents welcomed rain and slightly cooler conditions after days of heat and humidity baked the city. The General Roy S. Kelley fireboat was returning to New Orleans Riverfront for a patriotic water show, sending streams of red, white, and blue water into the air.

The Colorado towns and suburbs of Estes Park, Golden and Highlands Ranch cancelled fireworks celebrations after thunderstorm alerts were issued. Severe weather warnings scuttled Independence Day travel plans at Denver International Airport, where at least 290 flights were delayed and 171 cancelled -- among the most flights affected in the nation -- according to Flight Aware.

President Joe Biden hosted a barbecue for military families at the White House, which was decked out with red, white and blue bunting and big U.S. flags draped over the columns facing the South Lawn. Biden told the crowd gathered how grateful he was for their service. And he talked about how important it was to work to unify the nation.

"Democracy is never guaranteed," Biden said. "Every generation must fight to maintain it."

Later, the Bidens watched fireworks from the White House balcony with thousands of guests on the lawn, as Louis Armstrong's version of "America the Beautiful" played over loudspeakers.

Vice President Kamala Harris was in her home state of California, where she visited a Los Angeles fire station to pay tribute to first-responders who she said risk their lives for their community.

"On this Independence Day, we came by to thank them, and to let them know we think of them all the time," Harris said.

While the holiday put a spotlight on how Americans carry different views of patriotism, many people embraced the holiday with whimsy and a sense of community.

In Hannibal, Missouri, the hometown of Mark Twain, the Fourth of July weekend coincides with National Tom Sawyer Days. Fence-painting and frog-jumping contests were held.

Altoona, Iowa, dubbed its celebration "CORNival." In addition to the nod to America's birthday, the festival marks the 100th anniversary of the first acre of commercial hybrid seed corn, grown and harvested in Altoona in 1923. Twenty 6-foot-high fiberglass corn cob statutes decorated by local artists were being unveiled and will later be placed around the town of 21,000 residents.

In Joppatowne, Maryland, hundreds of people lined up at a Sheetz gas station to pump regular fuel at \$1.776 per gallon, WBAL-TV reported. Sheetz set the price per gallon in commemoration of the year the Declaration of Independence was signed, according to a statement posted on the company's website.

And in the east Tennessee city of Gatlinburg held its annual Independence Day midnight parade early Tuesday. George Hawkins, who created the parade, died Saturday, news outlets reported.

Running events were a feature of many celebrations.

In Lexington, Kentucky, about 2,000 people ran through the city's downtown. Stephanie Thurman told WKYT-TV that the race had been on her bucket list. "I started these races here in 2019; I turned 50. That was one of the things on my bucket list, so I did that, and ever since then, I was bit by the bug,"

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Hundreds participated in Alaska's Mount Marathon, a grueling mountain race that features steep inclines, loose rock and shale that the top runners seemingly fly over on their way down. It's an Independence Day tradition in coastal Seward, a town of about 2,500 people south of Anchorage.

Some cities were eschewing firework displays for shows in which drones fitted with lights are coded to create massive, moving shapes in the sky. Los Angeles, Tahoe City, California, Salt Lake City, and Boulder, along with a few other Colorado towns, have opted for the aerial spectacles that can display an expansive American flag and the year 1776 in red, white and blue. Avoiding explosive fireworks limits the danger of fires in states already devastated by massive burns.

The air pollution agency for Southern California issued an alert for potential health problems caused by high levels of airborne particles from fireworks. The particulate advisory by the South Coast Air Quality Management District is in effect through Wednesday in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The Chicago suburb of Highland Park, where a shooting at least year's Fourth of July parade left seven people dead, also held a drone show to avoid the startling noise of fireworks.

Gun violence also marred some of the celebratory atmosphere, as shootings left five dead in Philadelphia and three dead in Texas.

Fireworks also led to at least one death, in western Michigan. Nine other people were injured in that fireworks explosion on Monday, the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department said.

## **Possible shark attacks prompt heightened patrols at New York's Long Island beaches**

NEW YORK (AP) — Two swimmers were apparently attacked by sharks off the shores of Long Island on Tuesday, a day after two others reported being attacked while enjoying the water at popular New York beaches.

At least one beach delayed opening to holiday revelers Tuesday, after officials said drones spotted some 50 sand sharks that morning near a popular beach park. When the beach reopened, swimmers were advised to stay close to shore.

"We want to make sure swimmers are safe," Long Island State Parks Regional Director George Gorman told Newsday.

The beach was closed once more after a possible shark sighting, but officials determined it was a dolphin.

After a spate of attacks last year, state parks officials have increased patrols and deployed more drones to scout the waters for possible danger.

"We did have a season last year where we had six swimmers bitten from sharks, so this has turned into a bit of a concern," Suffolk County Police Commissioner Rodney Harrison told WABC.

Tuesday's incidents happened about 60 miles (95 kilometers) apart, including one off Fire Island Pines — not far from another attack the day before when a 15-year-old reported being bitten on one of his feet by a shark while surfing.

Earlier Monday, another 15-year-old girl was treated for an apparent shark bite to a leg.

"She didn't see what bit her, the lifeguards didn't know what bit her, the drone operator checked the area, we didn't see," Gorman said. "So we can't definitively say what bit her."

Tuesday's shark encounters both occurred just before 2 p.m.

A 47-year-old man was in chest-deep water off Quogue Village Beach in the Hamptons when he felt an apparent bite to his right knee, Quogue police said. He told authorities that he did not see a shark.

As a precaution, Quogue police advised swimmers to stay out of the water until officials could assess the risks.

Soon after, miles (kilometers) away, a 49-year-old man reported having a hand bitten while swimming near Fire Island Pines Beach.

Despite the attacks, holiday revelers remained on the beach.

"That's nature and maybe we are taking over their domain and they don't like it," 90-year-old Diana

Fratello told WCBS.

## World swelters to unofficial hottest day on record

By MELINA WALLING and SETH BORENSTEIN undefined

The entire planet sweltered to the unofficial hottest day in human recordkeeping July 3, according to University of Maine scientists at the Climate Reanalyzer project.

High temperature records were surpassed July 3 and 4 in Quebec and northwestern Canada and Peru. Cities across the U.S. from Medford, Oregon to Tampa, Florida have been hovering at all-time highs, said Zack Taylor, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. Beijing reported 9 straight days last week when the temperature exceeded 35 C (95 F).

This global record is preliminary, pending approval from gold-standard climate measurement entities like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. But it is an indication that climate change is reaching into uncharted territory. It legitimately captures global-scale heating and NOAA will take these figures into consideration when it does its official record calculations, said Deke Arndt, director of the National Center for Environmental Information, a division of NOAA.

"In the climate assessment community, I don't think we'd assign the kind of gravitas to a single day observation as we would a month or a year," Arndt said. Scientists generally use much longer measurements -- months, years, decades -- to track the Earth's warming. In addition, this preliminary record for the hottest day is based on data that only goes back to 1979, the start of satellite record-keeping, whereas NOAA's data goes back to 1880.

But Arndt added that we wouldn't be seeing anywhere near record-warm days unless we were in "a warm piece of what will likely be a very warm era" driven by greenhouse gas emissions and the onset of a "robust" El Nino. An El Nino is a temporary natural warming of parts of the central Pacific Ocean that changes weather worldwide and generally makes the planet hotter.

Human-caused climate change is like an upward escalator for global temperatures, and El Nino is like jumping up while standing on that escalator, Arndt said.

The global daily average temperature for July 3 came in at 17.01 degrees Celsius or 62.6 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the University of Maine's Climate Reanalyzer, a common tool often used by climate scientists for a good glimpse of the world's condition. The reanalyzer is based on a NOAA computer simulation intended for forecasts that uses satellite data. It is not based on reported observations from the ground. So this unofficial record is effectively using a weather tool that is designed for forecasts, not record-keeping.

This average temperature may not seem that hot, but it's the first time in the 44 years of this dataset that the temperature surpassed the 17-degree Celsius mark.

Hotter global average temperatures translate into brutal conditions for people all over the world. In the U.S., heat advisories are in effect this week for more than 30 million people in places including portions of western Oregon, inland far northern California, central New Mexico, Texas, Florida and the coastal Carolinas, according to the National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center. Excessive heat warnings are continuing across southern Arizona and California, they said.

When the heat spikes, humans suffer health effects.

"Those hotter temperatures that happen when we get hotter than normal conditions? People aren't used to that. Their bodies aren't used to that," said Erinanne Saffell, the Arizona state climatologist and an expert in extreme weather and climate events.

Saffell added that the risk is already high for the young and old, who are vulnerable to heat even under normal conditions.

"That's important to understand who might be at risk, making sure people are hydrated, they're staying cool, and they're not exerting themselves outside and taking care of those folks around you who might be at risk as well," she said.

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Borenstein reported from Washington and Walling from Chicago.

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

Follow Seth Borenstein and Melina Walling on Twitter at @borenbears and @MelinaWalling.

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.

## 'Smallville' actor released from prison for role in sex-trafficking case tied to cult-like group

The television actor Allison Mack, who pleaded guilty for her role in a sex-trafficking case tied to the cult-like group NXIVM, has been released from a California prison, according to a government website.

Mack, best known for her role as a young Superman's close friend on "Smallville," was sentenced to three years behind bars in 2021 after pleading guilty two years earlier to charges that she manipulated women into becoming sex slaves for NXIVM leader Keith Raniere.

Online records maintained by the Federal Bureau of Prisons said Mack, 40, was released Monday from a federal prison in Dublin, California, near San Francisco. Her release was first reported by the Albany Times-Union.

Mack avoided a longer prison term by cooperating with federal authorities in their case against Raniere, who was ultimately sentenced to 120 years in prison after being convicted on sex-trafficking charges.

Mack helped prosecutors mount evidence showing how Raniere created a secret society that included brainwashed women who were branded with his initials and forced to have sex with him.

In addition to Mack, members of the group included an heiress to the Seagram's liquor fortune, Clare Bronfman; and a daughter of TV star Catherine Oxenberg of "Dynasty" fame.

Mack would later repudiate Raniere and express "remorse and guilt" before her sentencing in federal court in Brooklyn, New York.

## French far-right figure ends divisive crowdfunding for officer whose shooting of teen set off unrest

PARIS (AP) — A French far-right figure behind a divisive, and hugely successful, crowdfunding campaign for the family of a police officer jailed in the killing of a 17-year-old that triggered riots around France announced on Tuesday that he's closing the account which topped more than 1.5 million euros (\$1.63 million).

Criticism, and plans for lawsuits, have mounted around Jean Messiha's Gofundme effort with claims that his real motive was to spread a message of hate and pit the far-right against residents of poor suburbs with a high rate of people of immigrant origin.

Even Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has said the collection for the jailed officer's family did not contribute to calming the situation, just like Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti who warned on France-Inter radio against a possible "instrumentalization."

The unrest was touched off by the shooting last Tuesday of the young man identified as Nahel, who was stopped while driving a Mercedes in suburban Paris. Violence was driven by a mainly teenage backlash in the suburbs and urban housing projects against a French state that many young people with immigrant roots say routinely discriminates against them. Violence appeared to continue to ebb for a third night Tuesday.

However, reports emerged of the death early Sunday of a 27-year-old man in Marseille. The local prosecutor's office opened an investigation Tuesday for "mortal blows with use or threat of a weapon," the newspaper La Marseillaise reported.

The probable cause of death was a "violent shock to the thorax caused by a projectile of the 'flashball' type," commonly used by French police for riot control.

It was not immediately clear whether the victim, who was not identified, was in the area of riots and

pillaging the night of his death, the paper quoted the prosecutor's office as saying.

Messiha, meanwhile, hailed in a tweet what he called an "historic symbol of national generosity" while announcing the closing of the crowdfunding campaign at midnight Tuesday for the family of the jailed officer, identified only as Florian M.

He said that more than 100,000 donors contributed to the effort he initiated on Friday that reached more than 1.5 million euros. He equated the response to a "tsunami" in support of law enforcement officers "who in a certain way fight daily so that France remains France."

The crowdfunding had an ugly edge with Messiha bragging at one point that his effort was bringing in more funds than a crowdfunding account set up for the family of Nahel. The family filed a complaint, alleging the crowdfunding was based on deception to "criminalize" the victim and win support for the police officer who fired at him, according to France-Info, which saw the complaint. It wasn't immediately clear whether an investigation would be opened.

Socialist lawmaker Arthur Delaporte from Calvados had filed a complaint earlier Tuesday against the crowdfunding contesting its legal grounds - shortly before Messiha closed it.

Egyptian-born Messiha is a former official of the National Rally party of far-right leader Marine Le Pen which he left for a fledgling far-right party then dropped out of that to return to his think tank. He remains a virulent critic of migration from Africa.

## **MLB's Sarah Langs, who has ALS, honored at Yankees game on anniversary of Lou Gehrig's famous speech**

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sarah Langs tried on Lou Gehrig's cap, a joyous moment and also a reminder of the link they share.

Langs, a beloved member of the baseball community in her role as a reporter and producer at Major League Baseball Advanced Media, revealed last October she had been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, known as Lou Gehrig's disease or ALS. She was honored at Yankee Stadium on Tuesday, the 84th anniversary of Gehrig's famous "luckiest man on the face of the Earth" speech, along with six other women who have the disease.

"I don't think I've processed any of this from the day that I pressed send on that tweet to share this with the world and all of the kindness I've received even beforehand," Langs said. "But, I mean, I love baseball so much. I'm so grateful for it. It's the one thing in my life that absolutely will not change at all."

ALS is a progressive disease that attacks nerve cells that control muscles throughout the body, eventually causing them to waste away. It became known as Lou Gehrig's disease after the star baseball player was diagnosed in 1939. There is no cure.

Langs, who turned 30 on May 2, visited the Yankees Museum and watched on the field as her parents, Liise-anne Pirofski and Charles Langs, threw out ceremonial first pitches. She attended the exchange of lineup cards and posed for photos with the umpires.

Seated at a pregame news conference alongside Yankees manager Aaron Boone and pitcher Gerrit Cole, Langs detailed her story as several of the women from the awareness group "Her ALS Story" and their families watched.

"I'm not used to being on this side of this. I've been in those seats," Langs said, looking to the media. "This is so, so important to put a spotlight on young women with ALS, to show not everyone looks like Lou Gehrig."

Cole presented Langs with a "Baseball Is the Best" T-shirt with the letters "ALS" highlighted in white, signed by all the Yankees as part of the team's annual HOPE week — Helping Others Persevere & Excel. A second signed shirt will be auctioned as a fundraiser.

Before the game, the videoboard played the start of Gehrig's speech, and then the women and several Yankees took turns reading segments of the address, which was met with a standing ovation.

Langs grew up in Manhattan, went to Dalton and the University of Chicago, interned at the New York Daily News and CSN Chicago and then joined ESPN in 2015 as a sports content researcher. She was promoted to senior sports content researcher in 2018 and joined MLB the following year.

Fans and media know her for the historical facts and comparisons she comes up with at a moment's notice.

She spoke of her baseball highlights that include attending David Cone's perfect game in 1999 — "I was young, but I'm aware of it and we talk about it as a family often" — and the Chicago Cubs winning the World Series Game 7 in 2016 for their first title since 1908.

She credited her perseverance to baseball.

"I think it just comes from baseball itself. I mean, baseball doesn't stop," she said. "It's there every day, unlike any other sport. There's a game every day and into October and November. So for me, the fact that baseball won't stop means I'm not going to either."

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

## Five dead in Philadelphia shooting that's nation's worst violence around July 4

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and RON TODT Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A 40-year-old killed one man in a house before fatally shooting four others on the streets of a Philadelphia neighborhood, then surrendering to police officers after being cornered in an alley with an assault rifle, a pistol, extra magazines, a police scanner and a bulletproof vest, police said.

A 2-year-old boy and a 13-year-old were also wounded in the Monday night violence that made the working-class area of Kingsessing the site of the nation's worst violence around the July Fourth holiday.

Police called to the scene found gunshot victims and started to help them before hearing more shots. Some officers rushed victims to hospitals while others ran toward the gunfire and chased the firing suspect. Officers ultimately arrested the assailant in an alley, Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw said at a news conference. The shooter had no connection to the victims before the shooting, she said.

"On what was supposed to be a beautiful summer evening, this armed and armored individual wreaked havoc, firing with a rifle at their victims seemingly at random," she said Tuesday afternoon.

Staff Inspector Ernest Ransom, the homicide unit commander, said witness interviews and video indicated that the suspect went to several locations in a ski mask and body armor, carrying an AR-15-style rifle.

"The suspect then began shooting aimlessly at occupied vehicles and individuals on the street as they walked," he said. The vehicles included a mother driving her 2-year-old twins home, and one was wounded in the legs and the other hit in the eyes by shattered glass.

Philadelphia police on Tuesday afternoon identified the victims as 20-year-old Lashyd Merritt, 29-year-old Dymir Stanton, 59-year-old Ralph Moralis and 15-year-old Daujan Brown, all pronounced dead shortly after the Monday night gunfire; and 31-year-old Joseph Wamah Jr., who was found in a home early Tuesday, also with multiple bullet wounds.

Investigators believe Wamah was the first victim killed, but he wasn't found by family members until hours later, Ransom said.

A 2-year-old boy shot four times in the legs and a 13-year-old shot twice in the legs were in stable condition, as were a 2-year-old boy and a 33-year-old woman injured by shattered glass.

Police said the suspect is believed to have acted alone and there was no reason to believe anyone else was involved. Police and prosecutors said no charges were planned at this point against a second person taken into custody who is believed to have obtained a gun somewhere and fired back at the shooter.

"When you are under fire in a mass shooting, there are rights to protect others and rights to protect yourself," District Attorney Larry Krasner said.

Authorities asked for patience as they investigate every aspect of the shooting. That investigation, Outlaw said, "includes the 'why.'"



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Krasner said the suspect would face multiple counts of murder, as well as aggravated assault and weapons charges, and was expected to be denied bail.

Outlaw praised the bravery of officers who tended to victims and rushed them to hospitals as others "fearlessly ran toward the sounds of gunfire," and captured the suspect.

"Their swift actions undoubtedly saved additional lives," she said.

At a holiday weekend block party in Baltimore, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) to the southwest of Philadelphia, two people were killed and 28 others were wounded in a shooting. More than half of the victims were 18 or younger, officials said.

About four hours after the Philadelphia shooting, gunfire at a neighborhood festival in Fort Worth, Texas, killed three people and wounded eight.

Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney renewed his oft-repeated call to "do something about America's gun problem."

"A person walking down the city street with an AR-style rifle and shooting randomly at people while wearing a bulletproof vest with multiple magazines is a disgraceful but all-too-common situation in America," Kenney said. "I was today at Independence Hall where they wrote that Constitution, and the 2nd Amendment was never intended to protect this."

Krasner said that the morning after the shooting, he saw "completely empty streets" in the traumatized neighborhood on an otherwise beautiful morning.

"I saw every porch empty. I saw every door closed. I saw every curtain where there was a curtain pulled. I saw no kids playing," he said, describing a bicycle left on a corner, apparently untouched for 12 or more hours, "as if everybody understood what happened here was so horrible that for right now this is a desert, and for right now everything that we associate with celebrating Fourth of July is off."

Tim Eads said that on Monday night he heard fireworks, then gunshots, and saw police cars "flying by." His wife was on the second floor "looking out the bay window and saw the shooter actually coming down this street here behind me."

Eads saw the other man with a pistol who, he said, may have been firing at the shooter.

"He was using my car as a shield shooting out into the street," Eads said.

A resident named Roger who declined to give his last name said he and his family were eating in the living room at about 8:30 p.m. when they heard eight to 10 gunshots.

"Everybody thought it was fireworks but ... been around here about three years so I heard it enough," he said. "I looked out the window and seen a bunch of people running."

He said he heard about four more shots and "thought it was the end of it." Ten minutes later, he said, police came "flying down here," and about five minutes later he heard rapid gunfire open up right outside the house.

The Philadelphia violence was the country's 29th mass killing in 2023, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in partnership with Northeastern University, the highest on record by this time in the year.

The number of people killed in such events is also the highest by this time in the year.

There have been more than 550 mass killings since 2006, according to the database, in which at least 2,900 people have died and at least 2,000 people have been hurt.

## Judge limits Biden administration in working with social media companies

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

A judge on Tuesday prohibited several federal agencies and officials of the Biden administration from working with social media companies about "protected speech," a decision called "a blow to censorship" by one of the Republican officials whose lawsuit prompted the ruling.

U.S. District Judge Terry Doughty of Louisiana granted the injunction in response to a 2022 lawsuit brought by attorneys general in Louisiana and Missouri. Their lawsuit alleged that the federal government

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overstepped in its efforts to convince social media companies to address postings that could result in vaccine hesitancy during the COVID-19 pandemic or affect elections.

Doughty cited "substantial evidence" of a far-reaching censorship campaign. He wrote that the "evidence produced thus far depicts an almost dystopian scenario. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a period perhaps best characterized by widespread doubt and uncertainty, the United States Government seems to have assumed a role similar to an Orwellian 'Ministry of Truth.'"

Republican U.S. Sen. Eric Schmitt, who was the Missouri attorney general when the lawsuit was filed, said on Twitter that the ruling was "a huge win for the First Amendment and a blow to censorship."

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry said the injunction prevents the administration "from censoring the core political speech of ordinary Americans" on social media.

"The evidence in our case is shocking and offensive with senior federal officials deciding that they could dictate what Americans can and cannot say on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other platforms about COVID-19, elections, criticism of the government, and more," Landry said in a statement.

The Justice Department is reviewing the injunction "and will evaluate its options in this case," said a White House official who was not authorized to discuss the case publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"This administration has promoted responsible actions to protect public health, safety, and security when confronted by challenges like a deadly pandemic and foreign attacks on our elections," the official said. "Our consistent view remains that social media platforms have a critical responsibility to take account of the effects their platforms are having on the American people, but make independent choices about the information they present."

The ruling listed several government agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services and the FBI, that are prohibited by the injunction from discussions with social media companies aimed at "encouraging, pressuring, or inducing in any manner the removal, deletion, suppression, or reduction of content containing protected free speech."

The order mentions by name several officials, including Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and others.

Doughty allowed several exceptions, such as informing social media companies of postings involving criminal activity and conspiracies; as well as notifying social media firms of national security threats and other threats posted on platforms.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit also included individuals, including conservative website owner Jim Hoft. The lawsuit accused the administration of using the possibility of favorable or unfavorable regulatory action to coerce social media platforms to squelch what it considered misinformation on masks and vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also touched on other topics, including claims about election integrity and news stories about material on a laptop owned by Hunter Biden, the president's son.

Administration lawyers said the government left it up to social media companies to decide what constituted misinformation and how to combat it. In one brief, they likened the lawsuit to an attempt to put a legal gag order on the federal government and "suppress the speech of federal government officials under the guise of protecting the speech rights of others."

"Plaintiffs' proposed injunction would significantly hinder the Federal Government's ability to combat foreign malign influence campaigns, prosecute crimes, protect the national security, and provide accurate information to the public on matters of grave public concern such as health care and election integrity," the administration says in a May 3 court filing.

Salter reported from O'Fallon, Missouri. Associated Press journalists Kevin McGill in New Orleans and Cal Woodward, Colleen Long and Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

## Plan to demolish house where 4 University of Idaho students were slain prompts objections

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Objections have been raised to demolishing the house where four University of Idaho students were killed last year, with members of three of the victims' families signaling it should be preserved until after the trial of the man charged in the deaths.

Shanon Gray, an attorney for the family of Kaylee Goncalves, one of the stabbing victims, said the university is disregarding families' requests that the home be left standing until after the trial of Bryan Kohberger, which is set to begin in October, the Idaho Statesman reported.

The bodies of Goncalves, Madison Mogen, Xana Kernodle and Ethan Chapin were found last Nov. 13 at the rental home across the street from the University of Idaho campus. Kohberger is charged with four counts of murder in connection with their deaths.

The owner of the property donated it to the school after the killings, and the university announced earlier this year that it was planning to demolish the home. A demolition date has not been set, but university spokesperson Jodi Walker said the school wants the house gone before the start of the fall semester.

Gray said in an email to the newspaper that the university asked for the families' opinions "and then proceeded to ignore those opinions and pursue their own self-interests. The home itself has enormous evidentiary value as well as being the largest, and one of the most important, pieces of evidence in the case."

Members of the Mogen and Kernodle families also oppose demolishing the property until after trial, the attorney said. Gray was unsure what position the Chapin family had. Members of the Chapin, Mogen and Kernodle families did not respond to requests for comment from the newspaper.

Gray also represents the Goncalves and Mogen families in tort claims filed against the university, the city of Moscow and Idaho State Police. That step preserves the families' rights to sue the government entities if they choose in connection with the deaths of their children.

Walker said university officials have been in "regular communication" with the victims' families since taking ownership of the house.

University attorney Kent Nelson, in correspondence with Gray, said neither the prosecution nor the defense has objected to the property being demolished. He told Gray that the university needed a "cogent argument," citing relevant case law or rules for it to deviate from its demolition plans. Nelson requested a response by June 23.

Gray said he received the correspondence from Nelson on June 22 and did not say if he met the deadline for a response.

## Joey Chestnut shakes off rain delay and defends title at Nathan's Fourth of July hot dog contest

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

Eating superstar Joey "Jaws" Chestnut shook off a rain delay and gobbled his way to another win at Nathan's Famous Fourth of July hot dog eating contest, downing 62 franks and buns in 10 minutes.

Chestnut out ate runner-up Geoffrey Esper and the rest of an international field of 15 competitive eaters by double digits to clinch his 16th title. Esper, of Oxford, Massachusetts managed to ingest 49 hot dogs and buns.

In the women's contest, defending champion Miki Sudo forced down 39 1/2 hot dogs and buns to collect her ninth Mustard Belt. But before the men could compete, stormy weather moved over New York City's Coney Island and delayed the competition for two hours.

"What a roller coaster, emotionally," Chestnut said after riding out the rain and wondering whether the famed contest would go on at all. The 39-year-old from Westfield, Indiana first competed for the Nathan's title in 2005 and hasn't lost it since 2015.

His best finish was in 2021 when he tallied 76 hot dogs, but Tuesday's weather disruption made a repeat

impossible.

"Everybody got messed up," Chestnut said.

Sudo beat Mayo Ebihara's 33 1/2 hot dogs in 10 minutes in a women's event that appeared to be much closer until the final count was announced. The unofficial real-time counter showed the two leaders tied throughout much of the competition. A final count of plates settled the score.

Sudo, 37, was disappointed in her winning total, which was nine hot dogs short of her all-time high. She said competition from the 27-year-old Ebihara had thrown her off.

"The first couple minutes, I found myself watching her, which I never want to do. I never want to be distracted by the other competitors," Sudo, of Port Richey, Florida, said after the competition. "Watching her, I fumbled my hands. I got stuck with a big burp early on but was able to correct."

The annual contest on New York City's Coney Island drew competitors from England, Canada, South Korea, Japan, Brazil and Australia, according to ESPN.

## Highland Park residents walk parade route where 7 were killed in Fourth of July shooting

By CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press/Report for America

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. (AP) — One year after a shooter terrorized July Fourth parade-goers in Highland Park, community members gathered Tuesday to honor the seven people who were killed, commemorate the day and reclaim the space to move forward.

The city hosted a series of events aimed at giving people an opportunity to heal together. But even as hundreds of residents of the Chicago suburb convened to honor their fallen, singing the National Anthem in unison softly, other U.S. cities were reeling from a fresh spate of gun violence.

Highland Park officials said they approached the event planning with a trauma-informed perspective.

"Nobody wanted a parade. It was inappropriate," Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering said. "But it was important for us to say that evil doesn't win. And this is our parade route, and this is our community that we are taking back."

Hundreds gathered for a Remembrance Ceremony at City Hall that included remarks from Rotering and several spiritual leaders, a musical performance and a moment of silence. Many wore matching blue shirts — the local high school's color — that read, "We Are Highland Park."

Attendees then walked last year's parade route together.

The events offered no floats, performers or giveaways.

Jessica Morales, Kevin Flynn, and their two small children attended the parade last year, and scrambled inside a nearby store when they shooting began. "It was really scary," Morales said.

They returned this year to pay their respects to the people who died and "not ignore the holiday, but remember what happened, and take the positive," said Morales, as the couple's 5-year-old and 1-year-old, decked out in red, white and blue, explored the busy, grassy expanse outside City Hall after the ceremony.

"We just want to keep the memory alive of what happened. It will always be with us. That's why we come to events like this," Morales said.

Mietra Namdari walked the half-mile parade route with her three children, 13, 11 and 7, pointing out law enforcement officers positioned on rooftops, as the shooter had been.

"They're here to keep us safe," she told her children.

Molly Dillon, 34, grew up in Highland Park and said she missed last year's parade but has attended more than 25 times — "almost every year it wasn't pouring down rain," added Dillon's father, Robert. This year, Molly wore a white T-shirt that said "gun control now."

"It's completely normal to walk that parade route. I've walked in it, I've watched it. And it's also completely surreal and totally strange because this context is new for us," Dillon said.

At night, the city planned to have a drone show instead of fireworks to avoid the noise that could sound like gunfire, Rotering said.

"I recognize for so many in our community, it's too soon."

Security was tight: Attendees had to register before each event, show a QR code and pass through security.

The day's events were "a good way to celebrate, but remember, at the same time," said Flynn, his young daughter in his arms.

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

## **Russia says it foiled Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow as Kyiv's counteroffensive grinds on**

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian air defenses on Tuesday foiled a Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow that prompted authorities to briefly close one of the city's international airports, officials said, as a Western analysis said that Russia has managed to slow Kyiv's recently launched counteroffensive.

The drone attack, which follows previous similar raids on the Russian capital, was the first known assault on the city since an abortive mutiny launched 11 days ago by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin. His Wagner troops marched on Moscow in the biggest — though short-lived — challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin in more than two decades of his rule.

Authorities in Ukraine, which generally avoids commenting on attacks on Russian soil, didn't say whether it launched the drone raid.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that four of the five drones were downed by air defenses on the outskirts of Moscow and the fifth was jammed by electronic warfare means and forced down.

There were no casualties or damage, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said.

As with previous drone attacks on Moscow, it was impossible to verify the Russian military's announcement that it downed all of them.

The drone attack prompted authorities to temporarily restrict flights at Moscow's Vnukovo airport and divert flights to two other Moscow main airports. Vnukovo is about 15 kilometers (nine miles) southwest of Moscow.

In May, two daring drone attacks jolted the Russian capital, in what appeared to be Kyiv's deepest strikes into Russia.

Tuesday's raid came as Ukrainian forces have continued probing Russian defenses in the south and the east of their country in the initial stages of a counteroffensive.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's Security and Defense Council, said that the military was currently focusing on destroying Russian equipment and personnel, and that the past few days of fighting have been particularly "fruitful." He provided no evidence and it wasn't possible to independently verify it.

The Ukrainians are up against minefields, anti-tank ditches and other obstacles, as well as layered defensive lines reportedly up to 20 kilometers (12 miles) deep in some places as they attempt to dislodge Russian occupiers.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said Tuesday the Kremlin's forces have "refined (their) tactics aimed at slowing Ukrainian armored counteroffensive operations in southern Ukraine."

Moscow has placed emphasis on using anti-tank mines to slow the onslaught, the assessment said, leaving the attackers at the mercy of Russian drones, helicopters and artillery.

"Although Russia has achieved some success with this approach in the early stages of Ukraine's counteroffensive, its forces continue to suffer from key weaknesses, especially overstretched units and a shortage of artillery munitions," the assessment said.

Western analysts say the counteroffensive, even if it prospers, won't end the war, which started with Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Russia, meanwhile, has continued its missile and drone barrage deep behind the front line.

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Russian shelling of Pervomaiskyi, a city in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, wounded 43 civilians, Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Tuesday. Among the wounded were 12 children, including two babies, according to officials.

Oleksandr Lysenko, mayor of the city of Sumy in northeastern Ukraine, said that three people were killed and 21 others were wounded in a Russian drone strike on Monday that damaged two apartment buildings.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the attack also damaged the regional headquarters of the Security Service of Ukraine, the country's main intelligence agency. He argued that the country needs more air defense systems to help fend off Russian raids.

In all, Ukraine's presidential office reported Tuesday, at least seven Ukrainian civilians were killed and 35 others injured in the fighting over the previous 24 hours.

Putin referred to the recent mercenary rebellion that rattled the Kremlin during a video call Tuesday with leaders of the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or SCO, which is a security grouping dominated by Moscow and Beijing.

Putin said that "Russian political circles, the entire society have shown unity and responsibility for the fate of the motherland by putting up a united front against the attempted mutiny."

He thanked the SCO members for what he described as their support during the uprising.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu also said that a united front thwarted Prigozhin's mutiny. He said Monday in his first public comment about the episode that it "failed primarily because the armed forces personnel have remained loyal to their military oath and duty." He said that the uprising had no impact on the war in Ukraine.

Dmitry Medvedev, head of Russia's Security Council chaired by Russian President Vladimir Putin, said Tuesday that the mutiny had not changed the attitude of Russian citizens toward signing up as professional contract soldiers in Ukraine. In a video posted on Telegram, he said almost 10,000 new recruits had joined up in the last week, with 185,000 joining the Russian army as professional contract soldiers since the start of the year.

In contrast, Prigozhin said that he had the public's backing for his "march of justice" toward Moscow.

On Tuesday, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe adopted a resolution recognizing Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism and the Wagner private mercenary group as a terrorist organization.

The declaration urges member states to take measures against the Wagner Group and any affiliated or successor structures. In addition, the document calls on members to recognize "the responsibility of Russia as a state sponsor of this terrorist organization."

Meanwhile, Russia's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday it saw "no grounds" to extend a deal that has allowed Ukraine to ship grain through the Black Sea to parts of the world struggling with hunger. The statement came less than two weeks before the expiration of the agreement, which was extended for two months in May.

Moscow has complained that a separate agreement with the United Nations to overcome obstacles to shipments of its fertilizers has not produced results.

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

## Princess Kate takes her seat in Royal Box at Wimbledon, right next to Roger Federer

By CHRIS LEHOURITES AP Sports Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Kate, the Princess of Wales, had the best seat in the house Tuesday on Centre Court at Wimbledon — in the front row of the Royal Box and right next to Roger Federer.

The future queen, wearing a mint green blazer, made her way down to her seat only moments before Federer was feted ahead of the opening match on Day 2 of the grass-court tournament.

Federer, an eight-time champion at the All England Club, sat between the princess and his wife, Mirka.

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The first match on a wet second day of Wimbledon — with the retractable roof closed — featured Elena Rybakina against American opponent Shelby Rogers. As is tradition at the most traditional of all tennis tournaments, Rybakina opened play on Tuesday as the defending women's champion.

Kate has been somewhat of a regular visitor to Wimbledon since marrying Prince William, even attending in the past with sister-in-law Meghan Markle. The late Queen Elizabeth II, William's grandmother, made only a handful of trips to the All England Club during her 70-year reign. Her last appearance in the Royal Box was in 2010.

King Charles III has taken his seat in the Royal Box at times but not since taking over as monarch from his mother. Elizabeth died last September and Charles had his coronation in May.

Rybakina won that opening match 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, and two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray then beat Ryan Peniston 6-3, 6-0, 6-1. In 2013, Murray won the first of his two Wimbledon titles, ending a 77-year wait for a British men's champion at the All England Club.

His second Wimbledon title came in 2016, and he also won the Olympic gold medal at the 2012 London Games on the same Centre Court grass — beating Federer in the final.

Federer, who turns 42 on Aug. 8, announced his retirement from tennis at the end of last year following a series of knee operations.

Besides Princess Kate and the Federers, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was also in the Royal Box — sitting behind the trio.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe is a British-Iranian charity worker who was detained in Tehran for almost six years. She was freed last year.

"I got to see her very briefly after the match," Murray said. "I spoke to her a while back. Yeah, it was very emotional talking to her and hearing her story ... it was brilliant that she was able to come along and watch. It was her first time here. Glad she could make it."

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

## Vietnam bans 'Barbie' movie due to an illustration showing China's territorial claim

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Vietnam's state media have reported that the government banned distribution of the popular "Barbie" movie because it includes a view of a map showing disputed Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.

The newspaper Vietnam Express and other media said posters advertising "Barbie" were removed from movie distributors' websites after Monday's decision. With Margot Robbie playing Barbie opposite Ryan Gosling's Ken in Greta Gerwig's comedic look at their "perfect" world, "Barbie" was supposed to open July 21 in Vietnamese theaters.

The reports cited Vi Kien Thanh, director general of the Vietnam Cinema Department, as saying the National Film Evaluation Council made the decision. It said a map in the film shows China's "nine-dash line," which extends Beijing's territorial claims far into waters that fall within areas claimed by Vietnam and other countries.

The "nine-dash line" is an arcane but sensitive issue for China and its neighbors that shows Beijing's maritime border extending into areas claimed by other governments and encompasses most of the South China Sea. That has brought it into tense standoffs with the ASEAN nations of Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines, with Chinese fishing boats and military vessels becoming more aggressive in the disputed waters.

Asked about the issue at a daily briefing on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said, "China's position on the South China Sea issue is clear and consistent."

"We believe that the countries concerned should not link the South China Sea issue with normal cultural and people-to-people exchanges," Mao said.

However, China is exceedingly sensitive when it comes to how its national image and border claims are

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portrayed in entertainment and by businesses. For example, it has routinely retaliated against companies from hotels to airlines that it believes have suggested that self-governing Taiwan – with its own political system, country code and currency — is anything other than a part of China.

Companies almost always acquiesce to Chinese complaints, fearing they risk being locked out of the huge, lucrative Chinese market. That includes Hollywood films deleting or adding scenes based on the expected response on the ruling Communist Party and the highly nationalistic public.

When an international court ruled in 2016 that the “nine-dash line” has no basis in law and the Philippines was entitled to an exclusive economic zone in part of the area claimed by Beijing, China rejected the ruling.

Warner Bros. offices were closed Tuesday for the July 4 holiday.

In 2019, Vietnam ordered showings of “Abominable” canceled after moviegoers complained about a scene showing the “nine-dash line.” Politicians in the Philippines called for a boycott of all DreamWorks releases to protest the scene, and Malaysia ordered the scene to be cut from the movie.

## **In a polarized US, how to define a patriot increasingly depends on who’s being asked**

By GARY FIELDS, MARGERY BECK and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

Millions of Americans will attend parades, fireworks and other Independence Day events on Tuesday, celebrating the courage of the nation’s 18th century patriots who fought for independence from Great Britain and what they considered an unjust government. Those events also will honor the military and those who sacrificed in other conflicts that helped preserve the nation’s freedom over its 247-year history.

That is only one version of a “patriot.” Today, the word and its variants have morphed beyond the original meaning. It has become infused in political rhetoric and school curriculums, with varying definitions, while being appropriated by white nationalist groups. Trying to define what a patriot is depends on who is being asked.

### **THE ORIGINAL PATRIOTS**

While the word’s origins come from ancient Greece, its basic meaning in American history is someone who loves his or her country.

The original patriots come from the American Revolution, most often associated with figures such as Sam Adams and Benjamin Franklin. But enslaved people who advocated for abolition and members of native communities trying to recover or retain their sovereignty also saw themselves as patriots, said Nathaniel Sheidley, president and CEO of Revolutionary Spaces in Boston. The group runs the Old State House and Old South Meeting House, which played central roles in the revolution.

“They took part in the American Revolution. There were working people advocating for their voices to be heard in the political process,” Sheidley said.

The hallmark of patriotism then, he said, was “a sense of self-sacrifice, of caring more about one’s neighbors and fellow community members than one’s self.”

### **PATRIOTISM HAS HAD MORE THAN ONE MEANING**

In some ways, the view of patriotism has always been on parallel tracks with civic and ethnic nationalism, historians say.

“Patriotism really depends on which American is describing himself as patriotic and what version or vision of the country they hold dear,” said Matthew Delmont, a historian at Dartmouth.

Opposition to government and dissent have been common features of how patriotism has been defined, he said. He cited the example of Black military members who fought in World War II and advocated for civil rights when they returned. They also saw themselves as patriots.

“Part of patriotism for them meant not just winning the war, but then coming home and trying to change America, trying to continue to fight for civil rights and to have actual freedom and democracy here in the United States,” Delmont said.

For many white Americans who see themselves as patriotic, “They’re thinking of other white Americans as the true definition of Americans,” Delmont said.



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## HOW THE DEFINITION HAS EVOLVED

Far-right and extremist groups have branded themselves with American motifs and the term "patriot" since at least the early 20th century, when the second Ku Klux Klan became known for the slogan "100% Americanism," said Mark Pitcavage, senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism.

By the 1990s, so many antigovernment and militia groups were using the term to describe themselves that watchdog groups referred to it as the "Patriot movement."

That extremist wave, which included Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, faded in the late 1990s and early 2000s. But many such groups resurfaced when Barack Obama became president, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, which closely tracked the movement.

Since then, many right-wing groups have called themselves "patriots" as they've fought election processes, LGBTQ+ rights, vaccines, immigration, diversity programs in schools and more. Former President Donald Trump frequently refers to his supporters as "patriots."

## HOW WHITE NATIONALIST GROUPS USE IT

The term works as a branding tool because many Americans have a positive association with "patriot," which harkens back to the Revolutionary War soldiers who beat the odds to found the country, said Kurt Braddock, an American University professor and researcher at the Polarization and Extremism Research & Innovation Lab.

One example is the white supremacist militia group Patriot Front, which researchers say uses patriotism as a sort of camouflage to hide racist and bigoted values. Some white nationalist groups may genuinely view themselves as pushing back against tyranny — even if in reality they are "very selective" about what parts of the Constitution they want to defend, Braddock said.

Gaines Foster, a historian at Louisiana State University, said patriotism at one point was seen as a civic nationalism that held the belief "that you're an American because you believe in democracy, you believe in equality, you believe in opportunity. In other words, you believe certain things about the way the government works, and that's a very inclusive vision."

He said the violent Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol was the most dramatic example of how the view of patriotism has shifted in recent years, saying "people began to lean less toward a commitment to democracy and more to the notion in the Declaration of Independence that there is a 'right of revolt,' and that becomes patriotism."

## HOW PATRIOTISM GETS LINKED TO CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Bob Evnen has been active in Nebraska Republican politics for nearly 50 years and was instrumental a decade ago in enacting a requirement for the Pledge of Allegiance to be recited in schools. The measure doesn't force students to participate, but does require schools to set aside time each class day for the pledge to be recited.

He pushed for the pledge policy to be included in the state's social studies curriculum standards, despite criticism from some lawmakers and civil rights organizations who labeled it "forced patriotism."

The intent, he said, is "to teach our children to become young patriots who have an intellectual understanding of the genius of this country and who feel an emotional connection to it."

"Somewhere along the line, we lost that — to our detriment, I believe," Evnen said.

Now Evnen is Nebraska's secretary of state overseeing elections and he is sometimes the target of election conspiracy theorists — usually fellow Republicans. They have made unfounded accusations of election rigging across the country and often question his patriotism for disagreeing.

Evnen finds those accusations maddening. To him, patriotism is unifying around "the idea of liberty and freedom and of self-governance." He said today's national debate on what constitutes patriotism flies in the face of reason.

"They're now just personal attacks in an effort to shut down debate," he said. "Anyone who strays from orthodoxy is labeled unpatriotic."

## PATRIOTISM IS A HOT BUTTON IN SCHOOLS

In Idaho, Gov. Brad Little and Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield, both Republicans,

announced in June that the state had purchased a new “patriotic” supplemental history curriculum that would be made available, free, to all public schools.

“It’s more important than ever that Idaho children learn the facts about American history from a patriotic standpoint,” Little wrote on Facebook. He said the lessons would help to “truly transform our students here in Idaho.”

Little’s office referred questions about the supplement to the state’s education department.

“The Story of America” curriculum was developed by conservative author and former Reagan-era education secretary Bill Bennett. In a 2021 press release, Bennett said the curriculum was needed because “an anti-American ideology that radically misrepresents U.S. history has infiltrated our education system and misled our kids.”

It’s difficult to compare the supplemental curriculum against the lessons that Idaho schools currently use because each district selects its own texts and lesson plans.

The new curriculum emphasizes that talking about American history and teaching the subject should be done with the intent to “cultivate a respect and love of your country,” Critchfield said.

“It’s not to change history, but to honor the history we had,” she said.

Democratic state Rep. Chris Mathias, a member of the House education committee, hasn’t seen the supplemental curriculum yet, but said history lessons should teach the good and the bad, and discuss — without shaming — the uncomfortable aspects of history.

Saying one curriculum is “patriotic” suggests that others currently in use are not, he said.

“I would really like to know if that’s true,” said Mathias, who previously served in the U.S. Coast Guard. “As a military veteran, I think a lot of people disagree on what it means to be devoted to America. I think a lot of people think that blind devotion is the same thing as patriotism. I don’t.”

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Fields reported from Washington, Beck from Omaha, Nebraska, and Boone from Boise, Idaho. Associated Press writers Steve LeBlanc in Boston, and Linley Sanders and Ali Swenson in New York contributed to this report.

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The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP’s democracy initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **Putin says Russia is ‘united as never before’ during Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting**

By ASHOK SHARMA and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that the Russian people are “united as never before,” seeking to project confidence in the wake of a short-lived revolt while participating in a meeting of an international organization that offered him a sympathetic audience.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting, hosted via videoconference by India, was Putin’s first multilateral summit since an armed rebellion rattled Russia and comes as he is eager to show the West has failed to isolate Moscow over its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The Asian security grouping, founded by Russia and China to counter Western alliances, also welcomed Iran as a new member, bringing its membership to nine nations.

Speaking by video link from the Kremlin, Putin praised the organization for “playing an increasingly significant role in international affairs, making a real contribution to maintaining peace and stability, ensuring sustainable economic growth of the participating states, and strengthening ties between peoples.”

He thanked the member states for supporting Russian authorities during the short-lived mutiny mounted by Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, and said the West had turned Ukraine into “a virtually hostile state — anti-Russia.” Putin has frequently lashed out at the West for its support of Ukraine in the war.

The summit presented an opportunity for Putin to show he remains in control after the insurrection left some wondering about divisions among Russian elites.

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"The Russian people are united as never before," he said. "The solidarity and responsibility for the fate of the fatherland was clearly demonstrated by the Russian political circles and the entire society by standing as a united front against the attempted armed rebellion."

Earlier speakers avoided direct references to the war, while bemoaning its global consequences.

A declaration adopted at the virtual summit also made no reference to Ukraine, but it said threats and challenges are "becoming more and more complex, destructive and dangerous, existing conflicts are aggravating and new conflicts are emerging."

In his opening speech, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned of global challenges to food, fuel and fertilizer supplies but didn't mention the war in Ukraine. Trade in all three has been disrupted by the war.

He also took a veiled swipe at Pakistan, saying the group shouldn't hesitate to criticize countries that are "using terrorism as an instrument of its state policy."

"Terrorism poses a threat to regional peace and we need to take up a joint fight," Modi said without naming Pakistan. India regularly accuses Pakistan of training and arming insurgent groups, a charge that Islamabad denies.

In his speech, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif denounced terrorism and defended his country's role in the fight against it.

"While the sacrifices made by Pakistan in fighting terrorism are without parallel, this scourge continues to plague our region and remains a serious obstacle to the maintenance of peace and stability," Sharif said. "Any temptation to use it as a cudgel for diplomatic point scoring must be eschewed."

Sharif also hailed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI, saying it could be a "game changer for connectivity, stability, peace and prosperity in the region."

Six of the nine SCO members — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — reaffirmed their support for the BRI initiative, the declaration said.

India opposes the initiative because it is being built through a portion of Kashmir under the control of Pakistan that New Delhi considers to be included in its part of the divided territory.

The declaration calls for new approaches to promote more equitable and effective international cooperation. It also said the SCO is not directed against any other states and is open to broad cooperation with all.

It said the "principles of mutual respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of states, non-interference in internal affairs and non-use of force or threats to use force, are the basis of sustainable development of international relations."

The SCO includes the four Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, all former Soviet republics in which Russian influence runs deep. India and Pakistan became members in 2017. Belarus is also in line for membership.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that "the benefits of the official membership of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the SCO will be historic."

Raisi's speech, cited by the Iranian news agency IRNA, expressed the hope that membership will prepare the ground for improving collective security, respect for the sovereignty of member nations, sustainable development, and confronting environmental threats.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said in a message that the summit was taking place amid growing global challenges and risks.

"But at a time when the world needs to work together, divisions are growing, and geopolitical tensions are rising," he said.

"These differences have been aggravated by several factors: diverging approaches to global crises; contrasting views on nontraditional security threats; and, of course, the consequences of COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine," he said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping called on members to work toward "long-term peace and stability in the region," according to a readout of his speech posted by state broadcaster CCTV.

He said China wants to "better synergize" the country's Belt and Road Initiative — a trillion-dollar infrastructure investment project criticized in the West for burdening smaller countries with large amounts of

debt — with other nations' own development strategies and regional cooperation initiatives.

Even as the SCO continues to expand, the group remains at risk of competing interests or conflicts between member states.

India and Pakistan share a history of bitter relations, mainly over Kashmir, a disputed Himalayan region that is split between them but claimed by both in its entirety, and they have fought two wars over it.

Meanwhile, New Delhi and Beijing are locked in a three-year standoff of thousands of soldiers stationed along their disputed border in the eastern Ladakh region.

And the SCO summit took place as Moscow relies more deeply on Beijing as its war in Ukraine drags on. While New Delhi has avoided criticizing Russia's invasion, Moscow's China ties could irk India in the long run and complicate its relationship with Cold War ally Russia.

Munir Ahmed in Islamabad, Dasha Litvinova in Tallinn, Estonia, and Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

## Ukrainians honor award-winning writer killed in Russian missile attack on restaurant

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Dozens of people with flowers, many unable to hold back tears, bid farewell Tuesday to an award-winning Ukrainian writer who was among those killed by a Russian missile attack on a popular restaurant in eastern Ukraine.

The memorial service for Victoria Amelina, 37, was held in the crowded main hall of Saint-Michael's Cathedral in Kyiv, where ceremonies are usually held for soldiers who were killed on the battlefield.

Amelina died in a hospital from injuries sustained in the June 27 strike on a popular restaurant frequently visited by journalists and aid workers in the city of Kramatorsk. Twelve other people also lost their lives in the attack.

"Usually, we gather here to say goodbye to the most deserving," said Archimandrite Lavrentii, the Orthodox priest leading the service. "Considering the times we live in, leading a worthy and dignified life for each of us is the best tribute we can offer in memory of those who have passed away into eternity."

Around 100 people, including representatives from the Ukrainian literary community, relatives, and residents of Kyiv gathered at the church to honor Amelina, a prominent writer who had turned her attention from literature to documenting Russian war crimes after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Mourners approached the closed casket, gently touching the yellow and blue Ukrainian flag covering it. Many couldn't hold back tears. To the left of the casket, people laid flowers, some of which were adorned with ribbons in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. At the end of the farewell, a mountain of flowers stood next to a portrait of Amelina, a red-haired woman with a pale face and a penetrating gaze pictured against a dark background.

A funeral will be held Wednesday in Amelina's hometown of Lviv.

Dmytro Kovalchuk, 31, was having dinner with Amelina at the restaurant when a Russian Iskander missile struck the building. He worked as a producer for a team of writers — Amelina and a group of Colombian authors.

He said Amelina was the first one to be evacuated to the hospital. She sustained an injury when the roof collapsed, and a piece of iron reinforcement struck her head.

"Victoria remained in her seat as she was," recalled Dmytro. It seemed like she was fine, but she didn't respond when called by her name.

"It was an honor to work with her," said Kovalchuk, adding that Amelina was a very polite and kind person.

After the service, the coffin and the flowers were loaded into a long black vehicle that departed for Lviv amid the strong and haunting sound of the trembita, a Ukrainian alpine horn made of wood.

Victoria Amelina is one of over 60 artists killed in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale war, said Tetiana

Teren, the head of PEN Ukraine.

"She had doubts about whether literature and culture could have an impact and support the country during such a horrific genocidal war. And she began to search for her own role, what she could contribute," said Teren, holding a Ukrainian flag, about Amelina's decision to document war crimes.

"Victoria strongly believed that we not only have to win this war, but we must bring to justice and hold accountable all those who committed crimes, who continue to kill Ukrainians and undermine our culture".

Amelina was born Jan. 1, 1986, in Lviv. In 2014 she published her first novel, "The November Syndrome, or Homo Compatiens," which was shortlisted for the Ukrainian Valeriy Shevchuk Prize.

She went on to write two award-winning children's books and another novel. In 2017, her novel, "Dom's Dream Kingdom," received national and international accolades — including the UNESCO City of Literature Prize and the European Union Prize for Literature.

Her fiction and essays have been translated into many languages, including English, Polish, Italian, German, Croatian, Dutch, Czech, and Hungarian.

In 2021, she founded the New York Literature Festival, which takes place in a small town called New York in the Donetsk region of Ukraine.

Since the start of the invasion, Amelina had devoted herself to documenting Russian war crimes in eastern Ukraine, PEN America said. In Kapytolivka, near Iziium, she discovered the diary of Volodymyr Vakulenko, a Ukrainian writer killed by the Russians.

She also began writing her first work of English nonfiction shortly before her death. In "War and Justice Diary: Looking at Women Looking at War," Amelina recounts stories of Ukrainian women collecting evidence of Russian war crimes. It is expected to be published soon, according to PEN Ukraine.

## Meta looks to target Twitter with a rival app called Threads

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Meta is poised to unveil a new app that appears to mimic Twitter — a direct challenge to the social media platform owned by Elon Musk.

A listing for the app, called Threads, appeared on Apple's App Store, indicating it would debut as early as Thursday. It is billed as a "text-based conversation app" that is linked to Instagram, with the listing teasing a Twitter-like microblogging experience.

"Threads is where communities come together to discuss everything from the topics you care about today to what'll be trending tomorrow," it said.

Instagram users will be able to keep their user names and follow the same accounts on the new app, according to screenshots displayed on the App Store listing. Meta declined to comment on the app.

Musk replied "yeah" to a tweet from Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey saying, "All your Threads are belong to us," along with a screenshot from the App Store's privacy section showing what personal information might be collected by the new Meta app.

Threads could be the latest headache for Musk, who acquired Twitter last year for \$44 billion and has been making changes that have unnerved advertisers and turned off users, including new daily limits on the number of tweets people can view.

Meta has good timing because Twitter users are growing frustrated with Musk's changes and looking for a viable alternative, said Matt Navarra, a social media consultant.

Threads presents the "opportunity to jump to a platform that can give them many of the things that they want Twitter to continue to be that it no longer is," he said.

Allowing Instagram users to port their profile to Threads could give the new app more traction with potential users by providing a ready-made set of accounts for them to follow, said Navarra, former director of social media at tech news site The Next Web and digital communications adviser for the British government.

Twitter has rolled out a series of unpopular changes in recent days, including a requirement for users to be verified to use the online dashboard TweetDeck. The policy announced Monday takes effect in 30

days and appears to be aimed at raising extra revenue because users need to pay have their accounts verified under Musk's changes.

TweetDeck is popular with companies and news organizations, allowing users to manage multiple Twitter accounts.

It comes after outcry over Musk's announcement this weekend that Twitter has limited the number of tweets users can view each day — restrictions that the billionaire Tesla CEO described as an attempt to stop unauthorized scraping of potentially valuable data.

Still, some users might be put off by Meta's data privacy track record, Navarra said. And would-be Twitter challengers like Mastodon have found it a challenge to sign up users.

"It's hard to tell whether the upset and discontent is strong enough to make a mass exodus or whether it will be somewhat of a slow erosion," Navarra said.

Musk's rivalry with Meta Platforms also could end up spilling over into real life. In an online exchange between Musk and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the two tech billionaires seemingly agreed to a cage match face-off, though it's unclear if they will actually make it to the ring.

## **Kremlin open to talks over potential prisoner swap involving detained US reporter Evan Gershkovich**

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin on Tuesday held the door open for contacts with the U.S. regarding a possible prisoner exchange that could potentially involve jailed Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, but reaffirmed that such talks must be held out of the public eye.

Asked whether Monday's consular visits to Gershkovich, who has been held behind bars in Moscow since March on charges of espionage, and Vladimir Dunaev, a Russian citizen in U.S. custody on cybercrime charges, could potentially herald a prisoner swap, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Moscow and Washington have touched on the issue.

"We have said that there have been certain contacts on the subject, but we don't want them to be discussed in public," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "They must be carried out and continue in complete silence."

He didn't offer any further details, but added that "the lawful right to consular contacts must be ensured on both sides."

The U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, Lynne Tracy, on Monday was allowed to visit Gershkovich for the first time since April. The U.S. Embassy did not immediately provide more information.

The 31-year-old Gershkovich was arrested in the city of Yekaterinburg while on a reporting trip to Russia. He is being held at Moscow's Lefortovo prison, notorious for its harsh conditions. A Moscow court last week upheld a ruling to keep him in custody until Aug. 30.

Gershkovich and his employer deny the allegations, and the U.S. government declared him to be wrongfully detained. His arrest rattled journalists in Russia where authorities have not provided any evidence to support the espionage charges.

Gershkovich is the first American reporter to face espionage charges in Russia since September 1986, when Nicholas Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for U.S. News and World Report, was arrested by the KGB. Daniloff was released 20 days later in a swap for an employee of the Soviet Union's U.N. mission who was arrested by the FBI, also on spying charges.

Dunaev was extradited from South Korea on the U.S. cybercrime charges and is in detention in Ohio. Russian diplomats were granted consular access to him on Monday for the first time since his arrest in 2021, Nadezhda Shumova, the head of the Russian Embassy's consular section, said in remarks carried by the Tass news agency.

## Tijuana, reliant on the Colorado River, faces a water crisis

By SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — Luis Ramirez leapt onto the roof of his bright blue water truck to fill the plastic tank that by day's end would empty into an assortment of buckets, barrels and cisterns in 100 homes.

It was barely 11 a.m. and Ramirez had many more stops to make on the hilly, grey fringes of Tijuana, a sprawling, industrial border city in northwestern Mexico where trucks or "pipas" like Ramirez's provide the only drinking water for many people.

"Each time, it gets farther and farther where we have to go," he said, blaming the city's water problems on drought and population growth, before jumping into the driver's seat next to 16-year-old assistant Daniel Alvarez.

Among the last cities downstream to receive water from the shrinking Colorado River, Tijuana is staring down a water crisis driven also by aging, inefficient infrastructure and successive governments that have done little to prepare the city for diminishing water in the region.

Entire neighborhoods on Tijuana's hilly and sometimes grassy far reaches remain unconnected to the city's water mains and pipes. Accessing water there is a daily struggle — and an expensive one, as trucked-in water usually costs much more than what people connected to the city pay.

Taxi driver Aurelio Hernandez lives in one of roughly 150 houses in a remote development near vast industrial parks that make aviation parts in the city's south. Dirt roads so steep they seem vertical lead to the village.

"It is the biggest problem we have," said Hernandez, who has lived in Rancho el Chicote for 20 years, about the lack of running water. Hernandez, his wife and two daughters use about 1,585 gallons (6,000 liters) of trucked-in water per month, he said, which costs about 2,000 pesos or \$116. The average U.S. family uses more than five times as much water each month, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, yet pays less, despite Mexico's much lower wages.

"Every year it's the same. Politicians come and promise you things, but nothing ever changes," Hernandez said.

Even in middle class neighborhoods, like homemaker Martha Muñoz's in Tijuana's fast-growing south, neighbors have to share updates on WhatsApp about possible shutoffs and coordinate requests to city authorities when it's cut.

"The state government is trying to bring some relief, but it will take time," Muñoz said. "Meanwhile, it's really hard every time there's a burst pipe, because they leave us without water for five days."

That's what happened in April, when upwards of 600 neighborhoods — more than half of the whole city — went without water while the state water utility known as CESPT in Spanish, repaired leaks in a primary main.

For some, that shutoff lasted days longer than the official 36-hour estimate. Authorities admitted that given the size of the area affected, they could not send water trucks to many neighborhoods.

"People are left without water for way too long," said Jose Manuel Perez Reyes, who distributes trucked-in water, adding that the government sometimes tells residents the shutoffs are to fix pipes when in reality there simply isn't enough water.

Even for the 700,000 users, according to CESPT, that are connected to city water, faucets often go dry, forcing them, too, to pay for trucked-in private water.

"It's like playing whack-a-mole in terms of trying to see where things are going to pop up next," said Carlos de la Parra, a water consultant and former professor of urban studies and the environment at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte who has studied water issues in northwestern Mexico for decades.

Water utilities are struggling to keep pace with both Tijuana's growth, de la Parra said, and about 8 to 10 years of neglect of infrastructure.

Then, there's drought. Nationwide, more than 44% of municipalities in Mexico were in drought in May, according to Mexico's National Water Commission. Tijuana's challenges are acute as one of the country's fastest-growing cities in one of Mexico's most water-stressed states.

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In charge of running the water utility in Tijuana is Victor Amador, who, despite the daily struggles for water in the city, denied that taps run dry except when work is being done on the pipes.

"We don't have problems at the moment," Amador said. "For now, we have enough water."

But that wasn't the case in January when Tijuana shut off a water main to perform work and had to request about 540 acre-feet of emergency water from San Diego. (An acre-foot of water is equal to 326,000 gallons or 1.2 million liters.)

The water — available during times of acute need, but counted against Mexico's share of Colorado River water — traveled through Southern California's behemoth aqueducts and across the U.S.-Mexico border. Such emergency water transfers have taken place for more than 50 years, the San Diego County Water Authority said, and have been needed every year since 2018 except one.

More than 90% of Tijuana's water comes from the Colorado River, traveling west across Baja California and over a 4,000-foot (1,219 meter) mountain pass through a single aqueduct that itself is often under repair. Over the past two years, Mexico's share of Colorado River water was slashed by 7%, and while those cuts have yet to affect Tijuana, hydrologists and policy experts emphasize that the city and state of Baja California need to secure other water sources — soon.

Despite years of promises from federal, state and city officials to diversify Tijuana's water supply using ocean water desalination and treated wastewater, the city has little to show for it. Amador said the government is working toward developing both.

"We're living in this drought as if nothing were happening," said Manuel Becerra, a water consultant based in Tijuana and former city superintendent of public services.

Part of the challenge for Tijuana's aging infrastructure is the city's layout: water is pumped up and down steep hills and canyons to reach developments that have sprawled in every direction as the city has grown — 19% since 2010. Then there's the estimated 7% of water that Tijuana loses to leaks, according to the state water utility.

"The topography of the area requires that water is pumped and re-pumped," Becerra said. "Sometimes even though there is water, the pumps fail, the power fails, or the pipe breaks, and service is interrupted."

On his fifth stop after re-filling his truck, water truck driver Ramirez descended a steep, gravel road to enter a neighborhood with about 100 homes not connected to city water. He stopped in front of a grey, two-story cinderblock home where retired construction worker Jose Trinidad and his wife move water from tank to bucket to bowl for bathing, cleaning and cooking.

Every month, Trinidad said he spends 1,600 pesos (about \$91) for water. After food, it's his largest expense.

"We spend a lot. It's difficult, but we have to deal with it," Trinidad said. "We have no choice."

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Video journalist Jordi Lebrija contributed to this report.

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## First Brexit, now Orxit? Politicians on Scotland's Orkney Islands vote to explore more autonomy

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Officials on the Orkney Islands, a corner of Scotland with Viking roots and an independent spirit, seized a moment in the global spotlight on Tuesday and voted to explore ways of seeking more autonomy — or even independence — from neglectful U.K. governments.

Journalists from across Britain and around the world tuned in remotely as Orkney Islands Council voted to study "alternative models of governance" for the archipelago, which has a population of 22,000.

The proposal from council leader James Stockan grabbed international headlines with its mention of



potentially restoring Orkney's "Nordic connections." Orkney was under Norwegian and Danish control for centuries until 1472 when the islands were taken by the Scottish crown as part of Margaret of Denmark's wedding dowry to King James III of Scotland.

Stockan said his proposal "is not about us joining Norway," but about countering the "discrimination that we've had against this community" from the Scottish and U.K. governments.

"I say, 'Enough,'" he said. "I say it is time for government to take us seriously, and it is time for us to look at all the options we've got."

A report accompanying Stockan's motion suggested Orkney should investigate options including a status like the Faeroe Islands, a self-governing dependency of Denmark that lies between Scotland and Iceland. Another option is emulating Britain's Crown Dependencies such as the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey.

Long an impoverished area reliant on the unpredictable fishing industry, Orkney prospered after large reserves of oil were discovered offshore in the 1960s. The islands, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) north of mainland Scotland, also have a burgeoning wind-power industry and a growing tourism sector.

But Stockan said Orkney gets less support from the Scottish government than other island communities in Shetland or the Hebrides, and is desperately in need of new ferries to keep its many islands connected.

Another councilor, Duncan Tullock, said Orkney was "living off crumbs."

"I've never been more disillusioned in my life with both the Scottish and the U.K. governments," he said. "We have had promise upon promise upon promise, every single one of them empty."

Any major constitutional change is a long shot, likely requiring a referendum and legislation by the Scottish and U.K. governments. The governments in Edinburgh and London are themselves at loggerheads over the Scottish administration's ambition to make Scotland an independent country outside the United Kingdom.

The U.K. government said there was "no mechanism" to change the status of Orkney. The Norwegian government said the debate was "a domestic and constitutional British matter" on which it had no view.

Councilor David Dawson criticized some of the ideas being floated for Orkney as "daydreams" — especially the "quite frankly bizarre fantasy of becoming a self-governing dependency of Norway."

He said the U.K.'s rocky departure from the European Union served as a warning about the risks of going it alone.

"Let me caution you with one word," he said. "Brexit."

## **Retailers, beware: Resumption of student loan payments could lead some buyers to pull back**

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The reprieve is over. Just as the American economy is struggling with high inflation and interest rates, the coming resumption of student loan payments poses yet another potential challenge.

The suspension of federal student loan payments, which took effect at the height of the pandemic in 2020, expires late this summer. Interest will start accruing again in September. Payments will resume in October.

Though many hoped their loans might at least be lightened, the Supreme Court last week struck down a Biden administration plan that would have given millions of people some relief from the return of the loan payments. The Biden plan would have canceled up to \$20,000 in federal student loans for 43 million borrowers; 20 million would have had their loans erased entirely. The court ruled that the plan exceeded the government's authority.

The restart of those payments will force many people to start paying hundreds of dollars in loans each month — money they had been spending elsewhere for the past three years. Their pullback in spending on goods and services won't likely make a serious dent in the \$26 trillion U.S. economy, the world's largest. Any pain instead will likely be concentrated in a few industries, notably e-commerce companies, bars and restaurants and some major retailers.

Even if all that won't be enough to weaken overall economic growth, the shift in spending by many young

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adults could inject further uncertainty into an economy already beset by uncertainties, from whether the Fed will manage to tame inflation and halt its interest rate hikes to whether a recession is destined to strike by next year, as many economists still fear.

Josh Bivens, chief economist at the Economic Policy Institute think tank, suggested that the likely hit to the economy might amount to perhaps one-third of a percentage point of gross domestic product — the nation's total output of goods and services — or about \$85 billion or \$90 billion a year.

It's "not trivial, but it's not huge," Bivens said. "At the macro level, my guess is that it won't be a game-changer."

The continued willingness of consumers to spend has kept the economy humming despite more than a year of dramatically rising interest rates. Consumers have had the financial wherewithal to load up Amazon shopping carts, go out for dinner and buy everything from lawn furniture to new refrigerators, in part because the government spent around \$5 trillion since 2020 to cushion the economic damage from COVID-19.

But those pandemic relief programs, including the student loan moratorium, are ending and adding to the obstacles the economy is facing.

The suspension of loan payments "had given people a bit more money in the pocket, and they've gone out and they've spent that money," said Neil Saunders, managing director of the GlobalData Retail consultancy.

Deutsche Bank analysts who follow the retail industry estimate that the resumption of the loan payments could shrink consumer spending by \$14 billion a month, or an average of \$305 per borrower. The biggest blow, they say, will likely be absorbed by online commerce and mail-order companies and by restaurants and bars.

Among the individual companies that could be hurt, according to the Deutsche Bank analysis, are Macy's, Target and Kohl's. The largest retailer, Walmart, is thought to be insulated from major damage because of its grocery business. (Walmart is also the nation's largest grocer.)

Dollar stores and other discounters might even benefit if more financially squeezed consumers turn to bargain-hunting.

Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, and his colleagues say they expect the end of the student loan moratorium to impose a "modest drag" on the economy, shaving 0.2% off growth in consumer spending this year. The dent to spending would have been half as much, they say, if the Supreme Court had allowed the Biden debt forgiveness program to proceed.

The economy has endured a wild ride since COVID-19 hit in early 2020. A deep recession engulfed the economy in March and April that year. Massive government aid fueled a rebound of surprising speed, strength and resilience.

But it came at a price: Surging demand from consumers overwhelmed the world's factories, ports and freight yards, resulting in delays, shortages — and much higher prices. Inflation surged last year to heights not seen since the early 1980s.

In response, the Fed began jacking up its benchmark short-term rate in March 2022. Since then, it's raised its key rate 10 times. Higher borrowing costs have had the intended effect of slowing the economy and price acceleration. From a year-over-year peak of 9.1% in June 2022, consumer price inflation fell to 4% in May. Yet that's still twice the Fed's 2% target. So the central bank has signaled that more rate hike are likely this year.

At the same time, the government has been phasing out pandemic relief. Extended unemployment aid ended in September 2021. An expansion of the food stamps program ended this year.

The savings that Americans had socked away beginning at the peak of the pandemic — when they were receiving government relief checks and saving money while hunkered down at home — are evaporating. Fed researchers have reported that any "excess" pandemic savings probably dried up in the first three months of 2023.

Despite everything, the economy has proved surprisingly durable. The government last week sharply upgraded its estimate of January-through-March economic growth to a 2% annual rate and said consumers were spending at their fastest pace in nearly two years. Factor in a still-robust job market — employers keep hiring briskly, and unemployment, at 3.7%, is barely above a half-century low — and the economy

has repeatedly outrun predictions, first sounded more than a year ago, that a recession was inevitable. "The economy has really powered through it," Bivens said. "So what is the straw that breaks the camel's back? My guess is it's not this. I don't think it's a big-enough thing."

Still, Bivens said, he worries about the Fed rate hikes and federal cutbacks, including the end of the student loan payment moratorium, "throwing more contractionary shocks" at an American economy that has defied the doubters — at least for now.

AP Retail Writer Anne D'Innocenzio contributed to this report from New York.

## 'Liberty, equality, fraternity' for all? New riots make France confront an old problem

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity": The lofty ideals to which France has long aspired are embossed on coins and carved above school doors across the land. Yet they are the polar opposite of what some French people who are Black or brown saw in a shocking video of a police officer shooting and killing a 17-year-old delivery driver of north African descent during a traffic stop.

That kid, some said to themselves, could have been me — or my children, or my friends. Within hours, the first fires of anger and revenge were lighting up the night skies of Nanterre, the Paris suburb where the teenager, Nahel, was declared dead at 9:15 a.m. last Tuesday. His left arm and chest had been pierced from left to right by a single shot fired before the yellow Mercedes he was driving then slammed into barriers on Nelson Mandela Square.

From the town on the fringe of the French capital's high-rise business district, with its disadvantaged housing projects, glaring wealth gaps, and melting-pot mix of races and cultural influences imported from France's former colonies, the flames of fury quickly spread.

More than 200 cities and towns reported arson attacks on public buildings, vehicle fires, clashes with police, looting and other mayhem in six nights of unrest. The violence was nationwide — from blue-collar ports on France's northern coast to southern towns overlooking the Pyrenees, from de-industrialized former mining basins to Nantes and La Rochelle on the western Atlantic coast, once hearts of the French slave trade.

After more than 3,400 arrests and signs that the violence is now abating, France is once again facing a reckoning — as it did after previous riots in mixed-race, disadvantaged neighborhoods in the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s.

And the uncomfortable central question remains the same: What is France doing wrong that prevents chunks of its population, particularly among non-whites, from being able to buy into its promise of equality and fraternity for all?

### THE PROBLEMS ARE BOTH OLD AND NEW

Among the factors being blamed and hotly disputed are problems both old and new: racism in police ranks and French society more broadly, poverty made more desperate by rising costs related to the war in Ukraine, decades of urban neglect, breakdowns in marriages and parental authority, and the ripples of the COVID-19 pandemic. Young teenagers whose schooling was interrupted by virus curfews and teaching shutdowns were among those smashing, burning, stealing and fighting with police — and reveling in the mayhem on social media.

For Yazid Kherfi, who spends his time driving from one housing project to the next, speaking to young people about how to avoid the route that he took into crime and prison, the violence was a cry of distress from a generation he says feels unloved and left by the wayside.

The minivan Kherfi uses has a quote from Martin Luther King painted on the back: "We must learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools." But on his rounds, Kherfi says he frequently hears young people complain that police single them out because of their color.

"The police aren't well trained to work in difficult neighborhoods. Some police are racist. There are violent

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police. They exist. I'm not saying all the police but it's still a certain number," he says. "Blacks and Arabs are stopped far more frequently than whites."

"We are a long way from liberty, equality, fraternity," he adds. "The reality is that people find all these situations very, very hard. It's been like this for more than 40 years. So of course, every time there are riots in France, it's linked to a young person's death related to a policing operation. And the police rarely blames itself."

From French President Emmanuel Macron down, government officials were quick to condemn the actions of the officer now incarcerated on a preliminary charge of voluntary homicide. Macron called the shooting "inexplicable and inexcusable." The officer's lawyer says his client feared, when the vehicle they'd stopped started moving again, that he and his colleague would be dragged along with it and crushed.

## HOW TO TACKLE RACISM WHEN IT CAN'T BE MEASURED?

Measuring the scale of racism and racial inequality in France is complicated by its official policy of color blindness, with strict limits on data that can be collected. For critics, that guiding philosophy has made the state oblivious to discrimination. France's census has no questions about race or ethnicity.

Still, inequalities are too glaring to be ignored. The government's statistics agency found in 2020 that death rates among immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa doubled in France and tripled in the Paris region at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic — an acknowledgement of the virus's punishing and disproportionate impact on Black immigrants and members of other systemically overlooked minority groups. Other research has also exposed racism in workplaces and hiring.

"For 40, 45 years there have been warning signs about discrimination," says Abel Boyi, head of a group called "All Unique, All United" that aims to reconcile young people with France and its republican values.

Boyi, who is Black, decries the state's colorblindness as "a French hypocrisy." He says he regularly encounters young people of color and also white people from disadvantaged neighborhoods who apply for dozens of jobs but aren't hired "because the family name sounds foreign, because the address isn't a good one."

"Unfortunately, when there's an injustice, there's always a radical fringe that tips into violence. We saw these young people, aged 12 to 19 ... at 1, 2, 3 o'clock in the morning burning cars, stoning police officers, stoning buses. It's terrible," Boyi says. "The anger is righteous but the method is wrong."

## THE VISUALS ADDED FUEL TO THE FLAMES

The video of Nahel's death also helps explain the rapid spread and sudden intensity of the violence. As was also the case with the footage of George Floyd's killing in the United States, the images left some people wondering whether police abuses sometimes go unpunished because they aren't captured on camera. Spray-painted graffiti in Nanterre read: "Without video, Nahel would be a statistic."

Police officer Walid Hrar says, however, that the relationship between France's forces of law and order and disadvantaged neighborhoods he works in isn't as broken as the rioting made it seem.

He runs a volunteer group of officers, The Guardians of Fraternity, who meet with neighborhood kids to try to build understanding and help them see that behind their uniforms, they are people, too. "Sometimes, the talks are very hard, very stormy," he acknowledges.

But Hrar, who is of Moroccan descent and Muslim, says the police force has "changed enormously" and become more diverse since he joined up.

That was in 2004. France was swept by rioting the following year. He has spent his career in Paris' northern suburbs where that violence first erupted, when 15-year-old Bouna Traoré and 17-year-old Zyed Benna were electrocuted while hiding from police in a power substation in Clichy-sous-Bois.

One difference between then and now, Hrar says, is that the new generation of rioters seems to know no limits, trashing schools, town halls, police stations and other symbols of authority.

"With some, the breakdown is total, that is true," Hrar says. "There is real groundwork that needs to be done."

Another key difference: social networks. This generation weaned on TikTok and Snapchat not only celebrated mayhem in short videos but, the government says, sometimes organized on their networks, too. Memes and hashtags about looting quickly swamped references about justice for Nahel. Macron said some rioters seemed to be acting out "the video games that have intoxicated them."

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It all adds up to something toxic and dangerous, with deep cracks in the foundations of a country still unreconciled with its often violent colonial past and with engrained discrimination and inequalities that defy quick fixes.

"How do we bring together the multitude of histories into one common history that concerns us all, regardless of skin color and origin?" said Boyi. "That is France's great challenge for the 21st century."

Paris chief correspondent John Leicester has reported from France for The Associated Press since 2002.

## Today in History: July 5, Larry Doby become first Black baseball player in American League

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 5, the 186th day of 2023. There are 179 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 5, 1947, Larry Doby made his debut with the Cleveland Indians, becoming the first Black player in the American League three months after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in the National League.

On this date:

In 1687, Isaac Newton first published his Principia Mathematica, a three-volume work setting out his mathematical principles of natural philosophy.

In 1811, Venezuela became the first South American country to declare independence from Spain.

In 1865, the Secret Service Division of the U.S. Treasury Department was founded in Washington, D.C., with the mission of suppressing counterfeit currency.

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the National Labor Relations Act.

In 1940, during World War II, Britain and the Vichy government in France broke off diplomatic relations.

In 1943, the Battle of Kursk began during World War II; in the weeks that followed, the Soviets were able to repeatedly repel the Germans, who eventually withdrew in defeat.

In 1954, Elvis Presley's first commercial recording session took place at Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee; the song he recorded was "That's All Right."

In 1971, President Richard Nixon certified the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which lowered the minimum voting age from 21 to 18.

In 1975, Arthur Ashe became the first Black man to win a Wimbledon singles title when he defeated Jimmy Connors.

In 1977, Pakistan's army, led by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, seized power from President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZUL'fih-kahr ah-LEE' BOO'toh).

In 2008, Venus Williams won her fifth Wimbledon singles title, beating younger sister Serena in the final.

In 2011, a jury in Orlando, Florida, found Casey Anthony, 25, not guilty of murder, manslaughter and child abuse in the 2008 disappearance and death of her 2-year-old daughter, Caylee.

Ten years ago: Pope Francis cleared two of the 20th Century's most influential popes to become saints in the Roman Catholic church, approving a miracle needed to canonize Pope John Paul II and waiving Vatican rules to honor Pope John XXIII. Enraged Islamists pushed back against the toppling of President Mohammed Morsi, as tens of thousands of his supporters took to the streets vowing to win his reinstatement and clashed with their opponents in violence that killed some three dozen people.

Five years ago: Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt resigned amid ethics scandals that prompted more than a dozen federal and congressional investigations; deputy administrator Andrew Wheeler, a former coal industry lobbyist, was named to take over as acting administrator. James Alex Fields Jr. pleaded not guilty to federal hate crime charges in a car attack on a crowd of protesters opposing a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, on Aug. 12, 2017; a 32-year-old woman died and dozens were injured. (Fields later pleaded guilty to 29 federal hate crime charges under a plea deal in which prosecutors agreed not to seek the death penalty.)

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One year ago: Police said a gunman who attacked an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago, killing at least seven people, legally bought two high-powered rifles and three other weapons despite authorities being called to his home twice since 2019 after he threatened suicide and violence. A Georgia prosecutor investigating the conduct of former President Donald Trump and his allies after the 2020 election subpoenaed Lindsey Graham, Rudy Giuliani, and other members of Trump's campaign legal team to testify before a grand jury, marking a major escalation in the case.

Today's Birthdays: Singer-musician Robbie Robertson is 80. Julie Nixon Eisenhower is 75. Rock star Huey Lewis is 73. Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Rich "Goose" Gossage is 72. Singer-songwriter Marc Cohn is 64. Actor John Marshall Jones is 61. Actor Dorian Wilson is 61. Actor Edie Falco is 60. Actor Jillian Armenante is 59. Actor Kathryn Erbe (er-BEE') is 58. Actor Michael Stuhlbarg (STOOL'-bahrg) is 55. Rapper RZA (RIH'-zuh) is 54. R&B singer Joe is 50. Rock musician Bengt Lagerberg (The Cardigans) is 50. Actor Dale Godboldo is 48. Rapper Bizarre is 47. Rapper Royce da 5'9" is 46. Rock singer Jason Wade (Lifeshouse) is 43. Actor Ryan Hansen is 42. Country musician Dave Haywood (Lady A) is 41. Soccer player Megan Rapinoe is 38. Rock musician Nick O'Malley (Arctic Monkeys) is 38. Actor Jason Dolley is 32. California Angels pitcher and designated hitter Shohei Ohtani is 29.