

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, July 10

Senior Menu: Lasagna rotini, spinach salad with dressing, ambrosia fruit salad, cookie, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Food Pantry open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Groton Community Center

Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Legion host Claremont, DH, 6 p.m.

U10 W/B at Columbia, DH, 6:30 p.m.

Softball hosts Claremont (U8 at 5:30 p.m., U10 at 7 p.m.); hosts Warner, DH

T-Ball at Columbia, 5:30 p.m.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, July 11

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, oriental blend vegetables, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread, fruit.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 7 p.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Groton Community Center

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

Olive Grove: Bridge, Ladies League at 6 p.m.

Legion at Aberdeen Smitty's, 1 game, 6 p.m.

Jr. Teener Regional Tournament, TBD

U10 R/B hosts Milbank, DH, 5:30 p.m.

Softball U12 hosts Clark, 6 p.m.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
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Wednesday, July 12

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, broccoli and carrots, pears, chocolate pudding, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Campfire 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

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons; Men's League

Jr. Teener Regional Tournament, TBD

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

Thursday, July 13

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, carrots, apricots, whole wheat bread.

Jr. Teener Regional Tournament, TBD

Softball hosts Webster (U8 at 6 p.m., U10 at 6 p.m. DH, U12 at 7:30 p.m. DH)

T-Ball Black at Andover, 6 p.m.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

JULY 10, 2023

World in Brief

roversial cluster bombs to Ukraine.

North Korea accused U.S. surveillance planes of violating air space and warned them to shoot them down, ramping up tensions ahead of the NATO Summit.

Authorities have named the six people who were pronounced dead at the scene when a small plane crashed in a field outside French Valley Airport in Murrieta, California on Saturday morning.

Former White House senior adviser Steve Bannon has been ordered by a judge to pay a team of lawyers more than \$480,000 in unpaid legal fees.

Rains in northern India have triggered flash floods and landslides, resulting in the deaths of at least 22 people, mostly in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, at least eight people died, and 13 others were hurt after a Russian rocket strike on a Lyman neighborhood in the Donetsk Oblast, regional officials said. Meanwhile, the U.S. announced it will provide a controversial package of cluster munition for Ukraine.

TALKING POINTS

"Cluster bombs should never be used. That's crossing a line. We know what takes place in terms of cluster bombs being very dangerous to civilians. They don't always immediately explode. Children can step on them. That's a line we should not cross. We would risk losing our moral leadership... I'm hoping the administration would reconsider this because these are very dangerous bombs. They're dangerous weapons, and this is a line I don't believe we should cross." Democratic lawmaker Barbara Lee of California slammed President Joe Biden's decision to send cluster munitions to Ukraine.

"This will disrupt and degrade ISIS's ability to plan and conduct terror attacks. However, CENTCOM's [United States Central Command] operations against ISIS, alongside partner forces in Iraq and Syria, will continue in order to achieve the group's enduring defeat." The U.S. Central Command said in a statement, confirming the death of ISIS leader Usamah Al-Muhajir, with the airstrike taking place in an unspecified part of Syria.

"It seems to me that the sole desire to bring the war to an end is beautiful. But this desire should or be based on some real-life experience. Well, it looks as if Donald Trump had already these 24 hours once in his time. We were at war, not a full-scale war, but we were at war, and as I assume, he had that time at his disposal, but he must have had some other priorities." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said while rejecting Trump's claim that he would have ended the Russia-Ukraine war "in 24 hours" if he won the 2020 presidential election.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

President Joe Biden is in the U.K., the first stop on his overseas trip for the 74th NATO Summit. Biden will be in the U.K. through Tuesday, at which time he will depart for Vilnius, Lithuania.

Congress returns to Washington, D.C., this week after breaking for its annual Fourth of July recess.

A trial set to begin today in Oakland County, Michigan, will decide how "The Queen of Soul" Aretha Franklin's estate is to be divided.

The BBC has suspended an unnamed male presenter after allegations were made, including that the presenter paid £35,000 (\$44,800) for sexually explicit photos of a then-teenager.

Slow-moving storms swept through the U.S. Northeast. At least one person was killed during heavy rains that caused flooding across the U.S. Northeast. The storms also prompted rescuers for drivers stranded in vehicles. The Hudson Valley was the most affected. More wet weather is on the way.

President Joe Biden has landed in the U.K. and will meet Prime Minister Rishi Sunak for talks which are expected to cover Washington's decision to send con-



FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-23



Photo from KSFY featuring Charla 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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Steve Dresbach and Bruce Babcock wait for the beginning opening ceremony of Summer Fest.



Photos courtesy Bruce Babcock



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Mayor Scott Hanlon chats with his car show buddies.



Photos courtesy Bruce Babcock



Aaron Grant, former Marine, signs his book to a customer during Summer Fest.

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"Paging Doctor Hollywood"

From Dr. Marcus Welby and Dr. Meredith Grey to "Hawkeye" Pierce and Doogie Howser, MD, there have been a multitude of television doctors. You likely spend more time watching them than you do with your own physician. Television shows the life of a doctor as exciting, dramatic and glamorous; however, real life is often much different.

On television doctors can solve every medical mystery within the span of a single show. Rare diseases or unusual presentations are no match for the intellect or dedication of the Hollywood doctor. Experimental treatments or lifesaving surgeries are all done with minimal interference. Television doctors rarely deal with hospital policies, evidence based medical care standards, or insurance companies. They also seem to have ample extra time between patients.

In the real world, things are not as simple and straightforward as they are on television. Multiple diseases have similar symptoms and specialized lab tests can take days or weeks to get results. Unfortunately insurance companies often dictate what tests can be done, such as a CT or MRI. They may also refuse to cover a hospital stay or a new medication, requiring older or cheaper options first. Doctors are required to spend a significant amount of time charting to justify tests or treatments for insurance companies. Unfortunately these activities do not make "must see TV" and take significantly more time than what is actually spent with patients.

On television, almost everyone gets better. A patient is just a problem that is solved and forgotten by the next episode, likely never seen again. In real life, many people live with chronic conditions that cannot be fixed or resolved. Real patients are not problems to be solved, but important partners with their doctors in order to live a healthier lifestyle. This takes trust; something that is gained slowly over years, and can be broken faster than a commercial break.

While not as dramatic as television's life and death surgeries, routine health care in the clinic is just as important. Television rarely shows a family medicine doctor doing a routine physical or a follow up visit for high blood pressure or diabetes. There is very little drama in adjusting a medication dose in the clinic. However, these visits will keep you from experiencing television worthy complications down the road.

You can look for a doctor as funny as Patch Adams, as smart as House, or as good looking as McDreamy. However, what is important is that you find a doctor that you communicate well with and trust. An annual physical and routine health care may seem boring and unnecessary, but it can help prevent some real life health care problems. Save the drama for your television.

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices as a hospitalist in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, streaming live on Facebook and SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Jill Kruse, DO

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Is virtual tourism better for the planet than actual tourism? – J.M., Albany, NY

If you've ever wanted to visit Yosemite National Park, the Great Barrier Reef or Tanzania's Mt Kilimanjaro but couldn't afford the costs or time away, virtual tourism might be just right for you. This latest trend in travel, which entails exploring destinations via virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, has gained popularity in recent years—especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when most leisure travel shut down completely. As concerns about environmental sustainability grow, there is a debate about whether virtual tourism might be better for the planet than actual tourism.

One of the primary advantages of virtual tourism is its potential to reduce carbon emissions associated with travel. Traditional tourism often involves long-haul flights, road trips and other modes of transportation that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. By enabling people to experience destinations virtually, there is a reduced need for physical travel, resulting in decreased carbon footprints. This aspect of virtual tourism aligns with global efforts to mitigate climate change and preserve natural resources.

Moreover, virtual tourism can help alleviate the strain on fragile ecosystems. Popular tourist destinations often face challenges related to over-tourism, which leads to overcrowding, habitat degradation, pollution and disruption of local communities. By diverting some travel demand to virtual platforms, the pressure on these vulnerable locations can be reduced, allowing them to maintain their ecological balance.

Beyond reducing environmental impact, virtual tourism can also contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage by enabling people to explore sensitive ancient ruins or historically significant sites without the real-world damage caused by thousands of footsteps traversing them. Another benefit is enhanced accessibility and inclusivity. Virtual tourism provides an opportunity for individuals who may not have the means or ability to travel to experience different places, cultures and natural wonders nonetheless.

However, it is crucial to recognize that virtual tourism has its limitations and potential drawbacks. One of the main criticisms is the loss of the sensory and authentic experience that physical travel provides. Virtual reality can mimic visuals and sounds, but it cannot replicate the taste, smell, touch and overall atmosphere of a destination. The emotional and transformative aspects of travel, such as connecting with local communities and immersing oneself in different cultures, may be diminished in a virtual environment. Also, the destinations themselves that normally rely financially on tourism can lose income.

Furthermore, virtual tourism relies heavily on technology, which has its own environmental footprint. The production and disposal of electronic devices, as well as the energy consumption of servers and data centers, contribute to e-waste and energy consumption. Advancements in renewable energy can help mitigate these concerns, but the overall impact of technology should be considered in evaluating the environmental benefits of virtual tourism. Ultimately, a combination of virtual and actual tourism, along with sustainable practices, may offer the most comprehensive approach to reducing the environmental impact of travel while still enjoying the unique benefits of physical exploration.

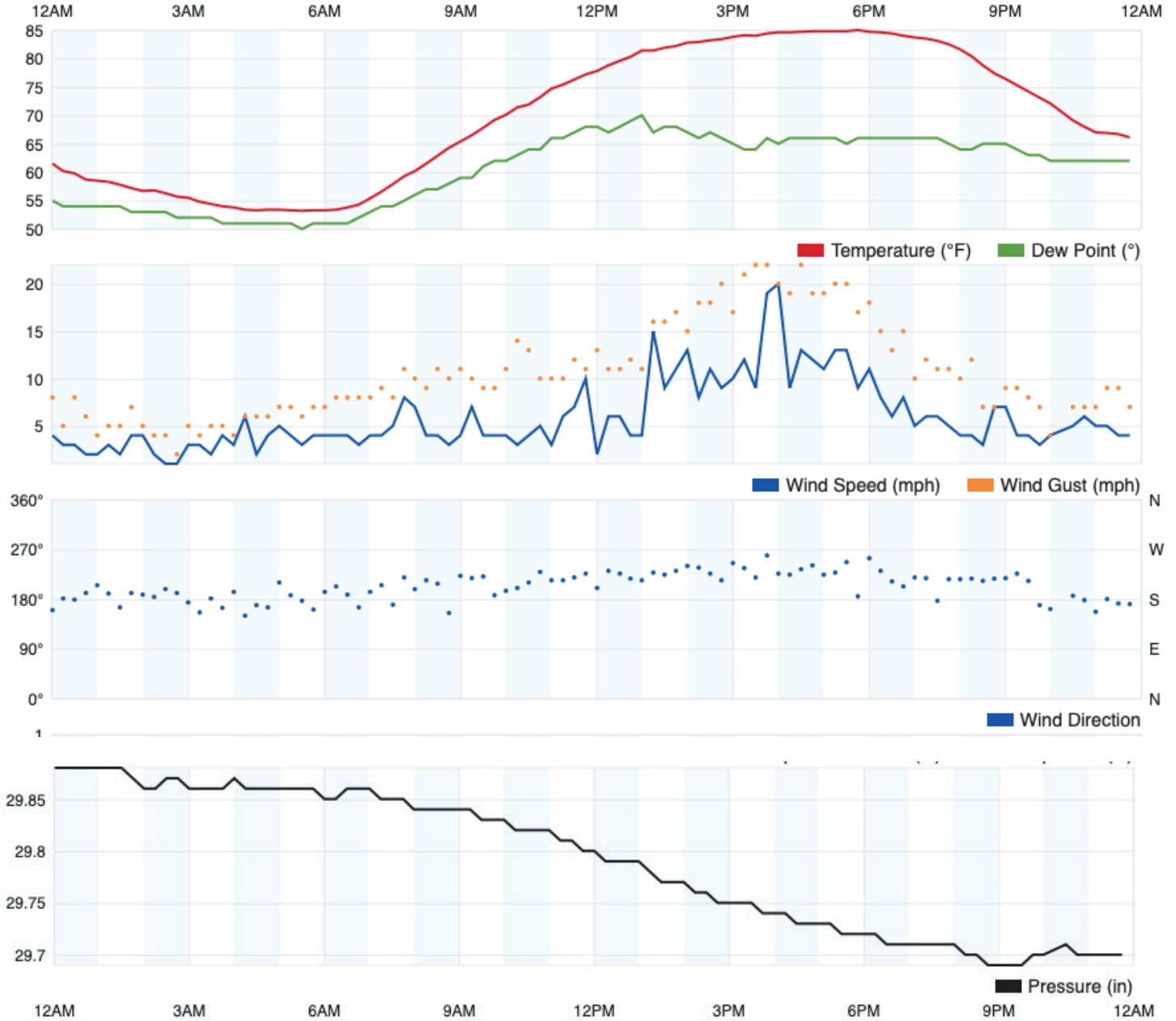


If you've ever wanted to visit the Yosemite but couldn't afford the costs or time away, virtual tourism might be right for you. Credit: Pexels.com.

Groton Daily Independent






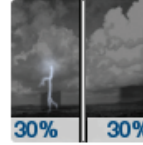

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny	Chance T-storms then Chance Showers	Sunny
High: 85 °F	Low: 52 °F	High: 73 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 84 °F

Some Heat Today, But Short-Lived

Today July 10th

A cold front brings a ~20% chance for isolated strong to severe thunderstorms this afternoon and evening across portions of central and east central SD.

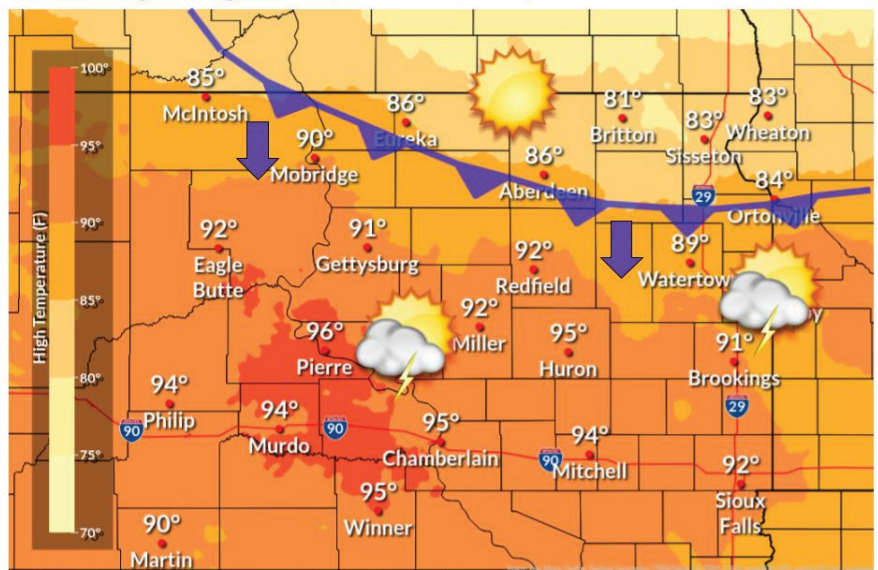
Tuesday July 11th

Cooler with highs in the 70s. 30 to 60% chance for showers and sub-severe storms through the day and night.

Wednesday July 12th

Seasonable temperatures. 20 to 35% chance for afternoon & evening showers and storms. A few of these could become strong to severe.

Today's High Temperatures Map



 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: July 10, 2023

5:29 AM

The passage of a cold front will shift winds to the northeast today, and bring the slight chance for a few storms for some. A better chance for moisture arrives Tuesday, along with some cooler air.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 5:33 PM

Low Temp: 53 °F at 4:29 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 4:32 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 30 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 114 in 1936

Record Low: 42 in 1945

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.15

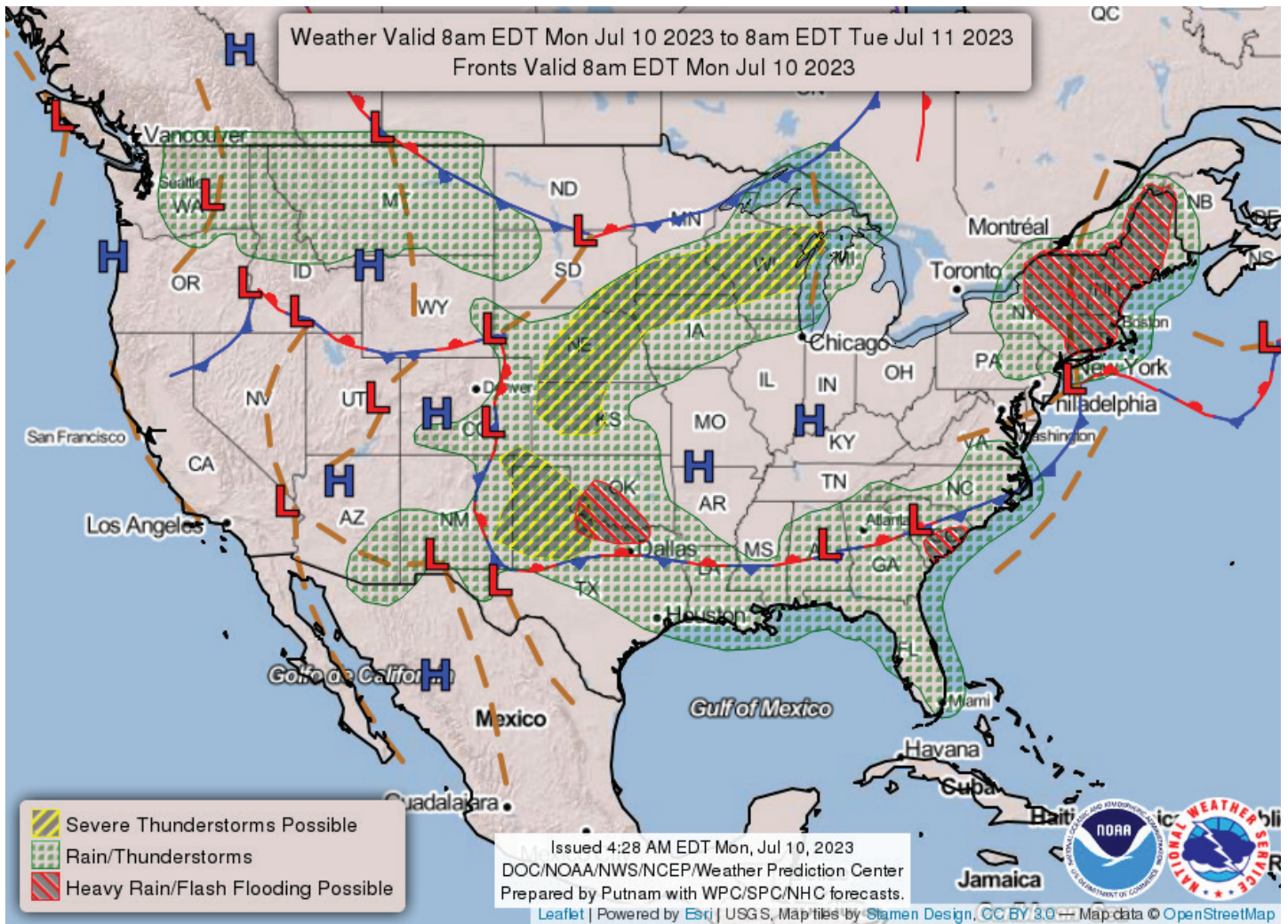
Precip to date in July.: 1.13

Average Precip to date: 12.16

Precip Year to Date: 12.48

Sunset Tonight: 9:23:11 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53:16 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 10, 1998: Flash flooding occurred from Keldron, in Corson County, and areas south, during the late afternoon and evening as a result of up to seven inches of rain that had fallen from slow-moving thunderstorms. Willow Creek and several small tributaries went out of their banks causing the inundation of low areas and county roads. Many county roads were damaged with one farmer losing several pigs and cows as a result of the flooding.

1887: A dam breaks in Zug, Switzerland, killing 70 people in their homes and destroying a large section of the town. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the History Channel.

1911: The mercury hit 105 degrees at North Bridgton, Maine the hottest reading of record for Maine. North Bridgton also reached 105 degrees on the 4th of July in 1911.

1913: The mercury hit 134 degrees at Greenland Ranch in Death Valley, California, the hottest reading of record for the World. Sandstorm conditions accompanied the heat. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the World Meteorological Organization.

1926: At the Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey, lightning struck one of the explosives storage structures during a thunderstorm and started a fire. As a result, several million pounds of explosives detonated over a period of 2–3 days. This explosion not only structural devastation, 187 of 200 buildings destroyed but military and civilian casualties as well. Close to one hundred are injured as explosion spreads havoc within a radius of 15 miles in New Jersey. Otto Dowling was in charge at the time and received a Distinguished Service Cross for his handling of the situation.

1936 - Afternoon highs of 112 degrees at Martinsburg, WV, 109 degrees at Cumberland, MD, and Frederick, MD, 110 degrees at Runyon, NJ, and 111 degrees at Phoenixville, PA, established all-time record highs for those four states. It was the hottest day of record for the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. (The Weather Channel)

1979 - The temperature at El Paso, TX, hit 112 degrees, an all-time record for that location. The next day was 110 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature in downtown Kansas City, MO, hit 109 degrees, following a sultry overnight low of 89 degrees. The daily low of 89 degrees was the warmest of record for Kansas City, and overall it was the hottest July day of record. It was the seventh of a record seventeen consecutive days of 100 degree heat, and the mean temperature for the month of 90.2 degrees was also an all-time record for Kansas City.

1987 - An early morning thunderstorm in Minnesota produced wind gusts to 91 mph at Waseca. Later that day, thunderstorms in South Dakota produced wind gusts to 81 mph at Ipswitch, and baseball size hail near Hayes and Capa. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms brought welcome rains to parts of the central U.S., but produced severe weather along the New England coast, in the Great Lakes Region, in North Carolina, and in the Southern Plateau Region. Strong thunderstorm winds gusting to 80 mph at Bullfrog, UT, sank three boats on Lake Powell. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Severe thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes in the northeastern U.S. A powerful (F-4) tornado struck Hamden CT and New Haven, CT, causing 100 million dollars damage at Hamden, and another 20 million dollars damage around New Haven. Forty persons were injured in the tornado. Seventy persons were injured in a tornado which traveled from Watertown, CT, to Waterbury, CT, and another powerful (F-4) tornado touched down near Ames NY injuring twenty persons along its 43.5 mile track. It was the strongest tornado of record for eastern New York State. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - Hurricane Dennis landed near Pensacola, Florida as a category 3 storm. Maximum sustained winds at the time of landfall were near 120 mph. There were nine hurricane-related fatalities in the U.S. and preliminary estimates of insured losses ranged from \$1 to \$1.5 billion.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE WONDER OF WORK

Years ago, a "hobo" came to the back porch as my mother sat there "shelling peas."

"Pardon me, Ma'am, but could you spare a meal to a starving traveler?"

Graciously, but firmly, my mother responded and said she would be happy to provide a meal, but he would have to do some yard work first. Politely, he declined. He was "too weak" to work before he had something to eat. He then walked away quietly and went next door.

God intended for man to work. As soon as He created man, He planted a garden in Eden and gave him a job to do: he was told to cultivate the garden. The Psalmist reminded us of the importance of work when he wrote, "Man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening."

Perhaps it is good to remember that in the days of His flesh, our Lord Jesus worked. He must have gone to His daily tasks with enthusiasm - not because it was easy or financially rewarding. He was using the skills His Father gave Him to do His will and honor Him through the work of His hands. On one occasion, early in His life, He said, "I always do the things that please Him." He did what was necessary yet never sinned.

How comforting it is to know that the Carpenter of Nazareth faced every situation that we face today or will face tomorrow. This fact assures us that He understands us completely. He faced the same trials and temptations that we face. However, He never gave in to any temptation or committed any sin so He could one day become our Savior.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for living a life that sets the example of how we should live. Please help us live a life where others can see You in us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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- Colored \$42.60/6 months
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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.07.23

8 10 17 55 66 3

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$480,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 53
DRAW: Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.23

29 33 38 43 49 8

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$5,450,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 8 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.09.23

6 8 18 19 48 11

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 23 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.23

6 14 26 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$144,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 23
DRAW: Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.23

12 23 30 42 62 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 52 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.08.23

7 23 24 32 43 18

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$650,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 52 Mins 59
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

After meeting Sunak, Biden heads for Windsor Castle to discuss clean energy with King Charles III

By SEUNG MIN KIM, JILL LAWLESS and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — President Joe Biden's itinerary this week in Europe is dominated by the ongoing war in Ukraine and his continued efforts to rally an international coalition against Russia's invasion of its neighbor.

But first, some tea.

The U.S. president's initial stop on his three-nation trip is Britain, where he'll meet with King Charles III for the first time since the latter was crowned in May. Biden did not attend Charles's coronation, sending first lady Jill Biden instead, and Monday's visit will be marked by a bit of royal pomp — including a royal salute, a viewing of U.S.-related artifacts at Windsor Castle and teatime for the two men.

Biden and Charles will also use their visit to bring attention to climate issues, hosting a forum focused on how to encourage private companies to engage in more clean energy efforts, specifically in developing economies.

The royal visit is paired with Biden's sixth meeting with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak since Sunak for talks on a range of global issues, including the war in Ukraine. The two nations are among the most stalwart defenders of Kyiv, and the United Kingdom has pushed the White House to take more aggressive steps in providing military aid to Ukraine.

The leader talks are meant to highlight the so-called enduring "special relationship" between the U.S. and the U.K. When Biden declined to attend Charles's coronation, he promised the king in a phone call that he would visit soon.

Biden last had formal talks with Charles, then prince, at the COP26 U.N. climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, in November 2021. The U.S. president also attended the state funeral of Charles's mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in September as well as a reception for heads of state at Buckingham Palace the night before the service.

The climate portion of Biden's visit with the king also underscores the high priority that the environment has been for the 74-year-old Charles, who has long fought to protect wildlife and battle climate change. Formally called the Climate Finance Mobilisation Forum, Biden and Charles will be briefed by officials from the financial and philanthropic sectors on their discussions about expanding clean energy initiatives in developing nations.

Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said the president has "huge respect" for the king's commitment on the climate issue in particular. He said Charles has been a "clarion voice" on climate and "someone who's mobilized action and effort."

"So the president comes at this with enormous goodwill," Sullivan told reporters Sunday as Biden flew to London.

Before making his way to Windsor Castle, Biden sat down with Sunak at the prime minister's official residence at 10 Downing St. in London to discuss Ukraine and other matters, possibly including the U.S. president's decision this week to provide Ukraine with cluster munitions, a weapon that more than two-thirds of the members of the NATO military alliance have barred for their potential threat to civilian life.

Biden has acknowledged that providing the bombs — which open mid-air and release smaller "bomblets" across a broad swath of land — was a "difficult decision" but he noted that the Ukrainians are running out of ammunition and that the weapons were necessary for them to continue to fight Russian forces.

"It took me a while to be convinced to do it," Biden said in a CNN interview broadcast as Biden flew to London. "But the main thing is, they either have the weapons to stop the Russians ... from stopping the Ukrainian offensive through these areas, or they don't. And I think they needed them."

Sunak, for his part, has distanced himself from the U.S. decision.

"The U.K. is signatory to a convention which prohibits the production or use of cluster munitions and

discourages their use," he told broadcasters on Saturday. The U.S. is not a party to that agreement.

"We will continue to do our part to support Ukraine against Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion, but we've done that by providing heavy battle tanks and most recently long-range weapons, and hopefully all countries can continue to support Ukraine," Sunak added.

Sullivan downplayed the disagreement over cluster munitions, saying, "I think you will find Prime Minister Sunak and President Biden on the same page strategically on Ukraine, in lockstep on the bigger picture of what we're trying to accomplish and as united as ever — both in this conflict and writ large."

And as the leaders met over tea in the 10 Downing St. garden on Monday, they continued to project that face of unity.

"We've only been meeting once a month," Biden joked as he declared the relationship between the U.S. and U.K. was "rock solid." Sunak added that their countries are "two of the firmest allies in that alliance."

The prime minister's office said the meeting "will be an opportunity to monitor progress on measures and initiatives under the Atlantic Declaration," which the two leaders signed when Sunak visited the White House last month.

"This includes negotiations which have now begun on a U.K.-U.S. Critical Minerals Agreement, which will support the UK and US' shared leadership in green technology," the statement said.

Kremlin says Putin met with Russian mercenary leader days after abortive mutiny

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin days after a short-lived rebellion by the mercenary chief and his private army, the Kremlin's spokesman said Monday.

The three-hour meeting took place at the Kremlin on June 29 and also involved commanders from the military company Prigozhin founded, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Wagner mercenaries have fought alongside Russian troops in Ukraine. Prigozhin has a long-simmering feud with Russia's top military brass which on June 24 culminated in an armed mutiny in which he led his fighters into Russia.

Prigozhin ended the mutiny after a deal was brokered for him to be exiled to Belarus.

The confirmation of a face-to-face meeting with Putin, who has branded Prigozhin as a backstabbing traitor, adds a new twist to the uncertainty surrounding the mercenary chief. His fate and whereabouts have been unknown since the abortive mutiny, which severely weakened Putin's authority.

Peskov said that during the June 29 meeting, Putin offered an "assessment" of Wagner's actions on the battlefield in Ukraine and "of the events of June 24." The president also "listened to the explanations of the commanders and offered them options for further employment and further use in combat," the Kremlin spokesman said.

"The commanders themselves presented their version of what happened. They underscored that they are staunch supporters and soldiers of the head of state and the commander-in-chief, and also said that they are ready to continue to fight for their homeland," Peskov said.

A total of 35 people took part in the meeting, including Wagner commanders and the leadership of the company, namely Prigozhin himself, Peskov said.

Also Monday, Russia's Defense Ministry published a video featuring the country's military chief — the first time Gen. Valery Gerasimov was shown since the rebelling aimed to oust him.

During last month's revolt, Prigozhin repeatedly denounced Gerasimov, who serves as chief of the general staff of the Russian armed forces, and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu for failing to provide his fighters in Ukraine with ammunition.

Monday's updates appeared to be an attempt by Moscow to take control of the narrative after a turbulent period.

Meanwhile, a Russian airstrike on a school in southern Ukraine killed four adults as people gathered to receive humanitarian aid, the governor of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region said Monday, branding the incident

"a war crime."

Three women and a man, all in their 40s, died in Sunday's attack in the town of Orikhiv, Gov. Yuriy Malashko said.

A guided aerial bomb caused an explosion at the school, Malashko said, without providing evidence. Eleven other people were wounded in the attack, he said.

Overall, Russia fired on 10 settlements in the province over the course of a day, he said.

Moscow denies it targets civilian locations. Russia has been accused numerous times of doing so and committing other war crimes since its full-scale invasion of neighboring Ukraine in February 2022.

In March, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine.

Broad investigations are also underway in Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The International Center for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, located in The Hague, is helping with those investigations.

Zaporizhzhia province is home to Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which Russian forces seized early in the war, and is one of four regions of Ukraine that Putin illegally annexed last year. Retaking the province is one of the targets of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Russian aerial assaults continued across Ukraine between Sunday and Monday, according to a summary from the Ukrainian presidential office.

In the Donetsk region, the Russians used aircraft, missile systems and heavy artillery to shell residential areas of 6 cities and villages, injuring one person, the office reported.

The Russian army attacked residential areas of Kherson, the regional capital of a province of the same name. A 66-year-old woman was injured, the presidential office said.

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

Extreme flooding overwhelms New York roadways and kills 1 person

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Heavy rain spawned extreme flooding in New York's Hudson Valley that killed at least one person, swamped roadways and forced road closures on Sunday night, as much of the rest of the Northeast U.S. braced for potentially punishing rains.

As the storm moved east, the National Weather Service extended flash flood warnings into Connecticut, including the cities of Stamford and Greenwich, before creeping into Massachusetts. Forecasters said some areas could get as much as 5 inches (12 centimeters) of rain.

In New York's Hudson Valley, rescue teams were attempting to retrieve the body of a woman in her 30s who drowned after being swept away while trying to evacuate her home. Two other people escaped.

The force of the flash flooding dislodged boulders, which rammed the woman's house and damaged part of its wall, Orange County Executive Steven Neuhaus told The Associated Press.

"Her house was completely surrounded by water," he said.

"She was trying to get through (the flooding) with her dog," he added, "and she was overwhelmed by tidal-wave type waves."

The extent of the destruction from the slow moving storm, which pounded the area with up to 8 inches (20 centimeters) of rain, won't be known until after sunrise, when residents and officials can begin surveying the damage. But officials said the storm had already wrought tens of millions of dollars in damage.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul confirmed to WCBS radio that several people were missing and one home was washed away.

The rains have hit some parts of New York harder than others, but officials said communities to the east of the state should brace for torrential rains and possible flash flooding.

Officials urged residents in the line of the storm to stay off the roads.

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"The amount of water is extraordinary and it's still a very dangerous situation," Hochul said.

"We'll get through this," she said, but added "it's going to be a rough night."

The governor declared a state of emergency Sunday for Orange County, about 60 miles (96 kilometers) north of New York City. She later extended the state of emergency to Ontario County in western New York, southeast of Rochester.

"We are in close communication with local officials and state agencies are participating in search and rescue efforts," she said.

The state deployed five swift-water rescue teams and a high-axle vehicle to help with rescues in flooded areas.

Some video posted on social media showed the extent of flooding, with streams of brown-colored torrents rushing right next to homes, and roadways washed away by fast-moving cascading flows.

West Point, home to the U.S. Military Academy, was severely flooded. Officials worry some historic buildings might have water damage.

The National Weather Service issued flash flood warnings across parts of southeastern New York, describing it as "life threatening," as well as warnings in northeastern New Jersey.

By Monday, "a considerable flood threat with a high risk of excessive rainfall is expected across much of New England," NWS said in a tweet. Intense rain may be especially strong in Vermont, where Gov. Phil Scott declared a state of emergency Sunday, and northeastern New York.

Showers and thunderstorms in New York City could lead to flash flooding, the National Weather Service New York tweeted.

The city's emergency notification system tweeted that the heavy rain could cause "life-threatening flooding to basements" and instructed residents Sunday to "prepare now to move to higher ground if needed."

State Route 9W was flooded, and the Palisades Interstate Parkway became so drenched that parts of it were closed, the New York State Police said in a statement. The police asked the public to avoid the parkway.

Golden reported from Seattle.

Erdogan says Turkey could approve Sweden's NATO membership if Europeans 'open way' to Turkey EU bid

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says his country could approve Sweden's membership in NATO if European nations "open the way" to Turkey's bid to join the European Union.

Erdogan, whose country has been holding off its final approval to Sweden's NATO membership, made the comments in Ankara on Monday before departing to the alliance's summit meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania.

"Turkey has been waiting at the door of the European Union for over 50 years now, and almost all of the NATO member countries are now members of the European Union. I am making this call to these countries that have kept Turkey waiting at the gates of the European Union for more than 50 years," Erdogan said.

"Come and open the way for Turkey's membership in the European Union. When you pave the way for Turkey, we'll pave the way for Sweden as we did for Finland," he added.

Turkey is a candidate to join the EU, but its membership bid has been stalled due to Ankara's democratic backsliding and disputes with EU-member Cyprus.

Earlier Monday, Sweden's foreign minister had expressed optimism that Turkey would drop its objections to Swedish NATO membership, saying the Nordic's country's accession is a question of when, not if.

Erdogan and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson were expected to meet later Monday in Vilnius ahead of the two-day NATO summit.

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström told public broadcaster SVT that he expects Turkey will eventually signal that it will let Sweden join the alliance, though he couldn't say whether that would happen at the annual summit.

"What we are counting on, of course, is to reach a point where we get a message back from President

Erdogan that there will be what you might call a green light ... a message that the ratification process in the Turkish Parliament can start," Billström said.

Turkey has stalled Sweden's NATO accession, saying it needs to do more to crack down on Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers as threats to its national security. Anti-Turkey and anti-Islam protests in Stockholm raised doubts that an agreement could be reached before the alliance's summit.

Billström said Sweden has fulfilled its part of a tripartite deal that Sweden, Finland and Turkey signed at last year's NATO summit in Madrid.

"We should consider it as a settled question in the sense that it is not a question of if. In connection with the NATO summit in Madrid last year, Turkey already gave Sweden status as an invitee to NATO. It is therefore a question of when," he said.

Billström said he expects Hungary, which also hasn't ratified Sweden's accession, to do so before Turkey.

In a statement, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said that "Finnish — and soon Swedish — membership of the alliance is a historic milestone for NATO, the Nordic region and Denmark's security. And there is no doubt that they will strengthen the security of all allies."

Previously non-aligned Sweden and Finland applied for NATO membership last year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Finland joined in April this year.

Families with transgender kids are increasingly forced to travel out of state for the care they need

By ARLEIGH RODGERS and MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

CHICAGO (AP) — On an early morning in June, Flower Nichols and her mother set off on an expedition to Chicago from their home in Indianapolis.

The family was determined to make it feel like an adventure in the city, though that wasn't the primary purpose of the trip.

The following afternoon, Flower and Jennilyn Nichols would see a doctor at the University of Chicago to learn whether they could keep Flower, 11, on puberty blockers. They began to search for medical providers outside of Indiana after April 5, when Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb signed a law banning transgender minors from accessing puberty blockers and other hormone therapies, even after the approval of parents and the advice of doctors.

At least 20 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for trans minors, though several are embroiled in legal challenges. For more than a decade prior, such treatments were available to children and teens across the U.S. and have been endorsed by major medical associations.

Opponents of gender-affirming care say there's no solid proof of purported benefits, cite widely discredited research and say children shouldn't make life-altering decisions they might regret. Advocates and families impacted by the recent laws say such care is vital for trans kids.

On June 16, a federal judge blocked parts of Indiana's law from going into effect on July 1. But many patients still scrambled to continue receiving treatment.

Jennilyn Nichols wanted their trip to Chicago to be defined by happy memories rather than a response to a law she called intrusive. They would explore the Museum of Science and Industry and, on the way home, stop at a beloved candy store.

Preserving a sense of normalcy and acceptance, she decided — well, that's just what families do.

Families in Indiana, Mississippi and other states are navigating new laws that imply or sometimes directly accuse them of child abuse for supporting their kids in getting health care. Some trans children and teens say the recent bans on gender-affirming care in Republican-led states send the message that they are unwelcome and cannot be themselves in their home states.

For parents, guiding their children through the usual difficulties of growing up can be challenging enough. But now they are dealing with the added pressure of finding out-of-state medical care they say allows

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their children to thrive.

In the Nichols family alone, support took many forms as they traveled to Chicago: a grandmother who pitched in to babysit Flower's 7-year-old brother, Parker, while their father Kris worked; a community of other parents of trans kids who donated money to make the trip more comfortable.

"What transgender expansive young people need is what all young people need: They need love and support, and they need unconditional respect," said Robert Marx, an assistant professor of child and adolescent development at San José State University. Marx studies support systems for LGBTQ+ and trans people aged 13 to 25. "They need to feel included and part of a family."

In Indiana, rancorous legislative debates, agitated family relationships and exhaustive efforts to find care have drawn families to the support group GEKCO, founded by Krisztina Inskeep, whose adult son is transgender. Attendance at monthly meetings spiked after the state legislature advanced bills targeting trans youth, she said.

"I think most parents want to do best by their kids," Inskeep said. "It's rather new to people, this idea that gender is not just a binary and that your kid is not just who they thought at birth."

The perceptions of most parents, Marx said, don't align neatly with the extremes of full support or rejection of their kids' identities.

"Most parents exist in a kind of gray area," Marx said. "Most parents are going through some kind of developmental process themselves as they come to understand their child's gender."

On June 13, Flower and Jennilyn set off on their trip, unsteady but hopeful. They brought a care plan from Indiana University's Riley Children's Hospital, the Hoosier State's only gender clinic.

At the time, the pair worried whether Chicago providers could meet their request for full-time support or as a backup if Indiana's ban went on hold. They considered whether they could make the drive every three months, the necessary interval between Flower's puberty blockers.

The decision for Flower to start puberty blockers two years ago wasn't one the family took lightly.

Jennilyn recalled asking early on whether her daughter's gender expression was permanent. She wondered if she had failed as a mom, especially while pregnant — was it an incorrect food? A missed vitamin?

Ultimately she and Kris dismissed those theories, ungrounded in science, and listened to their daughter, who recalled the euphoria of wearing princess dresses at an early age. Flower cherished a Little Red Riding Hood cape and felt certain of her identity from the start.

"I remember that I really disliked my name," Flower said of her birth name. "This is just like who I am. It's all that I have a memory of."

Conversations between Flower and her mother are often marked by uncommon candor, as when discussing early memories together at an Indianapolis park.

"Before I knew you and before I walked this journey with you," Jennilyn told her, "I would not have thought that a kid would know they were trans or that a kid would just come out wired that way. I always thought that that was something adults figured out, and so there were times that it was really scary because I didn't know how the world would accept you. I didn't know how to keep you safe."

Now, Jennilyn said, her worries have shifted to Flower's spelling skills and how she'll navigate crushes.

Flower, for her part, appreciates being heard. She said she and her parents make medical decisions together because, "of course, they can't decide on a medicine for me to take."

"At the same time, you can't pick a medicine that we can't afford to pay for or that, you know, might harm you," Jennilyn responded.

"That's what I really like about her," Flower said, of her mother. "She leaves a lot of my life up to me."

— In Mississippi, a ban on gender-affirming care became law in the state on Feb. 28 — prompting a father and his trans son to leave the state at the end of July for Virginia. There, he can keep his health care and continue to see doctors.

"We are essentially escaping up north," said Ray Walker, 17.

Walker lives with his mother, Katie Rives, in a suburb of Jackson, the state capital. His parents are di-

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forced, but his father also lived in the area. Halfway through high school, Walker is an honors student with an interest in theater and cooking. He has a supportive group of friends.

When Mississippi Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed the bill banning hormone therapy for anyone younger than 18, he accused "radical activists" of pushing a "sick and twisted ideology that seeks to convince our kids they're in the wrong body."

The state's largest hospital halted hormone treatments for trans minors months before Reeves signed the ban. That hospital later closed its LGBTQ+ clinic.

After that clinic stopped offering its services, Walker and other teenagers received treatment at a smaller facility in another city, but those services ended once the ban took effect.

As access to gender-affirming dwindled and was later outlawed, Walker's father, who declined to be interviewed, accepted a job in Virginia, where his son could keep his health care. Walker plans to move in with his father this month. Rives, however, is staying in Mississippi with her two younger children.

Walker's memories of the anguished period when he started puberty at 12 still haunt him. "My body couldn't handle what was happening to it," he said.

After a yearslong process of evaluations, then puberty blockers and hormone injections, Walker said his self-image improved.

Then the broad effort in conservative states to restrict gender-affirming care set its sights on Mississippi. The path toward stability that Walker and his family forged had narrowed. It soon became impassable.

"I was born this way. It's who I am. I can't not exist this way," Walker said. "We were under the impression that I still had two years left to live here. The law just ripped all of that up. They're ripping our lives apart."

The family sees no alternative.

"Mississippi is my home, but there are a lot of conflicting feelings when your home is actively telling you that it doesn't want you in it," Walker said.

As Walker's moving date approaches, Rives savors the moments the family shares together. She braces for the physical distance that will soon be between them. Her two younger sons will lose Ray's brotherly presence in their daily lives.

She still feels lucky.

"We know that's an incredibly privileged position to be in," Rives said of her son moving to Virginia. "Most people in Mississippi cannot afford to just move to another state or even go to another state for care."

Flower, initially dispirited by the debates at the Indiana Statehouse, brightened after her parents took her to her first Pride march on June 10 in Indianapolis.

She tied a transgender pride flag around her shoulders and covered her pink shirt in every rainbow heart-shaped sticker she could find. She gripped a sign that read: "She belongs."

Her favorite activities are often less inflected with politics than her status as a soon-to-be teenager. She's a Girl Scout who enjoys catching Pokemon with her brother. Before the trip, she zipped around an Indianapolis park on a pink scooter, her hair tangled by the wind.

Prior to entering Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, Flower used a women's bathroom. At a diner in the city, she ordered a mint chocolate chip milkshake and a vegan grilled cheese. Jennilyn created an itinerary to make their experience as joyful and uncomplicated as possible.

"First of all, we're going to be able to chill at the hotel in the morning," Flower said. "Second of all, there's a park nearby that we can have a lot of fun in. Third of all, we might have a backup plan, which is really exciting. And fourth of all: Candy store!"

The doctor's appointment the following day, initially intimidating, soon gave them another reason to celebrate: If care was not available in Indiana, they could get it in Chicago.

"Indiana could do whatever the hell they're going to do," Jennilyn said, "and we can just come here."

Arleigh Rodgers reported from Chicago and Indianapolis. Michael Goldberg reported from Jackson. Rodgers and Goldberg are a corps members 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.

Morocco's historic Women's World Cup debut inspires girls even if some in the Arab world ignore it

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

RABAT, Morocco (AP) — The game was sparsely attended; it was midweek and the outcome wasn't much in doubt: the Association Sportive des Forces Armees Royales, a powerhouse in women's soccer here, ended up crushing its Moroccan women's national professional league opponent 7-0.

Regardless, one young fan in the stands was excited from the get-go.

Wearing her hair in half-up pigtails and dressed in a jersey reading "Morocco" in Arabic, 5-year-old Aliae Benazzouza descended to the pitch to meet the players. A favorite of hers, Fatima Tagnaout, who plays for Morocco's national women's team and for the armed forces team known as ASFAR, embraced Aliae and held her hand as they posed for photos. Aliae waved at another player, calling her name. During the game, she would make her way to the front of the stands, pressing against a rail, for a better view.

"I was very happy," Aliae said. Her mom, Souad El Khorchef, a teacher, said her daughter peppered her with kisses afterward in thanks for taking her to the game and asked to practice soccer. El Khorchef told her that is possible when she's older.

After years largely in the margins, Moroccan women's soccer is gaining new ground at home and beyond, capturing the imagination of some girls like Aliae, winning the hearts and minds of more parents, and chipping away at a traditional view of soccer as a men's game. Morocco's national team, the Atlas Lionesses, will make its debut this month at the FIFA Women's World Cup, the first to qualify from the Arab world, where many are wild for the men's game.

"I teach (my daughters) confidence, not fear," said Idriss Benazzouza, Aliae's father. "I plant in them the spirit of soccer, the spirit of sports. Sports don't differentiate between genders."

He said the Lionesses' achievement "shows how women's soccer has progressed" in the North African country, filling him with joy. He added, though, that not everyone he knows shares his enthusiasm due to conservative views or to religious beliefs against women wearing shorts.

The national team's upcoming Women's World Cup appearance follows their male counterpart's history making feat as the first African or Arab team to reach the World Cup semifinals. Last year's run galvanized support from other Arab countries.

Morocco's 2022 hosting of the Women's Africa Cup of Nations drew large numbers of spectators and catapulted the country to the upcoming global tournament in Australia and New Zealand. It marked a watershed moment, soccer officials and players say.

"The qualification of the women's team for the finals at the Africa Cup of Nations, the media momentum and the wide audience that followed ... breathed new life into women's soccer in Morocco," Khadija Illa, president of the national women's soccer league, told The Associated Press. "We now see families bring their children, ... their daughters, to play soccer."

The on-the-pitch victories, she said, were the culmination of efforts by the Royal Moroccan Football Federation to develop soccer, including for women. Female players and teams traditionally suffered from neglect here and in the Arab world.

It wasn't an easy path, Illa said.

"Everything related to women requires struggling for," she said. "We're not 100% where we want to be, but we have put sound structures in place."

Those include hiring Atlas Lionesses' coach Reynald Pedros and moves in recent years by the Moroccan federation to support women's clubs with such things as salaries and buses. Financial assistance was part of an agreement announced in 2020 for the growth and professionalization of female soccer; goals included establishing a national under-17 championship and increasing the number of female players.

"There's no success without financial support," Illa said. "Everyone played before but they played without

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enthusiasm. ... When they realized that soccer can also become a career, the appetite has increased." Still, she said, large salary gaps exist between male and female players at Moroccan clubs, adding, "We're still at the beginning of the road."

She cited a sports-study program that searches for youthful talent, houses girls who qualify and provides them with schooling and soccer practice. It's funded by the Royal Moroccan Football Federation and has produced such players as Tagnaout, Illa said.

Bahya El Yahmidi, who oversees women's soccer at ASFAR, said with more victories, attitudes have been evolving.

"In the beginning, there was such talk as 'You belong in the home or in the kitchen' ... or girls would wait for their fathers or brothers to leave before they could sneak out to play," she said. "But later, a brother would come with his sister, a father with his daughter."

In developing women's soccer at ASFAR, the club provided players with "financial and moral stability," which has encouraged more to join, she said.

Atlas Lionesses' and ASFAR player Ghizlane Chebbak, named player of the tournament in the 2022 Women's Africa Cup of Nations, is increasingly seeing the star power she and some of her peers are enjoying in the eyes of young fans.

She recalled a girl sobbing uncontrollably, emotional that she encountered Chebbak and other players. That girl, she said, ended up joining ASFAR.

"It made us feel that we have actually made it to the hearts of young children," Chebbak told the AP.

When she was young, Chebbak would hear neighbors telling her mother not to let her play with the boys. She felt lucky that her family, including her late father who was a soccer player himself, backed her.

"Our efforts and perseverance in the field of soccer haven't gone in vain; people have understood that we have the right to play this sport," the 32-year-old said.

She hopes the national team can make Moroccan women's soccer proud at the World Cup. "We're highly focused," she said.

Nouhaila Benzina, who also plays for the national team and ASFAR, said her soccer career has opened up new worlds, helping her meet people from different countries and religions. The 25-year-old never saw her passion for soccer at odds with her modest attire and the Islamic headscarf that she wears on and off the pitch.

Many, she said, depict her as a role model.

"This fills me up with joy and makes me want to work harder to show girls they can achieve great things."

The Lionesses' ascent fuels the resolve of players like Hiba Karami, who plays for another local team, Fath Union Sport.

"This has made me work harder, aspire for more, dream," said the 18-year-old, who hopes one day to play with the senior national team.

The advancement in women's soccer has made a dream a reality for Karami; last year, she was one of the players representing Morocco in the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in India.

Karami loved soccer from a young age because her older sister played; they practiced together at home and on the beach.

"At the time, not much attention was paid to women's soccer," she said. Her parents supported her, and Karami paid little heed to naysayers.

"Some kids or men would say women belonged in the kitchen and weren't made for soccer," she said. "I knew that I loved the game and that I will play."

Her sister encouraged her. So did her extended family, though an aunt cautioned her not to dress like men now that she was playing soccer. Boys in the neighborhood accepted her "because I played better than they did," she said.

In recent years, women's soccer has received more attention, Karami said. She was overjoyed to see many people supporting the national team during last year's Women's Africa Cup of Nations, where it lost 2-1 to South Africa in the final.

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She only wishes that success happened sooner. For her, it's personal; her sister died.

"I wish she were here to witness my achievements," Karami said, breaking into tears.

Coach Pedros recently told reporters of the Moroccan team's Women's World Cup ambitions.

"We're going there to try and cause an upset, to get into the second round," he said. "We know we're the underdog in this group (with Germany, Colombia and South Korea), but that doesn't stop us making things difficult for the other teams."

He said having a Moroccan professional championship for women was a promising start "but we need to work in the clubs and in the national team to help Moroccan women's soccer progress."

In parts of the Middle East and North Africa, women's soccer can be shackled by lack of financing or conservative attitudes in some areas, while making new pushes in others when there are official efforts to develop the game.

Arijana Demirovic, head of Women's Football Development at FIFA, said that in the last three years, the international federation worked extensively with member associations in the MENA region to strengthen overall development of women's soccer.

FIFA, she said, supported Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in determining long-term strategies for women's soccer while also working on league development and capacity-building programs in Jordan, Iraq, Oman and Tunisia.

"Despite cultural challenges, member associations have been very committed in creating and maintaining access and opportunities for the girls to join the game in the right environment and conditions," she said. She expects these regional efforts to be bolstered by Morocco's participation in the World Cup.

Illa shares that optimism.

"Nothing is impossible," she said. "If they work and plan, other teams can make it too. Why not have four or five Arab teams competing in the World Cup?"

In Arab cities, where months ago many took pride in the Moroccan men's team World Cup performance, attitudes vary.

In Gaza, ruled by the militant Hamas group, shopkeeper Ahmed Qoffa said he rooted for Morocco's men's team but takes issue with female players wearing shorts.

"Culture and religion do not prohibit sports," he said. "If it is within the legal, cultural and societal limits, then there is no problem."

Elsewhere in the region, many, including some serious soccer fans, were unaware of the Atlas Lionesses' breakthrough.

"They always give attention to men's sports more than women's, especially in our countries," said Hadeel Sleiman. She is a fan from Lebanon.

In Egypt, 61-year-old Hassan Yousef argued that soccer "is a rough game that is not at all fit for women," adding he wouldn't enjoy watching women play.

Dr. Husam Mokhtar, a Libyan in Egypt, said he doubts women's soccer can become as popular as men's. "We support any Arab country making it to the World Cup," he said, but added that "soccer is a men's game."

His 13-year-old daughter, Miral, disagreed. "Everyone should do what they want to do," she said. "Every sport should be played by everyone."

Back in Morocco, Fath Union Sport players practiced vigorously on a recent day.

Among them was 11-year-old Inass Belattar, who once thought only boys could play soccer because she had never seen girls playing on the street. That changed as she watched a women's team compete at a stadium. She was hooked.

She dreams of a career as a soccer player, or a coach, but also an engineer.

"Girls can do anything," she said. "I want to play abroad and be famous around the world."

Associated Press journalists Wafaa Shurafa in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, Graham Dunbar in Geneva, Kareem Chehayeb in Beirut and Jerome Pugmire in Paris contributed.

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How many Russians have died in Ukraine? Data shows what Moscow hides

By ERIKA KINETZ Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Nearly 50,000 Russian men have died in the war in Ukraine, according to the first independent statistical analysis of Russia's war dead.

Two independent Russian media outlets, Mediazona and Meduza, working with a data scientist from Germany's Tübingen University, used Russian government data to shed light on one of Moscow's closest-held secrets — the true human cost of its invasion of Ukraine.

To do so, they relied on a statistical concept popularized during the COVID-19 pandemic called excess mortality. Drawing on inheritance records and official mortality data, they estimated how many more men under age 50 died between February 2022 and May 2023 than normal.

Neither Moscow nor Kyiv gives timely data on military losses, and each is at pains to amplify the other side's casualties. Russia has publicly acknowledged the deaths of just over 6,000 soldiers. Reports about military losses have been repressed in Russian media, activists and independent journalists say. Documenting the dead has become an act of defiance, and those who do so face harassment and potential criminal charges.

Despite such challenges, Mediazona and the BBC's Russian Service, working with a network of volunteers, have used social media postings and photographs of cemeteries across Russia to build a database of confirmed war deaths. As of July 7, they had identified 27,423 dead Russian soldiers.

"These are only soldiers who we know by name, and their deaths in each case are verified by multiple sources," said Dmitry Treshchanin, an editor at Mediazona who helped oversee the investigation. "The estimate we did with Meduza allows us to see the 'hidden' deaths, deaths the Russian government is so obsessively and unsuccessfully trying to hide."

To come up with a more comprehensive tally, journalists from Mediazona and Meduza obtained records of inheritance cases filed with the Russian authorities. Their data from the National Probate Registry contained information about more than 11 million people who died between 2014 and May 2023.

According to their analysis, 25,000 more inheritance cases were opened in 2022 for males aged 15 to 49 than expected. By May 27, 2023, the number of excess cases had shot up to 47,000.

That surge is roughly in line with a May assessment by the White House that more than 20,000 Russians had been killed in Ukraine since December, though lower than U.S. and U.K. intelligence assessments of overall Russian deaths.

In February, the U.K. Ministry of Defense said approximately 40,000 to 60,000 Russians had likely been killed in the war. A leaked assessment from the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency put the number of Russians killed in action in the first year of the war at 35,000 to 43,000.

"Their figures might be accurate, or they might not be," Treshchanin, the Mediazona editor, said in an email. "Even if they have sources in the Russian Ministry of Defense, its own data could be incomplete. It's extremely difficult to pull together all of the casualties from the army, Rosgvardia, Akhmat battalion, various private military companies, of which Wagner is the largest, but not the only one. Casualties among inmates, first recruited by Wagner and now by the MoD, are also a very hazy subject, with a lot of potential for manipulation. Statistics could actually give better results."

Many Russian fatalities - as well as amputations - could have been prevented with better front-line first aid, the U.K. Ministry of Defense said in an intelligence assessment published Monday. Russia has suffered an average of around 400 casualties a day for 17 months, creating a "crisis" in combat medical care that is likely undermining medical services for civilians in border regions near Ukraine, the ministry said.

Independently, Dmitry Kobak, a data scientist from Germany's Tübingen University who has published

leged victims.

On Sunday, though, he was more self-critical of his actions, which he attributed to arriving in 2018 as archbishop of La Plata "without any experience in another diocese." He said church procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse committed by clerics "were less clear" at that time.

"I cannot say that I have committed a crime or something against what was established at that time, but that I could have been a much better father, much better pastor and much more efficient. That, of course, I recognize," he told AP.

"With everything I say it is clear that I did not act in the best way," he said.

Fernández said he should have "treated the victims more closely" and acted "a little earlier" in removing Lorenzo from his duties as a priest while he was being investigated.

"I was waiting to see how justice acted, what the prosecutor did, what objective elements came to us," he said.

Anne Barrett Doyle, co-director of BishopAccountability.org, expressed disbelief at the archbishop's words.

"He declares himself bewildered, but he is a sophisticated and educated man," she said, adding that "claims of ignorance are not credible."

Barrett Doyle said Fernández "repeatedly" demonstrated support for the priest.

"If Archbishop Fernández finally regretted his handling of this case, why did he never reach out to Lorenzo's victims?" she said.

A close adviser to the Argentine-born pontiff, Fernández has been nicknamed the "pope's theologian" because he is widely believed to have helped author some of Francis' most important documents. Francis named him to head the La Plata archdiocese in 2018.

Fernández said he had spoken to the pope about the criticism received about Lorenzo's case and was told: "You explain reality as it was."

Ukraine tops NATO summit agenda along with defense plans, Sweden's membership and Belarus fears

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) — Russia's war in Ukraine will top the agenda when U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts hold a summit in Lithuania's capital over two days starting Tuesday.

They are expected to focus on ensuring that Ukraine has support as long as the conflict continues, how to bring the country even closer to NATO without actually joining, and security guarantees Kyiv might need to ensure that Russia doesn't invade again after the war ends.

The leaders meeting in Vilnius are set to endorse new defense plans in case Russian President Vladimir Putin tries to broaden Moscow's war beyond Ukraine and westward into allied territory. They also weigh defense spending, and how to boost their budgets as aid to Ukraine eats into national military coffers.

Sweden's accession to the 31-nation alliance is up for discussion, too, as Turkey delays the Scandinavian country's entry into the world's biggest security organization.

UKRAINE'S NATO MEMBERSHIP

The biggest item on NATO's agenda is what to do about Ukraine. U.S. President George W. Bush led the charge in 2008, promising that Ukraine would become a member one day.

Now, the country is trying to fend off a full-scale invasion by NATO's old foe Russia. The West believes that Ukraine is standing up for its interests, and countries are pouring in billions in aid, economic and military support.

NATO isn't ready to start membership talks with Ukraine yet. But it is helping to train and modernize its armed forces and security institutions to ensure that the country can take its place among NATO's ranks after the war is over. The summit will see a new forum for consultations created — the NATO-Ukraine Council.

SECURITY GUARANTEES

It's not really a topic for NATO — more for individual allies — but it's set to dominate talks in Vilnius.

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NATO and its Western partners are discussing ways to protect Ukraine after the war from a future invasion. NATO membership offers ironclad “all for one, one for all” protection, but the 31 countries must agree unanimously on letting Ukraine in, and they’re not united on this.

Failing that, major allies like the U.S., U.K., France and Germany could pledge to shield the country from another attack. NATO and the European Union would back that military protection with more money and other aid.

It’s unlikely that any conclusions will be drawn in Vilnius, but the summit is an important moment for leaders to flesh out what those guarantees might look like.

SWEDEN’S NATO MEMBERSHIP

Nearly all allies, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and Sweden say the country has done enough to join the military alliance. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan doesn’t agree, and he aims to steal the summit spotlight.

Sweden has given up a history of military neutrality to seek protection under NATO’s security umbrella. It has changed its anti-terror laws and lifted an arms embargo on Turkey to assuage Erdogan’s concerns.

To no avail.

The long-time Turkish leader used the issue during election campaigning last month. He’s also seeking upgraded F-16 fighter jets from the U.S., and Sweden could be leverage.

DEFENSE SPENDING

This is a perennial issue. The U.S. routinely flails its allies for failing to spend enough on their defense budgets. With money, arms and ammunition being poured into Ukraine, the need to boost national military budgets is a no-brainer.

The allies agreed in 2014 to move toward spending 2% of their gross domestic product on defense within a decade. The 2024 deadline approaches.

In Vilnius, the leaders will agree to make 2% the floor — that is, the least they should be spending — rather than the ceiling.

REGIONAL DEFENSE PLANS

NATO is conducting the biggest revamp of its defense plans since the Cold War in case Putin decides to widen the conflict outside Ukraine.

Right now, around 40,000 troops are on standby from Estonia in the north down to Romania on the Black Sea. About 100 aircraft take to the skies each day, and 27 warships are operating in the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas.

Those numbers are set to rise. Under new defense plans, NATO aims to have up to 300,000 troops available to move to its eastern flank within 30 days. The plans divide its territory into three zones – the high north and Atlantic area, a zone north of the Alps, and another in southern Europe. The top-secret documents lay out which countries and what equipment should defend any area under threat.

BELARUS

It’s not on the agenda, but NATO hopes that Belarus, Lithuania’s big neighbor, and Russia’s main backer, will play no surprise role in the summit or the war in Ukraine.

Belarus lies just 35 kilometers (22 miles) from Vilnius. Wagner mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin was offered refuge there. The jury is out on how many of his fighters might join him.

“We have seen some preparations for hosting large groups of soldiers in Belarus. So far, we haven’t seen them going to Belarus,” Stoltenberg said Friday.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko also said last month that his country has received Russian tactical nuclear weapons. He’s warning that he would order their use to protect his country.

NATO officials think he’s bluffing. But it’s quite possible that Putin will resume his nuclear saber-rattling again as the leaders gather in Vilnius.

Man with knife kills 6 people at kindergarten in China before being arrested, police and reports say

BEIJING (AP) — A man with a knife killed six people and wounded one Monday at a kindergarten in southeastern China, police and a news report said Monday.

A 25-year-old man was arrested following the 7:40 a.m. attack in Lianjiang, a city in Guangdong province, a police statement said. Employees who answered at the Lianjiang police headquarters declined to give more details.

A news outlet, Dafeng News, cited an unidentified witness as saying the attacker's child had been struck earlier by the car of one of the people who was killed at the school. It said one of the people killed was a teacher at the kindergarten.

Dafeng News on its website cited video posted online that it said showed a man carrying a knife walking past the kindergarten playground. It said other video showed at least four people in a pool of blood outside the school.

Attacks on kindergartens in China are reported regularly, usually blamed on grudges or mental illness, despite increased security ordered after some 20 children were killed in 2010. In 2020, a school guard was accused of injuring 39 people with a knife.

China prohibits most gun ownership. Personal attacks usually are carried out with knives or homemade explosives.

NATO will boost defense spending to help back Ukraine but the math is tricky. Just ask Luxembourg

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — When it comes to criticizing the NATO members who fail to spend enough on defense, tiny Luxembourg is an easy target.

One of NATO's richest countries, and routinely ranked at the top of Europe's economic growth tables, the Grand Duchy currently spends 0.72% of gross domestic product on its armed forces, according to the organization's estimates for this year.

That puts it at the foot of the 31-nation military alliance's charts. Still, the numbers are deceiving, and that goes for other members too, like Germany.

Under a pledge made in 2014, after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, NATO allies agreed to halt the spending cuts they made in calmer times after the Cold War ended, boost their national military budgets and move toward spending 2% of GDP on defense by 2024.

With that target date closing in, and the biggest land war in Europe in decades ravaging Ukraine, U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts will commit to a new spending goal at their two-day summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius starting on Tuesday.

"At the summit, allies will set a more ambitious defense investment pledge, to invest a minimum of 2% of GDP annually on defense," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Friday. No date will be set for achieving this target.

While the 2% figure remains as a reference point, it's a slippery metric.

Growth fluctuates in times of economic boom and bust, and inflation can wreak havoc with the bottom line. NATO estimates that Turkey, with one of the organization's biggest armed forces, will spend just 1.31% of GDP in 2023, compared to 1.91% before the war started.

Nor does big spending equal wise spending. Correct spending levels on paper don't translate into adequate and well-equipped forces being quickly dispatched to the battlefield and sustained by efficient supply lines.

Nor does 2% have a direct relationship to any real security threat assessment. The goal was established in peacetime. Things have changed, and Luxembourg's case provides a salutary lesson about what this guideline can hide.

When grilled by U.S. and European lawmakers about budget priorities, Luxembourg Defense Minister

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François Bausch said last month that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would have to spend four to five times more than they do now to reach 2% if their economic growth matched that of Luxembourg.

The three Baltic States — so geographically close to Russia and Ukraine, and historically aware of the potential threat that their giant neighbor poses — will all spend just above 2% this year, among only 11 nations to attain the goal, according to NATO estimates.

Sandwiched between France and Belgium, Luxembourg has demographic challenges too. Of its roughly 630,000 passport holders, only 315,000 are Luxembourgers. The number of people ranging in age from 18 to 40 — military service age — is smaller still.

Around 1,000 people are enlisted in the country's army. That's small compared to the might of some members, but greater per capita than the number serving in the armed forces of the United Kingdom, one of NATO's most exemplary national forces.

Plus, unemployment is low in Luxembourg. Relatively high-paying jobs abound. Why join up?

"I want to increase the number of troops in the army. We are looking for 200-300 soldiers already, but it's not easy," Bausch said.

Beyond that, Luxembourg spent more than 16% of its defense budget on support for Ukraine — a lot of it ammunition — last year. The government isn't asking for that money to be reimbursed through a special European Union fund set up to refund nations that help Ukraine defend itself.

Prime Minister Xavier Bettel's government also meets all of NATO's planning requirement goals.

"We are fulfilling everything that is demanded of us," Bausch said, and Luxembourg plans to double defense spending by 2028.

Another country that meets NATO's planning goals is Germany — Europe's model of fiscal rectitude and routinely flailed by former U.S. President Donald Trump for failing to boost its military budget.

In an abrupt about-face last year after Russia invaded Ukraine, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that his government would spend an additional 100 billion euros (\$109 billion) on defense, including on the purchase of high-end U.S.-made F-35 fighter jets.

But under NATO's spending requirements, little if any of that money can yet count toward its 2% target. Equipment orders aren't enough. Only when contractors are finally paid can the money be added up.

The summit in Vilnius isn't likely to solve NATO's perennial budgeting problem, and the U.S. cajoling of allies sometimes suspected in Trump's day of free-riding on their partners, like Luxembourg and even Germany, is likely to continue.

"We can't pass legislation requiring people to spend money. We're an intergovernmental alliance that commits to collective goals," a senior NATO official said on condition of anonymity to describe the latest thinking on NATO's defense-spending pledge.

In search of a lost cemetery, dig begins at a former Native American school in Nebraska

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE and CHARLIE NEIBERGALL Associated Press

Bodies of dozens of children who died at a Native American boarding school have been lost for decades, a mystery that archeologists aim to unravel as they begin digging in a central Nebraska field that a century ago was part of the sprawling campus.

Crews toting shovels, trowels and even smaller tools planned to start searching Monday at the site experts suspect is the Genoa Indian Industrial School cemetery. Genoa was part of a national system of more than 400 Native American boarding schools that attempted to integrate Indigenous people into white culture by separating children from their families and cutting them off from their heritage.

The school, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) west of Omaha, opened in 1884 and at its height was home to nearly 600 students from more than 40 tribes across the country. It closed in 1931 and most buildings were long ago demolished.

For decades, residents of the tiny community of Genoa, with help from Native Americans, researchers

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and state officials, have sought the location of a forgotten cemetery where the bodies of up to 80 students are believed to be buried.

Judi gaiashkibos, the executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, whose mother attended the school in the late 1920s, has been involved in the cemetery effort for years and was set Monday to travel to Genoa. She said it's difficult to spend time in the community where many Native Americans suffered, but the vital search can help with healing and bringing the children's voices to the surface.

"It's an honor to go on behalf of my ancestors and those who lost their lives there and I feel entrusted with a huge responsibility," gaiashkibos said.

Newspaper clippings, records and a student's letter indicate at least 86 students died at the school, usually due to diseases such as tuberculosis and typhoid, but at least one death was blamed on an accidental shooting.

Researchers identified 49 of the children killed but have not been able to find names for 37 students. The bodies of some of those children were returned to their homes but others are believed to have been buried on the school grounds at a location long ago forgotten.

As part of an effort to find the cemetery, last summer dogs trained to detect the faint odor of decaying remains searched the area and signaled they had found a burial site in a narrow piece of land bordered by a farm field, railroad tracks and a canal.

A team using ground-penetrating radar last November also showed an area that was consistent with graves, but there will be no guarantees until researchers can dig into the ground, said Dave Williams, Nebraska's state archeologist.

The process is expected to take several days.

"We're going to take the soil down and first see if what's showing up in the ground-penetrating radar are in fact grave-like features," Williams said. "And once we get that figured out, taking the feature down and determining if there are any human remains still contained within that area."

If the dig reveals human remains, the State Archeology Office will continue to work with the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs in deciding what's next. They could rebury the remains in the field and create a memorial or exhume and return the bodies to tribes, Williams said.

DNA could indicate the region of the country each child was from but narrowing that to individual tribes would be challenging, Williams said.

The federal government is taking a closer examination at the boarding school system. The U.S. Interior Department, led by Secretary Deb Haaland, a member of Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico and the first Native American Cabinet secretary, released an initial report in 2022 and is working on a second report with additional details.

Heavy rains cause flooding and mudslides in southwest Japan, leaving 2 dead and at least 6 missing

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Torrential rain has been pounding southwestern Japan, triggering floods and mudslides and leaving two people dead and at least six others missing Monday.

Rains falling on the regions of Kyushu and Chugoku since the weekend caused flooding along a number of rivers as well as mudslides, closing roads, disrupting trains and cutting the water supply in some areas.

The Japan Meteorological Agency issued an emergency heavy rain warning for Fukuoka and Oita prefectures on the southern main island of Kyushu, urging residents in riverside and hillside areas to take maximum caution. More than 1.7 million residents in vulnerable areas were urged to take shelter.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters the government has set up a task force and is doing its utmost for the search and rescue operation "as we put the people's lives first."

Two people have died and at least six others were missing, according to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency and prefectural officials. A man was found dead in a vehicle that had fallen into a swollen river in Yamaguchi prefecture.

work on excess COVID-19 deaths in Russia, obtained mortality data broken down by age and sex for 2022 from Rosstat, Russia's official statistics agency.

He found that 24,000 more men under age 50 died in 2022 than expected, a figure that aligns with the analysis of inheritance data.

The COVID-19 pandemic made it harder to figure out how many men would have died in Russia since February 2022 if there hadn't been a war. Both analyses corrected for the lingering effects of COVID on mortality by indexing male death rates against female deaths.

Sergei Scherbov, a scholar at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria, cautioned that "differences in the number of deaths between males and females can vary significantly due to randomness alone."

"I am not saying that there couldn't be an excess number of male deaths, but rather that statistically speaking, this difference in deaths could be a mere outcome of chance," he said.

Russians who are missing but not officially recognized as dead, as well as citizens of Ukraine fighting in units of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics, are not included in these counts.

Kobak acknowledged that some uncertainties remain, especially for deaths of older men. Moreover, it's hard to know how many missing Russian soldiers are actually dead. But he said neither factor is likely to have a huge impact.

"That uncertainty is in the thousands," he said. "The results are plausible overall."

The Russian Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Meduza is an independent Russian media outlet that has been operating in exile for eight years, with headquarters in Riga, Latvia. In April 2021, Russian authorities designated Meduza a "foreign agent," making it harder to generate advertising income, and in January 2023, the Kremlin banned Meduza as an illegal "undesirable organization."

Moscow has also labeled independent outlet Mediazona as a "foreign agent" and blocked its website after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Argentina archbishop says he made mistakes in handling abuse allegations against priest

By ALMUDENA CALATRAVA and NATACHA PISARENKO Associated Press

LA PLATA, Argentina (AP) — Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández, chosen by Pope Francis to head the Vatican office that ensures doctrinal orthodoxy, conceded Sunday he made mistakes in handling a 2019 case of a priest accused of sexual abuse of minors.

The case has drawn allegations by critics that Fernández tried to protect the priest, a charge that he has denied.

"Today I would certainly act very differently and certainly my performance was insufficient," he told The Associated Press during an interview after celebrating Mass in La Plata, about 70 kilometers (40 miles) south of Buenos Aires.

Pope Francis appointed Fernández on July 1 to head the Holy See's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which guarantees doctrinal orthodoxy and one of whose areas involves handling sexual abuse allegations brought against clergy. He was also named a cardinal Sunday along with about two dozen religious.

BishopAccountability.org, a U.S. group that maintains an online archive on abuse in the Roman Catholic Church, has questioned the archbishop's appointment as head of the dicastery. It said Fernández refused to believe allegations by minors who accused Eduardo Lorenzo, a priest in the archdiocese of La Plata, of abusing them.

At the end of 2019, hours after learning that an Argentine judge had ordered his arrest for the alleged sexual abuse of five children, Lorenzo was found dead in what was ruled a suicide.

In response to the U.S. organization's criticism, Fernández told AP in a statement Monday that he had never said he did not believe the allegations and that he took steps to distance the priest from the al-

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In the town of Soeda in Fukuoka prefecture, two people were buried underneath a mudslide. One was rescued alive, but the other was found without vital signs and later pronounced dead, according to prefectural officials.

In the city of Karatsu in Saga prefecture, rescue workers were searching for three people whose houses were hit by a mudslide, the agency said. Footage on NHK television showed one of the destroyed houses reduced to just a roof sitting on the muddy ground amid floodwater flowing down.

At least three others were missing elsewhere in the region.

Footage on NHK television showed muddy water from the swollen Yamakuni River gushing over a bridge in the town of Yabakei in Oita prefecture.

Deep partisanship will be on display as Congress releases competing voting bills

By STEPHEN GROVES and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA (AP) — Congress in the coming weeks will consider shoring up voting and election laws — efforts that will reflect the vast gulf between Democrats and Republicans on protecting a foundation of American democracy.

The parties will unveil separate and competing proposals that will have little chance of success in a divided government, but are likely to be used to rally supporters ahead of the 2024 elections.

House Republicans on Monday are scheduled to release a proposal that would tighten voting laws and take a defiant stand against concerns that laws passed in recent years by GOP-controlled state legislatures disadvantage some voters. Democrats, meanwhile, are preparing to reintroduce their own proposals to set federal voting standards and restore protections under the Voting Rights Act.

Even as the country prepares for the next presidential election, the separate measures will underscore how the two major parties have acted with little cohesion and often are completely at odds over voting procedures.

House Republicans are trying to send a message with both the date and location for releasing their plan, which will come Monday ahead of a field hearing in Atlanta on the eve of Major League Baseball's All-Star Game. MLB withdrew its midsummer game from the city's suburbs in 2021 over objections to the state enacting restrictive voting laws.

The event also will kickstart a push in the House to pass the GOP's "American Confidence in Elections Act."

Republican Rep. Bryan Steil, chair of the House Administration Committee, which oversees election law, has billed the plan as "the most conservative election bill to be considered in the House in over 20 years."

"It works to boost voters' confidence and uphold the Constitution by ensuring states maintain primary control over elections, not the federal government," he said at a hearing last month. "This is in stark contrast to House Democrats' efforts in the last two congresses, which would have nationalized our election system and centralized it in Washington, D.C."

Since the 2020 presidential election, many Republican-led state legislatures have added ID requirements to mail voting, curtailed or banned the use of ballot drop boxes and limited the ability of someone to return a ballot on behalf of someone else.

Republicans in Georgia have touted the state's sweeping 2021 voting law as a model for national reform, arguing the 2022 midterms and solid voter turnout were a rebuke to concerns the measure would result in voter suppression.

"The Georgia General Assembly has worked to create a system that makes it easier to vote, have results that can be audited and verified, give voters options for their preferred method of voting and build confidence using voter ID," former Georgia state Rep. Scot Turner, a Republican, told the House Administration Committee during a May hearing.

Critics say voter assistance groups had to increase efforts to counter the effects of the law, spending more money to educate voters and help ensure they could successfully cast a ballot despite facing new hurdles.

The House GOP legislation would encourage states to examine voter lists, conduct post-election audits

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and enact other checks on voter eligibility. It also aims to make an example of Washington, D.C. voter laws by ending the district's policy of allowing non-citizens to vote for local offices and prohibiting election officials from sending unrequested absentee ballots.

The Republican legislation also includes provisions to loosen finance reporting requirements and other restrictions on political parties, as well as protect non-profit organizations that engage in political advocacy from disclosing their donors.

It's all done in the name of "election integrity" and restoring voters' confidence in the results. But what often goes unsaid by Republicans is that former president Donald Trump inflamed many of those doubts with his baseless insistence that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

Democrats say the sustained attacks on the voting process by Trump and his allies show that measures are needed to ensure free and fair elections. Their long-running efforts to enact federal voting protections failed last year after Democrats were unable to secure enough votes in the Senate to overcome procedural rules used by Republicans to block them.

While little has changed since then, Democrats argue it's important to keep pressing the issue.

"America is under threat from election deniers and extremist anti-voting forces who undermine our democracy," said Rep. Joe Morelle, the ranking Democrat on the House Administration Committee. "In contrast, our agenda offers national standards that ensure every eligible American can participate in accessible, secure and transparent elections."

Democrats expect the proposals to closely mirror an updated bill that came together last year with the involvement of Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat. He had sought a compromise that could draw some Republican support, dropping some of the more controversial provisions and pushing to keep state-approved voter ID requirements under certain circumstances.

In the end, Republicans remained united in their opposition, arguing the bill was a Democratic power grab aimed at taking over federal elections. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, named in honor of the former civil rights leader and congressman from Georgia who died in 2020, would allow for federal review of voting law changes in certain jurisdictions to resume.

A 2013 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court halted the process known as preclearance, after deciding the formula was outdated for identifying which jurisdictions should be subject to the review.

Meanwhile, states are not waiting for federal action – leading to a wave of election-related bills that sharply diverge based on the state and which party is in control. Where Democrats hold the majority, lawmakers have been focused on expanding access to voting, overhauling the redistricting process and restoring the right to vote for those with past felony convictions.

California, New York, Oregon, Virginia and Washington are among the states that have passed comprehensive voting rights laws in recent years.

In Michigan, lawmakers have been busy passing legislation to implement a 2022 voter-approved initiative that established nine days of early voting, the use of a photo ID or signed affidavit to verify a voter's identity and the use of a permanent absentee voter list, among other actions. Lawmakers also are weighing a proposal to create a state-level Voting Rights Act that would create a preclearance process for state-level review of local voting changes under certain circumstances.

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat in her second term, said Republicans in the U.S. House have so far been unwilling to confront false claims about elections and to embrace voter-friendly policies.

"What we've seen from this Congress really over the last six months is -- instead of standing up to the lies around democracy -- digging into them," Benson said. "Any legislation that amplifies misinformation or codifies it, instead of debunking it, is going to be contrary to what we really need in Michigan and elsewhere to restore and ensure our voters have confidence in our elections."

She also called on Congress to provide a sustained level of funding for elections, rather than the scatter-shot approach that has resulted in a varying amount each year. A recent GOP budget proposal eliminated federal grants for state and local election offices to enhance election technology and security.

Groves reported from Washington.

Trump and DeSantis begin eyeing Super Tuesday states as they prepare for 2024 long game

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

As the Republican presidential primary intensifies this summer, most White House hopefuls are devoting their time to events in Iowa and New Hampshire, the states that kick off the nomination process early next year. Not Ron DeSantis or Donald Trump.

The Florida governor will address more than 1,500 faithful Republicans on Saturday at Nashville's Music City Center. A few weeks later, the former president will swing through Alabama to headline the state GOP's biggest event of the summer.

Trump, the early GOP frontrunner, and DeSantis, who is trailing him for second place, are hardly ignoring voters in the states that jumpstart the Republican contest. Over the past month, they've both held rallies and other major events in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina, sometimes even appearing in the same state on the same day.

But they are doing more than the other GOP candidates to strengthen their position in states like Tennessee and Alabama that will hold elections on so-called Super Tuesday. That's when the largest number of delegates, which candidates win state-by-state, are up for grabs of any single day in the primary cycle.

Only Trump and DeSantis, who have raised tens of millions of dollars to support their campaigns, have the resources to work in any meaningful way beyond the early states. And GOP leaders beyond Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina say it's a smart strategy.

"I know everybody's focused on Iowa and New Hampshire," said Scott Golden, chairman of the Tennessee GOP, who noted that early voting in his state begins in mid-February, before South Carolina is scheduled to hold its contest. "But it is worth taking a little time out to come to Tennessee."

For presidential candidates, Super Tuesday is a circled-in-red date — next year, it's March 5 — that can make or break a campaign.

Coming quickly after contests in early states such as Iowa and New Hampshire, the set of roughly 14 primaries are held across a broad geographic area, from California and Texas to Massachusetts and Maine. The day also is a test of a campaign's ability to organize supporters, its financial strength and a chance for those candidates who are still standing to run up their delegate total.

In 2016, for example, Trump's Super Tuesday dominance signaled, against conventional political wisdom, that the businessman and reality TV star was likely to be the party's nominee. President Joe Biden similarly romped through Super Tuesday in 2020, quickly forcing most of his remaining rivals to drop out.

This cycle, Trump and DeSantis have been nailing down key endorsements in Super Tuesday states, starting to hire staff and readying supporters to knock on doors.

The early start reflects the candidates' confidence they will be in the running come March, when the field typically has been winnowed down. Public polling shows Trump currently leading comfortably, followed by DeSantis, with other candidates trailing. They include former Vice President Mike Pence, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley and Chris Christie, the former New Jersey governor.

Of course, targeting Super Tuesday states is no guarantee for winning the nomination. After a late entry in the 2020 Democratic presidential race, billionaire Mike Bloomberg's strategy was to bypass early contests and win in Super Tuesday states. The former New York mayor spent over \$500 million but finished well behind Biden in the delegate haul.

Trump and DeSantis haven't entirely had the Super Tuesday states to themselves. Candidates including former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson have traveled in California and elsewhere. Haley is among those who went to Texas to visit its border with Mexico. But their campaigns have been almost solely focused

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in early states, some on one in particular.

Pence, an evangelical Christian, has primarily targeted Iowa, where a large portion of GOP primary voters are evangelicals. Christie is counting on independent-minded voters in New Hampshire to support his anti-Trump candidacy, while Haley and Scott hope for good showings in their home state of South Carolina, which votes 10 days before Super Tuesday.

Trump and DeSantis have the money to wage a broader campaign. Trump will report raising over \$35 million in the second quarter of this year alone, his campaign said, while DeSantis' campaign said he brought in \$20 million in just six weeks after announcing his candidacy.

Trump formally entered the race with the huge advantage of having run and won races in these states before, and his campaigning in many of them hasn't stopped since he lost the 2020 election. In 2021, for example, Trump held a "Save America" rally in Alabama that the state GOP said drew some 50,000 people.

"People of Alabama have a special relationship with Donald Trump," said Alabama Republican Party Chairman John Wahl, noting Trump handily won the GOP primary in 2016, when he was battling Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Marco Rubio of Florida for the nomination. Trump also won the general election in Alabama easily in 2016 and 2020.

While a small state compared to many other Super Tuesday contests, Wahl said places like Alabama allow candidates to demonstrate support among conservative voters that are "the heartbeat of the Republican Party."

"It's states like Alabama that are going to be where (Trump) hopes to make a lot of ground," he said. "And if other candidates are going to beat him, they have to compete with him in those states."

DeSantis and Never Back Down, the super PAC supporting him, are trying. The PAC plans to invest \$100 million on ground operations targeting the first 18 states — four early states plus Super Tuesday states — including paid staff such as state campaign directors. Door knocking is well underway in the first states and will start in Super Tuesday states this summer, with a goal of having 2,600 people out supporting the Florida governor by Labor Day.

"Nobody else is doing what we're doing as of this point," spokeswoman Erin Perrine said.

She described the door knocking as a crucial piece of the PAC's work because when DeSantis' supporters talk to voters about his personal story — a blue-collar upbringing, serving in the military, his legislative accomplishments — they like what they hear.

"They know the name, but they don't necessarily know the man," Perrine said. "We've seen that where we show people the man that we take away Trump supporters and that they come over to the DeSantis camp."

One of DeSantis' most prominent endorsements in a Super Tuesday state was from Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, who joined the Florida governor for a rally in Tulsa last month, a move that angered Trump and some of his allies in Oklahoma.

The state party is neutral on the race, said Chairman Nathan Dahm, but he said Oklahoma still seems to lean in the former president's favor. He noted he passes a home while out running that for six or seven years has had "Veterans for Trump" proudly displayed out front.

Still, Dahm said Super Tuesday contests can offer redemption to a candidate that might stumble in an earlier state.

"You can never know what dynamics will change," he said. "They should have a long-term strategy. Oklahoma is part of that."

Associated Press reporter Kim Chandler contributed from Montgomery, Alabama.

Aid to Syria's rebel-held northwest from Turkey certain to continue — but for 6 or 12 months?

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The delivery of humanitarian aid to Syria's rebel-held northwest from neighboring Turkey is virtually certain to get a green light to continue from the U.N. Security Council on Monday — but the big question is for how long.

The council's current authorization for aid deliveries through the Bab al-Hawa crossing is set to expire Monday, but the council has two rival extension resolutions before it to vote on.

A Russian resolution would continue aid deliveries for six months and a Brazil-Switzerland resolution backed by most council members and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres would authorize a 12-month extension.

The delivery of aid to the area has increased significantly following the devastation caused by the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that ravaged southern Turkey and northwestern Syria on Feb. 8.

Syrian President Bashar Assad opened two additional crossing points from Turkey to increase the flow of assistance to quake victims, and he extended their operation for three months in May until mid-August. But those crossings are not mentioned in either resolution.

Syria's northwestern province of Idlib is home to some 4 million people, many of whom have been forced from their homes during the 12-year civil war, which has killed nearly a half million people and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million. Hundreds of thousands of people in Idlib live in tent settlements and rely on aid that comes through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing.

The earthquake caused more than 4,500 deaths in northwest Syria and about 855,000 people had their homes damaged or destroyed, according to the U.N.

U.N. humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths told the Security Council on June 29 that the conflict in Syria has pushed 90% of its people into poverty and that millions face cuts in food aid in July because of a funding shortfall.

He said the \$5.4 billion U.N. humanitarian appeal for Syria — the world's largest — is only 12% funded, meaning that emergency food aid for millions of Syrians could be cut by 40% this month. On Friday, he said the U.N. World Food Program needs \$200 million to avoid the food cuts.

The Security Council initially authorized aid deliveries in 2014 from Turkey, Iraq and Jordan through four crossing points into opposition-held areas in Syria. But over the years, Syria's close ally Russia, backed by China, has reduced the authorized crossings to just Bab al-Hawa from Turkey — and the mandate from a year to six months.

Russia has pushed for more aid to be delivered across front lines within Syria, which would give the Syrian government control over the shipments. It has also pushed for early recovery projects to provide jobs and help the country's economy.

The Russian draft resolution "underscores the imperative of maintaining unimpeded and sustainable cross-line access from Damascus to all parts of Syria." It urges stepped up efforts to broaden humanitarian activities to include providing water, sanitation, health, education, electricity, demining and shelter. It also calls for "non-interference of unilateral sanctions in the humanitarian operations in Syria."

The Brazil-Switzerland draft makes no mention of sanctions. It calls for expanding humanitarian activities but would limit electricity provision to places "essential to restore access to basic services." On the issue of aid shipments within Syria, it calls on parties to enable deliveries to all parts of the country, "including by providing timely security guarantees to ensure the safe passage of cross-line convoys and humanitarian personnel."

South Korea's Yoon pushes for strong resolve against North's nuclear ambitions at NATO summit

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president says it's time to clearly demonstrate strong international resolve to deter North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and he plans to discuss how to cope with the North's expanding weapons arsenal with NATO leaders this week.

Yoon Suk Yeol will attend the annual NATO summit being held this year in Vilnius, Lithuania, on Tuesday and Wednesday as part of a two-nation trip that includes a stop in Poland.

"Now is the time to clearly demonstrate that the international community's determination to deter North Korea's nuclear weapons program is stronger than North Korea's desire to develop nuclear weapons," he said.

It's the second consecutive year that Yoon will take part in the summit, underscoring his push to deepen ties with the world's biggest military alliance. South Korea faces a mix of security challenges, including North Korea's nuclear program and the U.S.-China strategic rivalry. Last year, he became the first South Korean leader to attend a NATO summit when he took part in Spain.

In written responses to questions from The Associated Press ahead of his departure, Yoon said South Korea will stress at the NATO meeting the importance of international cooperation against "North Korea's illegal acts." He also said a new NATO-South Korean document will take effect at the summit to institutionalize cooperation in 11 areas, including non-proliferation and cybersecurity.

North Korea's headlong pursuit of reliable nuclear weapons has taken on new urgency after it test flew more than 100 missiles and openly threatened to use nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with South Korea and the United States since the start of last year.

Whether North Korea possesses functioning nuclear missiles is still a source of debate. But according to a South Korean government estimate in 2018, North Korea already had up to 60 nuclear warheads. Experts say North Korea is able to add six to 18 new warheads every year.

In response to North Korea's missile tests, Yoon, a conservative who took office in 2022, took steps to beef up his country's own missile capability and expand military drills with the United States. Yoon and President Joe Biden in April announced plans to reinforce their countries' deterrence capabilities, such as the periodic docking of a U.S. nuclear-armed submarine in South Korea and the establishment of a new bilateral nuclear consultative group, whose inaugural meeting is slated for next week in Seoul.

In its typical, fiery rhetoric, North Korea's Defense Ministry warned Monday the deployment of the U.S. submarine may incite "the worst crisis of nuclear conflict in practice." It also threatened to shoot down U.S. spy planes. South Korea's military countered it maintains a readiness to repel potential North Korean provocations.

Yoon's discussion of North Korea with NATO leaders could trigger a backlash from North Korea, which has called increasing cooperation between NATO and U.S. allies in Asia a process to create an "Asian version of NATO" that it said will raise regional animosities.

North Korea argues its weapons testing spree was meant to issue a warning over the expanded South Korean-U.S. military drills that it views as invasion rehearsals. Yoon says he wants to opt for peace through strength, though he remains open to dialogue with North Korea.

"Peace is never as certain and reliable as when it is backed by powerful force and deterrence," Yoon added. "Strong international sanctions against North Korea have the effect of preventing the advancement of its nuclear and missile capabilities."

In Vilnius, Yoon said that there will be "several opportunities" for him to speak with Biden over a range of topics, such as the strengthening of the U.S. security commitment and the expansion of trilateral security cooperation between Seoul, Washington and Tokyo.

Yoon said he and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also plan to hold a bilateral meeting there. He said he and Kishida will be able to discuss the advancement of bilateral relations but also ways to expand mutual solidarity and international cooperation.

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Relations between South Korea and Japan have improved significantly in recent months, with Yoon taking a major step toward resolving a thorny dispute over Japan's colonial-era mobilization of forced Korean laborers. The Yoon-Kishida meeting in Vilnius is expected to touch upon Japan's contentious plan to release treated wastewater from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant, which was recently approved by the U.N. nuclear watchdog but is still opposed by many in neighboring countries.

During the summit in Vilnius, NATO leaders are expected to offer more help in modernizing Ukraine's armed forces as the Russian invasion of the country continues with no end in sight. They are also expected to create a high-level forum for consultations and reaffirm that Ukraine will join their alliance one day.

Yoon said South Korea has provided humanitarian and financial support to Ukraine in a variety of forms and that supplies of de-mining equipment, ambulances and other materials "are in the works" following a request from Ukraine. He said South Korea has also already provided support to repair the damaged Kakhovka Dam in Ukraine.

South Korea, a growing arms exporter, has avoided directly providing arms to Ukraine in line with its long-standing policy of not supplying weapons to countries actively engaged in conflict. Leaked U.S. intelligence documents posted online earlier this year indicated that South Korea's National Security Council "grappled" with the U.S. in March over an American request to provide artillery ammunition to Ukraine.

"The Korean government will continue to fulfill its necessary role in tandem with the international community in order to safeguard the freedom of Ukraine," Yoon said. "On top of this, we will work out multipronged support measures needed for the prompt post-war restoration of peace in Ukraine and its reconstruction."

Yoon is invited to the NATO summit along with the leaders of Japan, Australia and New Zealand, a sign of strengthening ties between NATO and nations in the Asia-Pacific region. The four countries were invited to last year's summit as well.

"Just as incidents in Europe can have a substantial and consequential impact on the Indo-Pacific region, Indo-Pacific events can have immense ramifications for countries in Europe," Yoon said. "In particular, the war in Ukraine has reminded us all that a security crisis in one particular region can have a global impact."

Allisen Corpuz wins the US Women's Open at Pebble Beach for her first LPGA title

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Allisen Corpuz found herself on the biggest and most beautiful stage in women's golf and made it look like a stroll on the beach.

Never mind that she had never won on the LPGA Tour or that she had heard all week about the historic occasion of the U.S. Women's Open held at Pebble Beach for the first time. Nothing could make her crack.

"Every few holes I kind of looked out and said, 'I'm here at Pebble Beach. There's not many places that are better than this,'" Corpuz said.

There weren't many better performances, either. Corpuz turned a tight duel with Nasa Hataoka into a runaway, closing with a 3-under 69 on Sunday for a three-shot victory to become the first American in 20 years to make the U.S. Women's Open her first LPGA title.

At Pebble Beach, no less.

The 25-year-old from Hawaii was calm and cool, no matter the shot or the circumstances, until reality set in as she took a three-shot lead down the 18th fairway. It's a path taken over the years by the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and Tiger Woods, all of them U.S. Open champions at Pebble Beach.

"Just knowing the history ... Tiger just absolutely annihilated this place. Yeah, it's really special," Corpuz said. "Twenty, 30 years from now, I think just the fact that it's a U.S. Open means a lot to me. But know that it's at Pebble makes it even sweeter."

She won by three shots over Charley Hull (66) and Jiyai Shin (68) and claimed the \$2 million prize, the richest ever for an LPGA major champion.

Corpuz couldn't contain a wide smile when she tapped in for par, only to cover it with her hand as the tears began to flow. She wiped them with her Aloha-print towel.

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Former President Barack Obama was among the first to congratulate her on Twitter. Both went to Punahou School in Honolulu.

"Unreal," Corpuz said. "This week has felt like a dream come true."

Hilary Lunke in 2003 at Pumpkin Ridge was the last American to get her first win at the U.S. Women's Open, that one in a three-way Monday playoff.

Corpuz, who finished at 9-under 279, was the only player to break par all four days.

Corpuz never gave anyone much of a chance. Hataoka lost her one-shot lead on the opening hole when Corpuz hit her approach to 5 feet for birdie, and the 24-year-old from Japan dropped too many shots down the home stretch.

They were tied at the turn until Corpuz hit her approach to just inside 10 feet for birdie on the 10th. The key moment was at the par-3 12th, when Corpuz came up short in the bunker and had 15 feet for par. Hataoka rolled her birdie putt from the fringe 5 feet by the hole. Corpuz made her par, Hataoka missed her putt and the lead was at two.

It only got larger, Corpuz stretching it to four shots with superb wedges to 8 feet on the par-5 14th and 4 feet on the 15th, both birdies that made the final act a battle for second place.

Hull, who started the final round seven shots behind, closed to within two shots early on the back nine and stayed in the game with a 30-foot birdie putt on the 16th. Only later did she realize Corpuz was pulling away. Hull kept firing, hitting 3-wood from under the cypress tree in the middle of the 18th fairway and nearly pulling it off.

"Shy kids don't get sweets," she told herself on the 18th before lashing away and dropping to a knee to watch its flight.

Shin made a birdie on the 18th to join Hull as a runner-up. The two-time major champion from South Korea never had a serious chance to win, but she celebrated a big moment for Corpuz and for women's golf.

"I'm only watching the TV to Pebble Beach and then finally we are here to play," Shin said. "This course has a great history, and then finally the women's history is in."

That history belonged to Corpuz. She joined Michelle Wie West as the only major champions from Hawaii — Wie West won the Women's Open at Pinehurst No. 2 in 2014 and played her final major this week at Pebble Beach.

They are linked by the Aloha State, their high school (Punahou) and their emphasis on education — Wie West graduated from Stanford, Corpuz got a business degree and an MBA from USC — and their early start in USGA events. Corpuz broke Wie West's record as the youngest player to qualify for the U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links as a 10-year-old.

"I never really thought I'd get this far. Just watching Michelle, she's been such a huge role model to me, and it was really awesome to break her record for the Public Links," Corpuz said. "But I've never really compared myself to her. I've always wanted to make my own name. She's just served as a really big inspiration."

Corpuz was playing in her 19th USGA championship. She knows the USGA formula of fairways and greens, and loads of patience. She is built for this, especially given her concentration that not even a gorgeous day on the Monterey Peninsula could crack.

Officiating behind the fifth green was Mary Bea Porter King, the pioneer of junior golf in Hawaii and one of the most influential figures in the game. Corpuz first came into the Hawaii junior program at age 7.

"She's always been calm, cool and ... I won't say serious, but she just plodded along. She was sort of a giant killer," Porter King said. "I don't think she was fearful of anything."

That much was obvious at Pebble Beach, which had enough wind to be challenging as ever. Only seven players finished under par.

Hataoka, whose 66 on Saturday was nearly nine shots better than the field, had a 40 on the back nine and tied for fourth with Bailey Tardy, the 36-hole leader who went 75-73 on the weekend for her best finish in her LPGA rookie season.

Rose Zhang, who dominated the amateur scene and then won her first LPGA Tour start as a pro, never got on track and closed with a 72 to tie for ninth. She now has top 10s in both majors as a pro, though

this time she was never in the mix.

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

Accused Philadelphia shooter may have begun his spree nearly two days earlier than police thought

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Philadelphia authorities investigating a Fourth of July holiday shooting spree that left five people dead now say the gunman killed one of the victims almost two full days before the mass shooting.

Kimbrady Carriker, 40, was arraigned Wednesday morning on five counts of murder, attempted murder, aggravated assault and weapons counts of possession without a license and carrying firearms in public, prosecutors said.

While authorities initially believed Carriker killed Joseph Wamah Jr., 31, in a home as part of a quickly orchestrated series of shootings, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner said Sunday that an error prevented police from discovering Wamah's body right away.

"It has been determined through information received through a source and corroborated by the Philadelphia Medical Examiner's Office and additional evidence; that homicide victim Joseph Wamah, Jr. was killed by suspect Kimbrady Carriker approximately 44 hours before the mass shooting," Krasner's office said in a statement.

Authorities said Philadelphia Police responded to a 911 call about gunshots about 2 a.m. July 2 on South 56th Street, about 90 minutes after they now believe Wamah was killed. However, police were accidentally dispatched to North 56th Street, so they didn't find Wamah's body right away.

"The grieving family of the deceased has been briefed on this new information, and I cannot express enough the sorrow I feel," Krasner said.

A 2-year-old and a 13-year-old were also wounded by gunfire and another 2-year-old boy and a woman were hit by shattered glass in the rampage that made the working-class area in southwest Philadelphia the site of the nation's worst violence around the July Fourth holiday.

Gunman on scooter charged with murder, attempted murder, for series of New York City shootings

NEW YORK (AP) — A Brooklyn man accused of killing an 86-year-old and injuring three other men in a series of shootings while riding a scooter in New York City is charged with murder and attempted murder, police said Sunday.

In all, six apparently random shootings occurred in Brooklyn and Queens on Saturday, according to police.

The motive of the alleged gunman, identified Sunday as 25-year-old Thomas Abreu, was unknown, police said.

Police arrested Abreu without incident Saturday. The New York Police Department pulled an image of the gunman from video and sent it to officers, who spotted him a couple hours after the first shooting, police said.

Police confiscated a scooter and a 9 mm handgun with an extended magazine. Abreu was charged with murder, two counts of attempted murder and six counts of criminal possession of a weapon.

The shootings began around 11:10 a.m., when the gunman shot a 21-year-old man in the shoulder in Brooklyn. The man was brought to a hospital and was expected to survive, police said.

Soon after, Abreu allegedly shot Hamoo Saeidi, 86, of Queens, in the Richmond Hill area of Queens. Saeidi later died at a hospital.

Shortly afterward in Queens, witnesses reported a man on a scooter firing randomly into a group of people, although nobody was hurt.

Eight minutes later, a 44-year-old man was shot in the face. He was in critical condition at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center.

About one minute later, a 63-year-old man was shot in the torso. He was in stable condition at a hospital.

On Sunday, police reported a sixth related shooting at an intersection in Queens. A 40-year-old man fired upon was unhurt.

Killings in the nation's most populous city have risen in recent years to about where they were a decade ago but still well below an early-1990s peak. Gunfire injuries surged in New York City during the pandemic and remain stubbornly high. The city has confronted a series of high-profile crimes.

Mayor Eric Adams, a former New York City police captain, has called for getting more guns off the streets.

NATO unity will be tested at upcoming summit. Ukraine's possible entry may be the biggest challenge

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, LORNE COOK and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues with no end in sight, NATO's much-celebrated unity faces fresh strains when leaders gather for their annual summit this week in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The world's biggest security alliance is struggling to reach an agreement on admitting Sweden as its 32nd member. Military spending by member nations lags behind long-standing goals. An inability to compromise over who should serve as NATO's next leader forced an extension of the current secretary-general's term for an extra year.

Perhaps the most difficult questions are over how Ukraine should be eased into NATO. Some maintain admitting Ukraine would fulfill a promise made years ago and be a necessary step to deter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. Others fear it would be seen as a provocation that could spiral into an even wider conflict.

"I don't think it's ready for membership in NATO," President Joe Biden told CNN in an interview that aired on Sunday. He said joining NATO requires countries to "meet all the qualifications, from democratization to a whole range of other issues."

He said the United States should provide long-term security assistance to Ukraine — "the capacity to defend themselves" — as it does with Israel.

Bickering among friends is not uncommon, and the current catalogue of disputes pales in comparison with past fears that Donald Trump would turn his back on the alliance during his presidency. But the current challenges come at a moment when Biden and his counterparts are heavily invested in demonstrating harmony among members.

"Any fissure, any lack of solidarity provides an opportunity for those who would oppose the alliance," said Douglas Lute, U.S. ambassador to NATO under President Barack Obama.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is eager to exploit divisions as he struggles to gain ground in Ukraine and faces political challenges at home, including the aftermath of a brief revolt by the Wagner mercenary group.

"You don't want to present any openings," Lute said. "You don't want to present any gaps or seams."

By some measures, the war in Ukraine has reinvigorated NATO, which was created at the beginning of the Cold War as a bulwark against Moscow. NATO members have poured military hardware into Ukraine to help with its counteroffensive, and Finland ended a history of nonalignment to become NATO's 31st member.

"I think it's appropriate to look at all the success," Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky told The Associated Press. "So I think the invasion has strengthened NATO — exactly the opposite of what Putin anticipated."

He noted Germany's shift toward a more robust defense policy as well as an increase in military spending in other countries.

The latest test of NATO solidarity came Friday with what Biden said was a "difficult decision" to provide

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cluster munitions to Ukraine. More than two-thirds of alliance members have banned the weapon because it has a track record for causing many civilian casualties. The U.S., Russia and Ukraine are not among the more than 120 countries that have not signed a convention outlawing the use of the bombs.

As for Ukraine's possible entry into NATO, the alliance said in 2008 that Kyiv eventually would become a member. Since then, little action has been taken toward that goal. Putin occupied parts of Ukraine in 2014 and then tried to capture the capital in 2022 with his invasion.

"A gray zone is a green light for Putin," said Daniel Fried, a former U.S. ambassador to Poland who is now a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, called for a unified signal from NATO on Ukraine and for his country to join the alliance.

"It would be an important message to say that NATO is not afraid of Russia," Zelenskyy said through a translator in an ABC interview, when asked whether he would come to Vilnius. "Ukraine should get clear security guarantees while it is not in NATO. And that is a very important point. Only under these conditions our meeting would be meaningful. Otherwise, it's just another politics."

The U.S. and Germany insist that the focus should be on supplying weapons and ammunition to Ukraine, rather than taking the more provocative step of extending a formal invitation to join NATO. Countries on NATO's Eastern flank — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland — want firmer assurances on future membership.

NATO could decide to elevate its relationship with Ukraine, creating what would be known as the NATO-Ukraine Council and giving Kyiv a seat at the table for consultations.

Also in the spotlight in Vilnius will be Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the main obstacle to Sweden's attempts to join NATO alongside neighbor Finland.

Erdogan accuses Sweden of being too lenient on anti-Islamic demonstrations and militant Kurdish groups that have waged a long insurgency in Turkey.

Sweden recently changed its anti-terrorism legislation and lifted an arms embargo on Turkey. But a man burned a Quran outside a mosque in Stockholm last week, and Erdogan signaled that this would pose another hurdle. He equated "those who permitted the crime" to those who perpetrated it.

Turkey and the U.S. are also at an impasse over the sale of F-16 fighter jets. Erdogan wants the upgraded planes, but Biden says Sweden's NATO membership has to be dealt with first. McConnell said in the AP interview that he supports the sale of the fighter jets to Turkey "provided that the membership of Sweden is settled."

Underscoring the prominence of Turkey at the upcoming summit, Biden held a lengthy call with Erdogan aboard Air Force One on the way to London. During the conversation, Biden "conveyed his desire to welcome Sweden into NATO as soon as possible," according to the White House.

It's not the first time that Erdogan has sought to use a NATO summit for Turkish gain. In 2009, he held up the nomination of Anders Fogh Rasmussen as secretary-general but agreed to the move after securing some senior posts for Turkish officials at the alliance.

Max Bergmann, a former State Department official who leads the Europe Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said there's growing frustration among allies toward Erdogan, building on concerns about his ties to Putin, democratic backsliding and sanctions evasion.

"They've tried playing nice," Bergmann said. "The question is whether it's time to get much more confrontational."

Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orban, is also delaying his country's approval of Sweden's membership. In response, Idaho Sen. Jim Risch, the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is blocking a \$735 million U.S. arms sale to Hungary.

"We don't want members who aren't interested in doing everything possible to strengthen the alliance rather than the pursuit of their own or individual interests," Risch said. "I'm just sick and tired of it."

But he rejected the idea that these disagreements are a sign of weakness within NATO.

"These are kinds of things that always arise in an alliance," he said. "The fact that we've been able to

deal with them and will continue to deal with them proves that this is the most successful and strongest military alliance in the history of the world.”

At least one potentially difficult issue is off the summit agenda. Rather than seek consensus on a new NATO leader, members agreed to extend the tenure of Jens Stoltenberg, who’s held the job since 2014, for a year. It’s his fourth extension.

Most members wanted a woman to be the next secretary-general, and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had been considered a favorite. But Poland insisted on a candidate from the Baltic states because there had already been two Nordic secretaries general in a row. (Stoltenberg was a Norwegian prime minister and Rasmussen was a Danish prime minister.)

Others are skeptical of accepting a nominee from the Baltics, whose leaders tend to be more provocative in their approach to Russia, including supporting Ukraine’s desire to rapidly join NATO.

More disagreements loom over NATO’s updated plans for countering any invasion that Russia might launch on allied territory.

Cook reported from Brussels. Associated Press writer Sylvie Corbet in Paris contributed to this report.

Iga Swiatek finally reaches the Wimbledon quarterfinals. Novak Djokovic’s match was suspended

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Twice, Iga Swiatek was a single point from exiting Wimbledon on Sunday, a single point from the sort of confounding defeat at the place that gives her so much more trouble than any of the other Grand Slam tournaments.

Down a set and 6-5 in the second against Belinda Bencic, the No. 1-ranked Swiatek steeled herself and dispensed with the pair of match points. She erased the first with a booming forehand, the second with a forceful backhand, and soon enough, Swiatek was not just back in the contest, she was controlling it.

Frustrated in the late afternoon sunshine at Centre Court, so close to defeat in the early evening shadows, Swiatek managed to reach the Wimbledon quarterfinals for the first time by coming back for a 6-7 (4), 7-6 (2), 6-3 victory over the 14th-seeded Bencic.

“I threw everything I could at her,” Bencic said, “and I pushed her to the limit.”

Swiatek, a 22-year-old from Poland who will face wild-card entry Elina Svitolina of Ukraine for a semifinal berth, extended her unbeaten run to 14 matches, which includes claiming her fourth major title at the French Open last month.

Swiatek has won three championships at Roland Garros, and one at the U.S. Open, but she never before had been past the fourth round at the All England Club. Last year, she had a 37-match winning streak snapped during a third-round Wimbledon loss.

So comfortable on the red clay of Paris, so capable on the hard courts in New York — and at the Australian Open, where she has made it to the semifinals — Swiatek is just not quite the same player yet on the grass used at the year’s third Grand Slam tournament.

“I wasn’t sure that it’s going to end that way. I’m happy that I kind of kept my belief and I just played and I didn’t look back,” Swiatek said. “For sure this match is going to give me more belief. I’m happy that it was really tight and I could still play my game. These are important moments, for sure. You have to kind of take all the positive stuff from matches like that.”

Svitolina, a 2019 semifinalist at Wimbledon who had a baby last October and returned to the tour this April, advanced Sunday by edging two-time major champion Victoria Azarenka 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (11-9).

“After giving birth to our daughter, this is the second-happiest moment in my life,” Svitolina said.

The other quarterfinal on the top half of the women’s bracket will be No. 4 Jessica Pegula vs. 2019 French Open runner-up Marketa Vondrousova.

One men’s quarterfinals established Sunday was No. 8 Jannik Sinner against Roman Safiullin. No. 7 Andrey Rublev moved on but had to wait to find out his opponent, because seven-time Wimbledon champion

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Novak Djokovic's match against No. 17 Hubert Hurkacz was suspended at night after Djokovic took the first two sets 7-6 (6), 7-6 (6). That will resume Monday.

The big-hitting Bencic unfurled a right upper arm heavily wrapped in beige and white tape from her shoulder to above her elbow to deliver powerful shot after powerful shot. It was the kind of display that carried her to two medals for Switzerland — a gold in singles, a silver in doubles — at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, and a semifinal appearance at the 2019 U.S. Open.

And Swiatek frequently displayed signs of dismay.

She slapped her right thigh after ceding one point. After another, she looked up at her coach and her sports psychologist in the guest box with arms spread and palms up, as if to say, "What is happening?" Swiatek then walked behind the baseline with her back to the net and stared straight ahead at the green wall behind the Royal Box. During a changeover, she blocked everything out by draping a purple-and-green tournament towel over her head.

Swiatek certainly had her chances to move in front far earlier than she did.

Six times in the first set, she held a break point. Six times, she failed to cash in. Two came when she held set points while ahead 5-4 in the opener, but after Swiatek did not convert either, Bencic raced to a 6-1 lead in the ensuing tiebreaker before sealing it.

Swiatek headed to the locker room after that set and seemed to be back to her best immediately, finally breaking and eventually going up 3-1. But she let that advantage slip away by dropping the next three games and suddenly needed to erase the match points while behind 6-5.

Once past that key stretch, Swiatek straightened things out in the next tiebreaker.

From 2-all, she reeled off five consecutive points, the last of which was a double-fault by Bencic, to send the encounter to a third set.

And that, at long last, is when Swiatek looked like the woman who took over at No. 1 in the rankings in April 2022 and hasn't loosened her grip on that spot.

"She's incredibly precise or just has great depth and, kind of, the balls are really, really deep into your feet," Bencic said, noting that plenty of Swiatek's shots landed right on the lines.

Bencic screamed after missing a forehand to hand over a break point, then double-faulted for the 10th time to gift-wrap another 3-1 lead for Swiatek in the deciding set.

Swiatek protected that margin this time, and 23 minutes later — about an hour after being a point from losing — she was punching the air after delivering a cross-court forehand winner to end it.

"I'm just happy that I won it," Swiatek said, "cause it feels I'm going the right direction."

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

The FDA is being asked to look into Logan Paul's energy drink, which has the caffeine of 6 Coke cans

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — An influencer-backed energy drink that has earned viral popularity among children is facing scrutiny from lawmakers and health experts over its potentially dangerous levels of caffeine.

On Sunday, Sen. Charles Schumer called on the Food and Drug Administration to investigate PRIME, a beverage brand founded by the YouTube stars Logan Paul and KSI that has become something of an obsession among the influencers' legions of young followers.

"One of the summer's hottest status symbols for kids is not an outfit, or a toy—it's a beverage," said Schumer, a Democrat from New York. "But buyer and parents beware because it's a serious health concern for the kids it so feverishly targets."

Backed by two of YouTube's best known stars, PRIME was an immediate sensation when it launched last year, prompting long lines in grocery stores and reports of school yard resale markets.

Advertising itself as zero sugar and vegan, the neon-colored cans are among a growing number of energy drinks with elevated levels of caffeine; in PRIME's case, 200 milligrams per 12 ounces, equivalent to

about half a dozen Coke cans or nearly two Red Bulls.

That high content prompted bans from some schools in the United Kingdom and Australia where some pediatricians warned of possible health impacts on young children such as heart problems, anxiety, and digestive issues.

Company representatives, meanwhile, have defended the product as clearly labeled "not recommended for children under 18." They sell a separate sports drink, known as PRIME Hydration, which contains no caffeine at all. Representatives for PRIME did not immediately return a request for comment.

But in his letter to the FDA, Schumer claimed there was little noticeable difference in the online marketing of the two drinks – leading many parents to believe they were purchasing a juice for their kids, only to wind up with a "cauldron of caffeine."

"A simple search on social media for Prime will generate an eye-popping amount of sponsored content, which is advertising," he wrote. "This content and the claims made should be investigated, along with the ingredients and the caffeine content in the Prime energy drink."

'Insidious 5' topples 'Indiana Jones' before 'Mission: Impossible' launches

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Indiana Jones' reign atop the box office was short-lived. In its second weekend in theaters, the Disney release was usurped by another franchise fifth – "Insidious: The Red Door." The horror film starring and directed by Patrick Wilson scared up \$32.7 million in ticket sales from 3,188 theaters, according to studio estimates on Sunday.

It did better than the last installment, "Insidious: The Last Key," from 2018 and is the most any PG-13 horror movie has earned in its debut in the past two years.

"Insidious 5" was not well reviewed — but modestly budgeted scary movies are often critic-proof when it comes to the box office. This Blumhouse-produced franchise starring Wilson and Rose Byrne began in 2011 under the direction of James Wan and has been responsible for over \$570 million in global box office returns — and none of the films have cost more than \$16 million to produce. Only the first movie received a "fresh" rating on Rotten Tomatoes; The "Insidious" films more often garner sub 40% scores.

"The horror genre seems to have a never-ending allure for audiences," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "Horror movies are profitable and they're popular. Audiences love them and the accountants love them, too."

It was shrewd of Sony to release "Insidious" on the weekend between two Hollywood tentpoles, in this case "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" and "Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part I," which opens on Wednesday. But it was still a surprise that it was able to take No. 1 from something as well-known as "Indiana Jones."

"It was a perfect release date," Dergarabedian said. "This adds more complexity to the dynamics of the marketplace."

"Indiana Jones 5" took second place in its second weekend with \$26.5 million in North America (down 56% from its opening), bringing its domestic total to \$121.2 million. Globally it's earned an estimated \$247.9 million.

Indy had some other competition too, in "Sound of Freedom," a child trafficking drama starring Jim Caviezel, that opened on July 4 and nearly boasted similar ticket sales for the day. "Sound of Freedom" was made and distributed by Angel Studios, a faith-based, crowdfunded operation, and managed to come in third place this weekend with an estimated \$18.2 million from 2,850 theaters.

Brandon Purdie, head of theatrical distribution at Angel Studios, said in a statement that the numbers exceeded expectations and attributed its success to word of mouth.

"We're deeply grateful to AMC, Cinemark, Regal, and all our theater partners — and their hard-working theater staff members — for working with us to accommodate the surging demand for this film and having the courage to release 'Sound of Freedom' during the busiest movie season of the year," Purdie said.

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Part of Angel Studios operation involved the ability to buy "pay it forward" tickets on behalf of others. On opening day, the studio estimated that \$11.6 million came from direct box office and \$2.7 million through the pay it forward option. The film has been popular among right-wing pundits too and has appeared on QAnon message boards.

"Joy Ride" also made its theatrical debut this weekend in 2,820 locations and earned an underwhelming \$5.9 million to take sixth place behind "Elemental" and "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse." The R-rated comedy directed and co-written by Adele Lim follows four friends on an international trip, played by Ashley Park, Sherry Cola, Stephanie Hsu and Sabrina Wu.

The modestly budgeted Lionsgate release got rave reviews out of the South by Southwest Film Festival and maintains a 91% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, but it didn't motivate big crowds this weekend. Those that did go (58% women, 72% over age 25, according to PostTrak) gave it a B- CinemaScore, suggesting the movie did not meet expectations, which can sometimes be because of how the film was marketed. The hope is that word-of-mouth might help "Joy Ride" in the coming weeks.

"Joy Ride" is one of several raunchy, adult comedies in theaters this summer, including the Jennifer Lawrence movie "No Hard Feelings," which earned \$5.3 million in its third weekend, bringing its domestic total to \$40.3 million.

In more limited release, "The Lesson," a literary chamber thriller starring Richard E. Grant and Daryl McCormack, opened to \$157,752 from 268 screens.

With the summer movie season at its midway point, there is concern about the overall box office, which is about on par with where it was at the same point in 2022.

"By now, we thought we'd be well ahead of last year," Dergarabedian said. "But (movies like 'Insidious' and 'Sound of Freedom) add more revenue to the bottom line that a lot of people didn't expect. Sometimes surprises come along and that's great for theaters."

He added: "But we need the next few weeks to really overperform."

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

1. "Insidious: The Red Door," \$32.7 million.
2. "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," \$26.5 million.
3. "Sound of Freedom," \$18.2 million.
4. "Elemental," \$9.6 million.
5. "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," \$8 million.
6. "Joy Ride," \$5.9 million.
7. "No Hard Feelings," \$5.3 million.
8. "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts," \$5 million.
9. "The Little Mermaid," \$3.5 million.
10. "Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken," \$2.8 million.

Follow AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ldbahr.

Russia reports intercepting a missile over annexed Crimea and briefly halts traffic on key bridge

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian-installed authorities in the Crimean peninsula on Sunday reported shooting down a cruise missile near the city of Kerch and briefly suspending traffic on the Kerch bridge that links the annexed territory to Russia.

The Moscow-appointed governor of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said the interception of the missile by Russian air defenses didn't result in any damage or casualties. He didn't offer any details, including the type of the missile and its origin.

In the nearby Russian region of Rostov, authorities on Sunday also reported shooting down a missile.

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Gov. Vasily Golubev said the missile was Ukrainian, and its debris damaged the roofs of several buildings. No casualties have been reported.

Such attacks far beyond the front line on Russian regions on the border with Ukraine or the annexed Crimean peninsula have become common during the war in Ukraine that has just surpassed its 500-day mark.

Officials in Russian regions and Moscow-appointed authorities in Crimea, which was illegally annexed in 2014, have regularly reported explosions, drone strikes, and even cross-border raids by Ukrainian saboteurs. Kyiv has never openly taken responsibility for these attacks.

Last October, a massive explosion severely damaged the Kerch bridge — a key transport and supply route for Russian troops in Crimea — leaving it out of commission for weeks. In what appeared to be the first direct admission of Kyiv's involvement, Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar in a Telegram post on Saturday listed the attack among the country's main achievements in the war so far.

"(It's been) 273 days since (we) carried out the first strike on the Crimean bridge in order to disrupt the logistics for the Russians," Maliar wrote.

Among other successes, she also mentioned the sinking of the Moskva cruiser — something the Russian authorities refused to attribute to a Ukrainian attack.

Maliar's post on Sunday caught the attention of Russian state media and officials. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova once again called President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government a "terrorist regime" in an online statement condemning the attack.

In other developments:

— One of the defense commanders of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol who returned to Ukraine on Saturday announced going back to the battlefield. The sprawling steelworks was the last bastion of resistance as Russian forces took control of the port city early on in the war. Azovstal's more than 2,000 defenders left the steelworks in mid-May 2022 and were taken into Russian captivity.

The five leaders, some of whom were part of the Azov national guard regiment that Russia denounces as neo-Nazi, were freed in a September prisoner swap and taken to Turkey, where they were to remain until the end of the war under the Turkish president's protection. On Saturday, however, Zelenskyy brought them back to Ukraine. There was no immediate official explanation of how this squared with the conditions of the exchange.

Speaking to reporters in Ukraine upon returning, Denys Prokopenko — one of the five commanders — said he will return to the battlefield. "I am deeply convinced that the army is a team effort. And from today we will continue the fight together with you. We will definitely have our say in battle," Prokopenko was quoted by Ukrainian media as saying.

— The death toll from the Russian missile strike on Lyman, a city in the partially occupied Donetsk region that was struck on Saturday, rose to nine on Sunday. Lyman is a few kilometers (miles) from the front line, where Russian troops have recently intensified fighting in the forests of Kreminna.

Judge dismisses lawsuit seeking reparations for the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre

By JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

An Oklahoma judge has thrown out a lawsuit seeking reparations for the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, dashing an effort to obtain some measure of legal justice by survivors of the deadly racist rampage.

Judge Caroline Wall on Friday dismissed with prejudice the lawsuit trying to force the city and others to make recompense for the destruction of the once-thriving Black district known as Greenwood.

The order comes in a case by three survivors of the attack, who are all now over 100 years old and sued in 2020 with the hope of seeing what their attorney called "justice in their lifetime."

Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum said in a statement that the city has yet to receive the full court order. "The city remains committed to finding the graves of 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre victims, fostering economic investment in the Greenwood District, educating future generations about the worst event in our community's

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history, and building a city where every person has an equal opportunity for a great life," he said.

A lawyer for the survivors — Lessie Benningfield Randle, Viola Fletcher and Hughes Van Ellis — did not say Sunday whether they plan to appeal. But a group supporting the lawsuit suggested they are likely to challenge Wall's decision.

"Judge Wall effectively condemned the three living Tulsa Race Massacre Survivors to languish — genuinely to death — on Oklahoma's appellate docket," the group, Justice for Greenwood, said in a statement. "There is no semblance of justice or access to justice here."

Wall, a Tulsa County District Court judge, wrote in a brief order that she was tossing the case based on arguments from the city, regional chamber of commerce and other state and local government agencies. She had ruled against the defendants' motions to dismiss and allowed the case to proceed last year.

Local judicial elections in Oklahoma are technically nonpartisan, but Wall has described herself as a "Constitutional Conservative" in past campaign questionnaires.

The lawsuit was brought under Oklahoma's public nuisance law, saying the actions of the white mob that killed hundreds of Black residents and destroyed what had been the nation's most prosperous Black business district continue to affect the city today.

It contended that Tulsa's long history of racial division and tension stemmed from the massacre, during which an angry white mob descended on a 35-block area, looting, killing and burning it to the ground. Beyond those killed, thousands more were left homeless and living in a hastily constructed internment camp.

The city and insurance companies never compensated victims for their losses, and the massacre ultimately resulted in racial and economic disparities that still exist today, the lawsuit argued. It sought a detailed accounting of the property and wealth lost or stolen in the massacre, the construction of a hospital in north Tulsa and the creation of a victims compensation fund, among other things.

A Chamber of Commerce attorney previously said that the massacre was horrible, but the nuisance it caused was not ongoing.

Fletcher, who is 109 and the oldest living survivor, released a memoir last week about the life she lived in the shadow of the massacre. It will become widely available for purchase in August.

In 2019, Oklahoma's attorney general used the public nuisance law to force opioid drug maker Johnson & Johnson to pay the state \$465 million in damages. The Oklahoma Supreme Court overturned that decision two years later.

This story has been updated to reflect that Fletcher's memoir has already been published, rather than being published next month, and will become widely available for purchase in August.

Bleiberg reported from Dallas and Associated Press staff writer Michael Biesecker contributed reporting from Washington.

Election tensions rise in Zimbabwe after police bar opposition party from holding a rally

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

BINDURA, Zimbabwe (AP) — Opposition party supporters in Zimbabwe chanted and sang freedom songs outside a courthouse Sunday following a decision to ban them from holding a rally six weeks before elections.

The court in the town of Bindura upheld Friday's police order that the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change party could not hold the rally to officially launch its election campaign because the venue was unsuitable. The CCC had appealed in court against the order.

The decision increased tensions in the southern African nation, which has a history of violent and disputed elections.

The CCC immediately criticized the move as more evidence of a push by President Emmerson Mnangagwa and his ruling ZANU-PF party to silence the opposition using the police and the courts.

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Mnangagwa, 80, replaced long-ruling autocrat Robert Mugabe in a coup in 2017. He promised a new era of freedom and prosperity for Zimbabweans, who had seen their country's economy crumble amid some of the highest inflation rates ever seen.

But Mnangagwa has turned out to be as repressive as his predecessor, say critics, and the economy continues to collapse. There has been a crackdown on any kind of criticism.

The yellow-clad CCC supporters who gathered outside Bindura Magistrates Court sang "Dictatorship remains. When will this country be free?"

Police said that the opposition party's chosen venue for Sunday's rally was unsuitable because it was a "bushy" area with poor access via road, raising safety concerns for those attending. The police also said there was a "high risk" of the spread of communicable diseases.

A rally where thousands of ruling party supporters packed tightly together in a stadium to hear Mnangagwa speak was allowed to go ahead on Saturday.

"We are getting into a match with both legs tied," said CCC lawyer Agency Gumbo. "They would rather keep the opposition at the courts than on the campaign trail."

There was "an uneven playing ground that shows that the democratic process has been corroded," Gumbo said.

The CCC initially appealed against the police order at the High Court in the capital, Harare on Saturday. The case was moved to the court in Bindura, where the rally was scheduled to take place. The Bindura court eventually ruled late afternoon on Sunday, hours after the rally was meant to start at 10 a.m.

The CCC says the repression in the buildup to the Aug. 23 elections has included violence and intimidation against its supporters, the arrest of its officials and bans on its meetings. The opposition has also raised concerns over alleged voters' roll irregularities ahead of elections that will decide the presidency but also the makeup of the Parliament and nearly 2,000 local government positions.

Mnangagwa and his administration have denied the allegations of intimidation, with the president recently describing Zimbabwe as "a mature democracy."

CCC leader Nelson Chamisa lost narrowly to Mnangagwa in the 2018 presidential election and had his claim of vote-rigging rejected by the Constitutional Court.

Mnangagwa and the 45-year-old Chamisa are two of 11 candidates who have registered to stand in next month's presidential election.

More AP Africa news: <https://apnews.com/hub/africa>

What to stream this week: 'Asteroid City,' Lukas Nelson, 'Quarterback' and 'Secrets of Playboy'

By The Associated Press undefined

Albums from Lukas Nelson and Kool & The Gang plus a Spanish-language spin-off of "Bird Box" are among the new television, movies, music and games headed to a device near you.

Among the offerings worth your time as selected by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists are the dinosaur-hunting video game Exoprimal and the new Netflix series "Quarterback," which takes an unprecedented look at the lives of popular QBs Patrick Mahomes, Kirk Cousins and Marcus Mariota.

NEW MOVIES TO STREAM

— Wes Anderson's stylish and star-studded "Asteroid City" is coming to premium video on demand (VOD) on Tuesday. This outing is a whimsically constructed play-within-a-play that's set in the American midcentury Desert West at a junior stargazer convention, bringing together several kid geniuses, their parents, including Scarlett Johansson's Marilyn-esque movie star and Jason Schwartzman's widowed war photographer, scientists, military types, some singing cowboys and a very special cameo from Jeff Goldblum. I wrote in my review that it is very, very Wes Anderson and also a return to form. It'll also still be available in theaters around the country for anyone still hoping to catch it on the big screen.

— Remember the Sandra Bullock-in-a-blindfold movie "Bird Box" that seemingly everyone with a Netflix

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account watched over the holidays in 2018? Well, the streamer made a spin-off, in Spanish, that will debut on Friday, July 14. The blindfolds are once again paramount in "Bird Box Barcelona," in which a father played by Mario Casas tries to protect his daughter from the monsters. Álex and David Pastor wrote and directed this installment based on Josh Malerman's 2014 novel.

— Several other films big and small will be available on VOD starting on Tuesday, including "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts," set in 1994 and starring Dominique Fishback and Anthony Ramos. There's also the independent gem "The Starling Girl," a coming-of-age story about a teenage girl (Eliza Scanlen) who is trying to find her identity while adhering to the rules of her isolated religious community. Her life gets complicated when she develops a crush on the handsome youth pastor (Lewis Pullman).

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

NEW MUSIC TO STREAM

— Country star Lukas Nelson calls his latest album "the perfect setlist." "Sticks and Stones," the follow-up release to his 2021 album "A Few Stars Apart," includes the first single, "More Than Friends," featuring Lainey Wilson. Another single, "Alcohallelujah," touches on both the highs and lows of drinking, with Nelson singing: "Forgive me, Father, for I've been inspired /I got bars and bars of melodies and memories/ May this spirit lift me ever higher." The new 12-track album, out Friday, July 14, sees Nelson backed by his longtime band Promise of the Real.

— Kool & The Gang and summer go together like peanut butter and jelly. The R&B, funk and soul icons — celebrating their 60th anniversary next year — have a new album, "People Just Wanna Have Fun." The first single is infectious stuff, the happy, funky "Let's Party," featuring vocals from Sha Sha Jones. The band is led by founding members Robert "Kool" Bell on bass and George "Funky" Brown, the keyboardist, drummer and producer, whose memoir "Too Hot: Kool & The Gang & Me" arrives Tuesday. In addition to Jones, vocals on the album also include Shawn McQuiller, Lavell Evans, Dominique Karan, Rick Marcel and Walt Anderson, plus rappers Ami Miller & Ole'.

— A 1998 video recording of Rodgers & Hammerstein's music theater classic "Oklahoma!" — starring then-newcomer Hugh Jackman — is hitting movie theaters for a lot less than a Broadway ticket. Jackman starred as Curly, alongside Maureen Lipman, Josefina Gabrielle and Shuler Hensley, during the show's cheered run in London. The film will be screened in more than 800 cinemas around the globe for two days only, on Sunday, July 16 and Wednesday, July 19 — including the U.S., U.K., Canada, Ireland, Norway and Australia. It features some very hummable songs, including "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top" and the joyous title tune.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

NEW SERIES TO STREAM

— The title "Secrets of Playboy" alone sparks intrigue and the docuseries was a big hit for A&E because of its in-depth look at an alleged underbelly of the brand and its founder Hugh Hefner. The series returns for a second season on Monday with more interviews with former Playboy models, Playmates, and archival footage that examines Playboy's impact on pop culture and those directly involved with the company.

— Football fans: would you like to know exactly what your favorite team's quarterback is thinking during a season, from practices, to wins and losses, and what they say and do in a huddle? A new Netflix series called — you guessed it — "Quarterback" —takes an unprecedented look at the lives of popular QBs Patrick Mahomes, Kirk Cousins and Marcus Mariota for the entire 2022 season. The players were mic'd for every game and cameras followed them home. "Quarterback" premieres July 12.

— Season five of the silly, witty, Emmy-nominated comedy "What We Do in the Shadows" premieres July 13 on FX. The documentary-style show follows the adventures of a group of vampire roommates living in a decrepit mansion. These hundreds-year-old vampires go out into the world and interact with the population. If it sounds ridiculous, it is, and that's the point.

— Alicia Rancilio

NEW VIDEO GAMES TO PLAY

— California indie developer Night School Studio charmed gamers in 2016 with Oxenfree, the tale of a group of meddling teens who stumble across a series of dimensional rifts while exploring a mysterious

island. Night School, which has since been acquired by Netflix, is at long last returning to the story with the much anticipated Oxenfree II: Lost Signals. The sequel revolves around Riley, an environmental researcher who's assigned to her coastal Oregon hometown to investigate puzzling radio transmissions. Fans of the original — not to mention the supernatural smash "Stranger Things" — can book a return visit for Wednesday on PlayStation 5/4, Nintendo Switch, PC and the Netflix mobile app.

— Most of us who think about what 2040 will look like are worried about things like war, climate change and our new AI overlords, but Capcom's Exoprimal proposes a different existential threat: dinosaur outbreaks! Your mission is to team up online with four other players and send the voracious beasts back to extinction. You are armed with futuristic weapons and high-tech "exosuits" of armor — but you also have to compete with other squads to collect the most trophies. Capcom has plenty of experience with fearsome creatures, thanks to its popular Monster Hunter series, but even veterans of that franchise may be overwhelmed when Exoprimal drops dozens of raptors on them at once. The dinos arrive Friday, July 14, on PlayStation 5/4, Xbox X/S/One and PC.

— Lou Kesten

Catch up on AP's entertainment coverage here: <https://apnews.com/entertainment>.

UN chief says Sudan is on the brink of a 'full-scale civil war' after nearly 3 months of fighting

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Sudan is on the brink of a "full-scale civil war" as fierce clashes between rival generals continued unabated Sunday in the capital of Khartoum.

Guterres warned late Saturday that the war between the Sudanese military and a powerful paramilitary force is likely to destabilize the entire region, according to Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for the U.N. chief.

Sudan descended into chaos after months of tension between military chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan and his rival, Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, exploded into open fighting in mid-April.

Health Minister Haitham Mohammed Ibrahim said last month that the clashes have killed over 3,000 people and wounded over 6,000 others. The death tally, however, is highly likely to be much higher, he said. More than 2.9 million people have fled their homes to safer areas inside Sudan or crossed into neighboring countries, according to U.N. figures.

The fighting began 18 months after the two generals led a military coup in October 2021 that toppled a Western-backed civilian transition government. The coup and ensuing conflict dashed Sudanese hopes of a peaceful shift to democracy after a popular uprising forced the military removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir in April 2019.

The war has turned the capital Khartoum and other urban areas across the country into battlefields.

Residents in Khartoum said fierce fighting was underway early Sunday south of the capital. The warring factions were using heavy weapons in battles in the Kalaka neighborhood and the military's aircraft were seen hovering over the area, said resident Abdalla al-Fatih.

In his statement, Guterres also condemned an airstrike Saturday that health authorities said killed at least 22 people in Omdurman, a city just across the Nile from the Khartoum. The assault was one of the deadliest in the conflict so far.

The RSF blamed the military for the attack in Omdurman. The military denied the accusation, saying in a statement Sunday that its air force didn't carry out any airstrikes in the city Saturday.

The secretary-general also decried the large-scale violence and casualties in the western region of Darfur, which has experienced some of the worst fighting in the ongoing conflict, Haq said in a statement.

"There is an utter disregard for humanitarian and human rights law that is dangerous and disturbing," Guterres said.

U.N. officials have said the violence in the region has recently taken on an ethnic dimension, with the

RSF and Arab militias reportedly targeting non-Arab tribes in Darfur, a sprawling region consisting of five provinces. Last month, the governor of Darfur, Mini Arko Minawi, said the region was sliding back to its past genocide, referring to the conflict that engulfed the region in the early 2000s.

Entire towns and villages in West Darfur province were overrun by the RSF and their allied militias, forcing tens of thousands of residents to flee to neighboring Chad. Activists have reported many residents killed, women and girls raped, and properties looted and burned to the ground.

There were clashes between the military and the RSF elsewhere in Sudan on Sunday, including the province of North Kordofan, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Egypt, meanwhile, said it will host a meeting on Thursday for Sudan's neighboring countries. The gathering aims at establishing "effective mechanisms" to help find a peaceful settlement to the conflict in coordination with other international and regional efforts, Ahmed Fahmy, spokesman for Egypt's presidency, said in a statement.

Fahmy provided no further details on the gathering.

The efforts come as talks between warring factions in the Saudi Arabian coastal city of Jeddah repeatedly failed to stop the fighting. The Jeddah talks were brokered by Saudi Arabia and the United States

Stymied by the Supreme Court, Biden wants voters to have the final say on his agenda

By COLLEEN LONG and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After major blows to his agenda by the Supreme Court, President Joe Biden is intent on making sure voters will have the final say.

When the court's conservative majority effectively killed his plan to cancel or reduce federal student loan debts for millions of people, Biden said, "Republicans snatched away the hope that they were given." When the justices ended race-based affirmative action in college admissions, he said, "This is not a normal court." When they overturned *Roe v. Wade* and a national right to abortion last year, the president said, "Voters need to make their voices heard."

As Biden heads into the 2024 election, he is running not only against the Republicans who control one-half of Congress but also against the conservative bloc that dominates the nation's highest court. It's a subtle but significant shift in approach toward the Supreme Court, treating it more like a political entity even as Biden stops short of calling for an overhaul.

That shift is becoming apparent in everything from the White House's messaging to its legal strategy.

"The president respects the court's authority, but if its judgments are going to be political and there are members of the court who are saying that, he owes it to voters to make it clear what his positions are and what he's doing to address it," said Ron Klain, his former chief of staff.

"Many members of the current court testified that *Roe* is settled law and still overturned it," he added, referring to the court's ruling on abortion. "That has its consequences."

Biden, who once led the Senate Judiciary Committee, is focusing on the politicization of the court as a way to encourage voters to back him. Yet he has not embraced any effort to make big changes to the court.

Instead, Biden is increasingly vocal about his belief that the court is abandoning mainstream constitutional interpretation. He tells voters they need more Democrats in Congress and a Democrat in the White House to counter the impact of the conservative-leaning court.

Biden has won his share of cases, including on immigration, before a court where conservatives hold a 6-3 majority. But the student loan defeat capped a term when justices imposed significant roadblocks.

White House officials say Biden is keen to explore other ways to pursue the same priorities and explain to the American people about the obstacles.

"There's only upside in running against the court as an institution because the court is doing things that are wildly unpopular and they're preventing the president from implementing his agenda," said Chris Kang, chief counsel of the progressive group Demand Justice and a onetime deputy counsel to President

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Barack Obama.

"I think that it's important to make clear that the Supreme Court is making it impossible to implement and advance policies that should not have any controversy attached to them," he added.

Republicans are working to portray Biden as overstepping his legal authority in pursuit of his agenda. They say the high court's policies are in step with much of the country and they are trying to motivate their own voters by highlighting what the GOP has achieved through court rulings.

Former President Donald Trump, at the recent Faith and Freedom Coalition conference in Washington, praised the three justices he had nominated to the Supreme Court. "Exactly one year ago today, those justices were the pivotal votes in the Supreme Court's landmark decision ending the constitutional atrocity known as *Roe v. Wade*," Trump said.

He drew a standing ovation by noting that "conservatives had been trying for 50 years," to overturn that ruling. "But I got it done and nobody ever thought it was a possibility."

Other administration officials said the court's conservative dominance has lowered the political cost to Biden when the justices scuttle some of his legally suspect actions such as on student loans and coronavirus mandates. On the latter, the Supreme Court struck down Biden's attempt to require employees of large companies to get shots but left the requirement in place for health care workers, though by that time the pandemic had started to wane.

Klain insisted that everything Biden has put forward had a solid legal basis and was approved by the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel.

"There was no sense of taking the legal issues lightly or just 'do it and take whatever the court says,'" he said.

Confidence in the Supreme Court fell to its lowest point in at least 50 years after the leaked draft opinion in the abortion case in 2022. Those who view the current court favorably are largely Republican.

According to the Pew Research Center's September 2022 report, only 28% of Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents now view the court favorably, down nearly 40 percentage points since 2020. And people in the United States increasingly favor term limits.

Positive views of the court among Republicans and those who lean Republican has increased to 73%. As a result, the partisan gap is larger than at any other point in the 35 years of polling that Pew has done on the court.

Republicans have focused for years on remaking the federal judiciary and Supreme Court. When Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-K.Y., was the majority leader, he refused to even meet in 2016 with Obama's pick for the high court — current Attorney General Merrick Garland, a federal judge at that time. The nomination stalled until a Republican president, Trump, took over.

Establishment GOP operatives backed Trump because of his pledge to name as many judges to the bench as possible. Their gamble worked. Trump ended up with three Supreme Court nominees and 54 federal appeals court judges, reshaping the courts for a generation.

Democrats are now finally understanding the power of judges as a voting tool, and Biden has made judicial nominations a priority, appointing a record number of judges for a president at this point in his first term, including some of the most diverse picks yet to the judiciary. Biden aides plan on highlighting those accomplishments during the reelection campaign, but acknowledge it's only a small salve to their troubles at the high court.

Biden has taken to warning voters about what else the Supreme Court might do in the future, whether rolling back same-sex marriage rights or access to contraception.

"President Biden is being direct with the American people about the stakes these extreme decisions that jettison decades of longstanding precedent have for their fundamental freedoms and their daily lives," said White House spokesman Andrew Bates.

Part of Biden's unwillingness to go further to reshape the Supreme Court comes from a sense of history. Those pushing social change stood by the court after *Brown v. Board of Education*, a major civil rights case, and even *Roe v. Wade*, holding up its autonomy as a way to push forward. Backing away from that,

particularly for an establishment Democrat like Biden, is not easy.

As Biden said in an interview with MSNBC, "I think if we start the process of trying to expand the court, we're going to politicize it maybe forever in a way that is not healthy,"

Leah Litman, a professor of law at the University of Michigan and co-host of "Strict Scrutiny" podcast about the Supreme Court, said that while Biden was unlikely to go that far, "there are a variety of things that Democratic politicians could run on that would actually allow them to more explicitly push back against the court."

Besides expanding the size of the Supreme Court and or the lower courts, she said, other options include stripping the Supreme Court of jurisdiction over certain cases, setting term limits and implementing ethics changes.

All of them, she said, are things the party could embrace "as part of their recognition that the court has politicized itself."

Follow the AP's coverage of the U.S. Supreme Court at <https://apnews.com/hub/us-supreme-court>

The BBC suspends presenter over claims he paid a teenager for explicit photos

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The BBC said Sunday that it has suspended a leading presenter who is alleged to have paid a teenager for sexually explicit photos.

As senior British politicians urged a rapid investigation, the broadcaster said it was working to establish the facts of "a complex and fast-moving set of circumstances."

The U.K.'s publicly funded national broadcaster was scrambling to head off a worsening crisis after The Sun newspaper reported allegations that the male presenter gave a youth 35,000 pounds (\$45,000) starting in 2020 when the young person was 17.

Neither the star nor the youth was identified. Amid speculation on social media about the identity of the presenter, several of the BBC's best-known stars spoke up to say it wasn't them.

Though the age of sexual consent in Britain is 16, it's a crime to make or possess indecent images of anyone under 18.

The Sun said the young person's mother had complained to the BBC in May but that the presenter had remained on the air.

The BBC said in a statement on Sunday that it "first became aware of a complaint in May," but that "new allegations were put to us on Thursday of a different nature."

The broadcaster said "the BBC takes any allegations seriously and we have robust internal processes in place to proactively deal with such allegations." It said the corporation had also been in touch with "external authorities," but did not specify whether that was the police.

"This is a complex and fast-moving set of circumstances and the BBC is working as quickly as possible to establish the facts in order to properly inform appropriate next steps," the BBC said.

"We can also confirm a male member of staff has been suspended."

Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer held crisis talks with the broadcaster's director-general about what she called "deeply concerning" allegations. She said Director General Tim Davie had assured her the BBC was "investigating swiftly and sensitively."

"Given the nature of the allegations, it is important that the BBC is now given the space to conduct its investigation, establish the facts and take appropriate action. I will be kept updated," she wrote on social media.

Rachel Reeves, economy spokeswoman for the opposition Labour Party, said the BBC needed to "speed up their processes" and "get their house in order."

Commercial U.K. broadcaster ITV recently faced its own scandal after Phillip Schofield, a long-time host on the channel's popular morning show, quit in May, admitting he had lied about an affair with a much

younger colleague.

ITV executives were summoned to Parliament to answer questions about whether the broadcaster had a "toxic" work culture and had covered up misconduct by stars.

The BBC faces greater scrutiny than other broadcasters because it is taxpayer-funded and committed to remaining impartial in its news coverage. It was engulfed in a storm over free speech and political bias in March when its leading sports presenter, former England soccer player Gary Lineker, criticized the government's immigration policy on social media.

Lineker was suspended — and then restored after other sports presenters, analysts and Premier League players boycotted the BBC airwaves in solidarity.

Deputies accused a Texas sheriff of corruption and dysfunction. Then came the mass shooting

By JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

COLDSRING, Texas (AP) — Sheriff Greg Capers was the classic picture of a Texas lawman as he announced the capture of a suspected mass killer: white cowboy hat on his head, gold star pinned to his chest, white cross on his belt and a large pistol emblazoned with his name on his hip.

For four days, Francisco Oropeza had evaded hundreds of officers after allegedly killing five neighbors when they complained that his late-night shooting was keeping their baby awake. The sheriff said his deputies arrived in 11 minutes, but Oropeza was gone. With the search over, Capers had a message for the victims' families.

"They can rest easy now," Capers told a row of television cameras in May. The burly sheriff later personally hauled the "coward" across a town square into court.

But an Associated Press investigation led the sheriff's office to disclose that deputies took nearly four times as long as Capers initially said to arrive at the mass shooting.

The AP also found Capers' turn in the national spotlight belied years of complaints about corruption and dysfunction that were previously unknown outside the piney woods of San Jacinto County.

Capers did not directly respond to requests for comment.

What has played out under his watch is indicative of challenges police face across rural America, where small staffs must patrol vast jurisdictions. It also reveals the difficulty in holding powerful law enforcement officials accountable in isolated areas with little outside oversight.

Former deputies said Capers' office has long neglected basic police work while pursuing asset seizures that boost its \$3.5 million budget but don't always hold up in court.

Deputies did not arrest Oropeza last year after he was reported for domestic violence and never contacted federal authorities to check his immigration status, although immigration officials say he was in the country illegally. Capers' department also appears to have done little to investigate after another family's call to 911 reporting a different man's backyard gunfire nearly struck their young daughter.

The county paid \$240,000 in 2020 to settle a whistleblower's lawsuit accusing Capers of wide-ranging misconduct. Last year, county leaders hired a police consulting firm to examine the sheriff's office but disregarded its recommendation to have the Texas Rangers' public corruption squad investigate.

The LION Institute found evidence that Capers fostered a "fear-based" culture and oversaw the improper seizure of tens of thousands of dollars of property. The group's report, obtained by the AP, also alleges deputies failed to follow up on reports of 4,000 crimes, including sexual and child abuse.

"The sheriff and his inner circle do whatever they want, regardless of law, with no consequence," said Michael Voytko, who spent nearly five years as a San Jacinto County deputy before leaving in 2020 for another law enforcement job. "There was no accountability there for any of the deputies."

After the April 28 mass shooting outside Cleveland, 46 miles (74 kilometers) northwest of Houston, Capers' second-in-command said the sheriff initially gave his "best guesstimation" about the response time. Chief Deputy Tim Kean added that low pay has left the office short of deputies to patrol the county, where

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27,000 people live scattered along dirt roads through thick forest.

Kean also dismissed the consultant's accusations as "straight-up lies" drummed up by the sheriff's political opponents and said the county settled the whistleblower lawsuit to avoid a costly trial.

"This place is open any time to the Texas Rangers," Kean said in an interview. "Any day they can come in here and go through this whole building top to bottom."

In April, as Wilson Garcia and his wife tried to calm their crying baby boy, gunfire from the lot next door echoed off the pines around their house.

Garcia said he walked over and asked Oropeza to take his target practice farther from their home. When Oropeza refused, Garcia and his wife made their first of many 911 calls at 11:34 p.m.

By that point, Oropeza was already on the sheriff's radar.

Deputies were called to Oropeza's home at least three times in the prior two years, according to call logs. One came last June, when his wife reported he punched and kicked her, "pounded" her head on the "driveway gravel" and threatened to kill her, court records said. The logs show a deputy arrived 46 minutes later; Oropeza was gone.

An arrest warrant for Oropeza was dropped late the next month after his wife said she didn't want to press charges, according to Kean. She is accused of hindering his apprehension in the mass shooting.

Experts say Oropeza's immigration record barred him from having a firearm. The 38-year-old Mexican national was deported four times before 2016 and illegally reentered the county, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. His lawyer, Anthony Osso, declined to comment on his client's immigration status and said Oropeza will plead not guilty to capital murder.

Kean said deputies can't check immigration records themselves and did not contact ICE because they don't find the agency responsive.

The logs do not clarify the nature of all the calls to Oropeza's home, but Capers has said his office previously received complaints about the man's gunfire.

Garcia recalled telling his wife to "get inside" that April night as he watched their neighbor run toward their home, reloading his rifle. At 12:11 a.m., a dispatcher heard gunfire over the open phone line, according to a detailed timeline that the sheriff's office provided to the AP in response to questions.

Deputies arrived on the street five minutes later, which was 42 minutes after the first 911 call, according to the timeline. Garcia's wife, his 9-year-old son and three others were dead.

Kean and another sheriff's official said the initial calls came in as harassment complaints about Oropeza shooting on his own property and that some calls required a Spanish translator. They said the three deputies on duty were working on an aggravated robbery and the time it took them to respond was "average" given the county's size and the area's rough roads.

The next day, when Keith and Tiffany Pinkston heard about the shooting, their first thought was, "That could have been us."

In January, the family was enjoying a backyard campfire with friends when they said their neighbor began shooting. Bullets blew holes through their fence and one sprayed sandy soil up at their 8-year-old daughter as she ran, screaming, they recalled.

The group scrambled for cover and called 911. When deputies arrived nearly 40 minutes later, the Pinkstons said, they did not ask for the neighbor's identification.

Two months later, state police arrested the neighbor on a manslaughter charge in a deadly car crash. Court documents show he was a convicted sex offender who had failed to register with Houston police the year before. His felony record prohibited him from possessing a firearm.

Kean said deputies "routinely" identify callers and anyone they are calling about, make sure no one is wanted, and look for evidence of gunfire, although he could not say whether they did so at the Pinkstons' home. In logs, deputies wrote that the callers were "heavily intoxicated" and their neighbor denied having a weapon. The deputies suggested the gunfire was fireworks.

Keith Pinkston, a self-described "country boy" who often carries a handgun and generally supports po-

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lice, showed the AP round holes in his fence that he said were from shooting by the neighbor. He called Capers and his deputies "worthless."

Capers spent decades as a deputy in the Houston-area before being elected sheriff in 2014. He took over a 32-officer force with a history of corruption chronicled in a 1984 book, "Terror on Highway 59," and inspired a made-for-TV movie. The book documented how Sheriff James 'Humpy' Parker ran roughshod over the rights of motorists, particularly those of color, in the 1970s. Parker eventually pleaded guilty to federal civil rights charges and resigned.

"We thought we'd gotten over that," County Commissioner David Brandon said. "But obviously we haven't."

By last year, county commissioners were concerned enough about staff turnover that they paid the LION Institute, the police consulting firm, nearly \$50,000 to review the sheriff's office and suggest improvements.

The group's report lays out evidence that the sheriff's staff falsified training records and failed to pursue 4,000 reported crimes over the years, including 106 alleged sexual assaults. The report said Capers dismissed concerns about an affair between a deputy and an informant and brushed aside reports that the same deputy leaked investigative information to suspects.

When LION CEO Mike Alexander tried to present the findings to commissioners in a closed-door meeting in August, he was surprised to find the sheriff there. Alexander, a former police chief, wrote in his subsequent report that Capers' presence was "analogous to allowing a possible organized crime suspect to be present during a briefing between the investigating detective and prosecuting attorney."

Kean denied deputies neglected investigations, largely blaming an "admin screw-up" in the department's computer system and saying some victims couldn't identify their attackers. He also said Alexander never interviewed Capers, him or other deputies.

Two commissioners told the AP they deferred to the district attorney, rather than referring the matter to the Texas Rangers. The other two dismissed the inquiry as "a witch hunt" that rehashed a disgruntled former deputy's lawsuit.

That lawsuit, brought by Michael Flynt, accused the sheriff's office of retaliating after he raised concerns about Capers' conduct. Flynt was a retired Houston-area officer whom Capers recruited to run an undercover drug unit in early 2017. The sheriff's office had fired him by June 2018, charging Flynt with forging government documents by allegedly lying on his job application.

Judges eventually dismissed and expunged the charges. Flynt, 57, unsuccessfully ran for sheriff against Capers in 2020.

That year, Capers acknowledged in a deposition that he told a former deputy to scrub Facebook of information about the deputy's romantic relationship with a confidential informant in a series of gambling cases. The county settled Flynt's lawsuit two months later.

After less than two years working amid Capers' "corruption," Flynt said he understands "why people hate cops."

One local whose life was upended by the gambling busts is Rickie Wood. Even after all charges against him were dropped, Wood said he was unable to recover much of the property deputies seized when they raided his used car dealership in 2015. The items included titles to more than 25 vehicles and his pickup truck, he said.

"They took everything that I owned to where I couldn't even operate my business," the 68-year-old said. "It was devastating."

Wood presented a list of more than two dozen items to the sheriff's office in 2017 describing some, including his truck, as badly damaged. Others, including two laptops and a Smith & Wesson revolver, were missing.

Kean said the sheriff's office had warrants for the seizures and he wasn't aware of anything being broken or lost, noting that the office keeps a careful inventory of property.

Former deputies said questionable seizures were common, and Capers conceded in his deposition to paying one person \$2,815 for missing property, including diamond earrings.

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He also said under oath that he may have used seized funds to attend a sheriff's conference in Reno, Nevada, after the commissioners refused to foot the bill.

The sheriff said the trip was for training but acknowledged he also spent some of it gambling. ____
Associated Press videojournalist Lekan Oyekanmi contributed to this report.

Today in History: July 10, the Battle of Britain begins in World War II

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, July 10, the 191st day of 2023. There are 174 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 10, 1940, during World War II, the Battle of Britain began as the Luftwaffe started attacking southern England. (The Royal Air Force was ultimately victorious.)

On this date:

In 1509, theologian John Calvin, a key figure of the Protestant Reformation, was born in Noyon, Picardy, France.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson personally delivered the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') to the Senate and urged its ratification. (However, the Senate rejected it.)

In 1925, jury selection took place in Dayton, Tennessee, in the trial of John T. Scopes, charged with violating the law by teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution. (Scopes was convicted and fined, but the verdict was overturned on a technicality.)

In 1929, American paper currency was reduced in size as the government began issuing bills that were approximately 25 percent smaller.

In 1951, armistice talks aimed at ending the Korean War began at Kaesong.

In 1985, the Greenpeace protest ship Rainbow Warrior was sunk with explosives in Auckland, New Zealand, by French intelligence agents; one activist was killed.

In 1991, Boris N. Yeltsin took the oath of office as the first elected president of the Russian republic. President George H.W. Bush lifted economic sanctions against South Africa.

In 2002, the House approved, 310-113, a measure to allow airline pilots to carry guns in the cockpit to defend their planes against terrorists (President George W. Bush later signed the measure into law).

In 2005, a search-and-rescue team found the body of a missing U.S. commando in eastern Afghanistan, bringing an end to the desperate search for the last member of an ill-fated, four-man special forces unit that had disappeared the previous month.

In 2015, to the cheers of thousands, South Carolina pulled the Confederate flag from its place of honor at the Statehouse after more than 50 years.

In 2020, President Donald Trump commuted the sentence of his longtime political confidant Roger Stone, intervening in extraordinary fashion in a criminal case that was central to the Russia investigation and concerned Trump's own conduct; the move came days before Stone was to begin serving a 40-month sentence for lying to Congress, witness tampering and obstructing the House investigation into whether Trump's 2016 campaign had colluded with Russia.

Ten years ago: Dzhokhar Tsarnaev pleaded not guilty in the Boston Marathon bombing in a seven-minute proceeding that marked his first appearance in public since his capture in mid-April 2013. In a first, the Navy succeeded in landing a drone the size of a fighter jet aboard an aircraft carrier, the USS George H.W. Bush, off the Virginia coast. David Ortiz doubled in his first at-bat to become baseball's career leader in hits as a designated hitter and hit a two-run homer an inning later, leading the Boston Red Sox to an 11-4 victory over Seattle.

Five years ago: A daring rescue mission in Thailand was completed successfully, as the last four of the 12 boys who were trapped in a flooded cave for more than two weeks were brought to safety along with their soccer coach. The other eight had been brought out in the two preceding days. Rancher Dwight

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Hammond and his son Steven, who had been convicted of intentionally setting fires on public land in Oregon, were pardoned by President Donald Trump.

One year ago: Japan's governing party and its coalition partner scored a major victory in a parliamentary election, possibly propelled by sympathy votes in the wake of the assassination two days earlier of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Sri Lanka's opposition political parties met to install a new government a day after the president and prime minister offered to resign in the most dramatic day of monthslong political turmoil. Dozens of Ukrainian emergency workers labored to pull people out of the rubble after a Russian rocket attack smashed into apartment buildings in eastern Ukraine, killing at least 15 people.

Today's Birthdays: Actor William Smithers is 96. Actor Lawrence Pressman is 84. Singer Mavis Staples is 84. Actor Mills Watson is 83. Actor Robert Pine is 82. Rock musician Jerry Miller (Moby Grape) is 80. International Tennis Hall of Famer Virginia Wade is 78. Folk singer Arlo Guthrie is 76. Rock musician Dave Smalley is 74. Country-folk singer-songwriter Cheryl Wheeler is 72. Rock singer Neil Tennant (Pet Shop Boys) is 69. Banjo player Bela Fleck is 65. Actor Fiona Shaw is 65. Bluegrass singer-musician Tim Surratt (Balsam Range) is 60. Actor Alec Mapa is 58. Country singer-songwriter Ken Mellons is 58. Rock musician Peter DiStefano (Porno for Pyros) is 58. Actor Gale Harold is 54. Country singer Gary LeVox (leh-VOH') (Rascal Flatts) is 53. Actor Aaron D. Spears is 52. Actor Sofia Vergara is 51. Rockabilly singer Imelda May is 49. Actor Adrian Grenier (grehn-YAY') is 47. Actor Chiwetel Ejiofor (CHOO'-ih-tehl EHJ'-ee-oh-for) is 46. Actor Gwendoline Yeo is 46. Actor Thomas Ian Nicholas is 43. Singer-actor Jessica Simpson is 43. Actor Heather Hemmens is 39. Actor Emily Skeggs (TV: "When We Rise") is 33. Rapper/singer Angel Haze is 32. Pop singer Perrie Edwards (Little Mix) is 30.