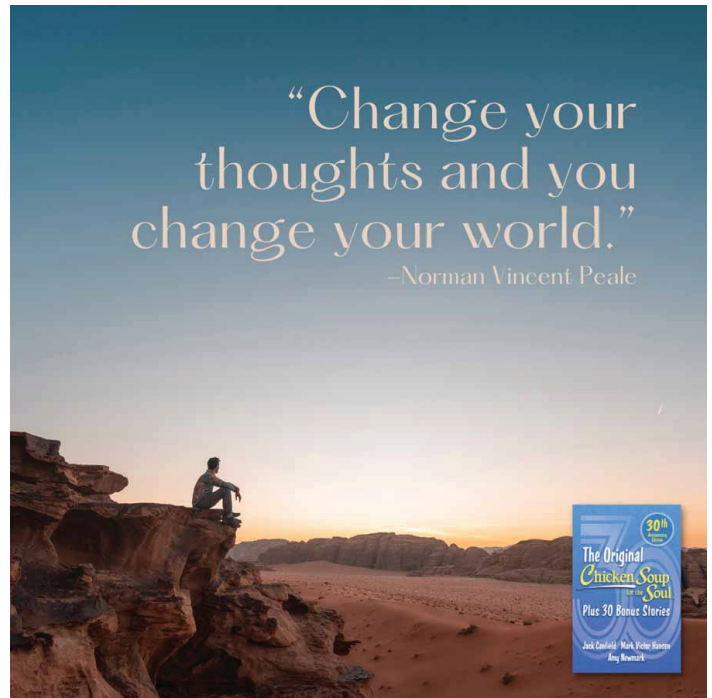


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“Change your thoughts and you change your world.”

—Norman Vincent Peale

Thursday, July 20

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken breast on bun, sliced tomato, potato salad, mandarin oranges, cucumber salad.

Water Tower Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, 11:30 a.m. to Noon followed by open house at City Hall, noon to 1:30 p.m.

Sip and Shop, Downtown Groton, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Olive Grove: Pro Am

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Northville

Friday, July 21

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, mashed potatoes, green beans, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

Olive Grove: Ferney Open

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Northville

State Jr. Teener Tournament in Corsica

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

Saturday, July 22

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

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

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Northville

State Jr. Teener Tournament in Corsica

Sunday, July 23

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship at 8:30 a.m., coffee hour 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship at 10:30 a.m.

St. John's worship, 9 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.

Amateur District in Groton

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Northville

State Jr. Teener Tournament in Corsica

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

by Newsweek

JULY 18, 2023

World in Brief

A shooting in Auckland, New Zealand, claimed at least three lives, including the gunman, and caused multiple injuries hours before the 2023 Women's World Cup opening. Read more on the World Cup below.

Hundreds of angry demonstrators stormed the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad, breaking into the compound and lighting a fire in protest over the burning of the Muslim holy book of Quran.

A judge rejected Donald Trump's efforts to move his hush money criminal case in New York to federal court, shortly after another

judge denied the former president's request for a new trial in a civil case brought by writer E. Jean Carrol.

A Powerball player has won a \$1.08 billion jackpot, the third-biggest prize in the lottery's history, after purchasing a ticket for Wednesday night's draw at Las Palmitas Mini Market in downtown Los Angeles.

A tornado touched down in Nash County, North Carolina. At least 13 people were injured, while nearly 90 structures, including a Pfizer facility, were damaged.

House Republicans helped Democrats kill a Republican amendment that would have expanded the number of flights to and from Washington, D.C., a change that could have inconvenienced 25 million passengers.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia's overnight missile and drone blitz on the Ukrainian port city of Odesa was intended as "revenge" for Kyiv's suspected naval drone strike on the Kerch Strait Bridge, Ukraine's deputy prime minister told Newsweek.

TALKING POINTS

"This was an opportunity for the state of Alabama to be on the right side of history. Well, once again, the state decided to be on the wrong side of history," Alabama state Rep. Prince Chestnut, a Democrat, said after Republicans voted in favor of approving new congressional lines that critics say might violate a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

"What President Biden's trying to do is just a blatant vote buy. And it's, you know, the Supreme Court has ruled it illegal. He can't just, with the sign of his pen, wipe away over half a trillion dollars in student loan debt," former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos said on WABC's Cats & Cosby podcast.

"I call on the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for Dzmityr Shantsou, who has publicly confessed to the crime of unlawful deportation of children from occupied areas of Ukraine. All those responsible for stealing Ukrainian children must be held to account," Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba said after the top Belarus Red Cross official told state-run media that his organization is helping transport Ukrainian children to Belarus..

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

The Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to vote on new legislation that would require Supreme Court justices to embrace and follow a code of ethics.

Jemaine Cannon, the 51-year-old death row inmate convicted of killing a young mother nearly three decades ago, is set to be executed in Oklahoma.

The weekly report on initial and continuing jobless claims, existing home sales, and leading economic indicators for June are due from 8:30 a.m. ET.

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Legion drops second game in Legion Regions

Groton Post #39 dropped its second game of the regions in the double elimination tournament held in Northville. Groton held a 10-2 at the top of the third inning, but Faulkton-Highmore Hitmen scored four runs in each the third and fourth innings and added a run in the fifth and sixth as FH Hitmen won, 12-11.

Faulkton-Highmore had 11 hits compared to nine for Groton. Logan Ringgenberg and Tate Larson each had a double while Bradin Althoff had a triple.

Both teams put up a bunch of runs, but Groton Legion Post 39 fell to FH Hitmen Legion 12-11 on Wednesday. FH Hitmen Legion collected 11 hits, while Groton Legion Post 39 had nine.

Groton Legion Post 39 was right in it until FH Hitmen Legion singled in the sixth inning.

Groton Legion Post 39 got on the board in the top of the second inning after Dillon Abeln singled, scoring one run, Brevin Flihs singled, scoring one run, an error scored one run, and Tate Larson singled, scoring two runs.

Groton Legion Post 39 scored five runs on four hits in the top of the third inning. Cade Larson grounded out, scoring one run, Flihs singled, scoring one run, Bradin Althoff tripled, scoring two runs, and Larson doubled, scoring one run.

FH Hitmen Legion tied the game in the bottom of the fourth thanks to a hit by a pitch, and a single by August Kopecky.

Groton Legion Post 39 took the lead in the top of the fifth. One run scored on another play, to give Groton Legion Post 39 the leg up, 11-10.

Carson Stephenson singled, which helped FH Hitmen Legion tie the game at 11 in the bottom of the fifth.

Layne Cotton earned the win for FH Hitmen Legion. They gave up zero hits and one run (zero earned) over four innings, striking out five and walking three. Flihs took the loss for Groton Legion Post 39. They went one and one-third innings, surrendering one run (zero earned) on three hits, striking out none and walking none. Larson started the game for Groton Legion Post 39. The righty allowed five hits and 10 runs (four earned) over three and two-thirds innings, striking out five and walking three. Gunner Brueggeman stepped on the mound first for FH Hitmen Legion. They allowed nine hits and 10 runs (seven earned) over three innings, striking out two and walking three.

Groton Legion Post 39 collected nine hits in the game. Flihs and Larson each collected two hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Larson drove the middle of the lineup, leading Groton Legion Post 39 with three runs batted in. They went 2-for-4 on the day. Cole Simon paced Groton Legion Post 39 with two walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, collecting six walks for the game. Ryan Groeblichhoff, Simon, and Colby Dunker each stole multiple bases for Groton Legion Post 39. Groton Legion Post 39 stole seven bases in the game. Groton Legion Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

FH Hitmen Legion amassed 11 hits in the game. Stephenson set the tone at the top of the lineup, leading FH Hitmen Legion with three hits in four at bats. Alex Sorensen led FH Hitmen Legion with four runs batted in. They went 2-for-3 on the day. Cotton and Kopecky each collected multiple hits for FH Hitmen Legion. Stephenson stole two bases. FH Hitmen Legion stole five bases in the game.

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Second-Inning Burst Enough To Lead Aberdeen Past Groton Locke Electric

Aberdeen scored 13 runs in the second inning, which helped them defeat Groton Locke Electric 21-0 on Thursday.

Aberdeen got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Jackson Cogley induced Spencer Sealbach to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored, Tyler Oliver doubled, scoring one run, Ryan Ellingson drew a walk, scoring one run, Chad Ellirgson drew a walk, scoring one run, Brandon Kisler was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, and Micheal Babcock doubled, scoring three runs.

Aberdeen scored 13 runs on eight hits in the bottom of the second inning. Oliver doubled, scoring one run, Kelly Coates singled, scoring one run, Ellirgson was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Kisler singled, scoring one run, Babcock singled, scoring one run, Niko Pezorelle was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Sealbach singled, scoring one run, Oliver drew a walk, scoring one run, Coates singled, scoring one run, Jesse Babcock drew a walk, scoring one run, Ellirgson singled, scoring one run, Kisler grounded out, scoring one run, and Babcock doubled, scoring one run.

Cogley stepped on the bump first for Groton Locke Electric. The righty allowed five hits and 13 runs over one inning, striking out none and walking five. Ellirgson stepped on the hill first for Aberdeen. They surrendered one hit and zero runs over three innings, striking out six and walking none.

Ryan Groenlinghoff led Groton Locke Electric with one hit in one at bat. Groton Locke Electric turned one double play in the game. Groton Locke Electric didn't commit a single error in the field. Colin Frey had the most chances in the field with three.

Aberdeen collected 13 hits in the game. Babcock led Aberdeen with four hits in four at bats. Oliver, Coates, and Sealbach each collected multiple hits for Aberdeen. Ellingson paced Aberdeen with two walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, piling up seven walks for the game. Aberdeen were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Coates had the most chances in the field with nine.

Avantara Help Wanted

AVANTARA OF GROTON has the following positions open: part-time house-keeping, cook and resident concierge. Apply at www.avantaragroton.com.

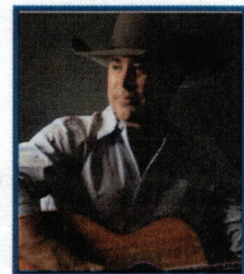
2ND ANNUAL **COLUMBIA FEST** & PARKS DEDICATION “A BLAST FROM THE PAST” **JULY 29, 2023**



COME FOR A FULL DAY OF FUN!

- 10:00 AM.....PARADE!
- 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM.....Vendors
- 11:00 AM.....Parks Dedication
- 12:00 - 3:00 PM.....Ballgames
- 3:00 - 4:00 PM.....Home Run Derby
- 4:00 - 5:00 PM.....Harry Luge Performs
- 5:00 PM.....Duck Race
- 6:00 - 8:00 PM.....Karaoke
- 9:00 PM.....Harry Luge

Lots of **GREAT ENTERTAINMENT, DELICIOUS FOOD** and **FUN ACTIVITIES**. Bring your lawn chairs and picnic blanket.



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Raines to do tribute to WWII Veterans

Lee Raines, native of Groton and author of "Friday Night Lights--South Dakota Style," "The Great Consolidation--South Dakota Style," and "Service to Country--South Dakota Style," interviewed World War II veteran "Punch" Podoll this week as part of his newest project, a tribute to WWII veterans from Brown and Day counties.

"Punch" and descendants of the Podoll family hosted Raines Monday afternoon at the Podoll Family Heritage Center near Columbia. "Punch" relayed his time as an ensign in the U.S. Navy and the V12 Program at South Dakota State University.

Raines will be in the Groton area through early August. If you are a veteran family member or remember the early 1940s in the area, please consider contacting Lee at leeraines824@gmail.com or call 512.644.6061.





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Company looking for lithium in Black Hills plans to drill 2 miles from Rushmore

BY: SETH TUPPER - JULY 19, 2023 6:18 PM

A company's plan to conduct exploratory drilling for lithium in the vicinity of Mount Rushmore has sparked criticism from an environmental group.

The company is Midwest Lithium. Its South Dakota subsidiary, SDO Services, plans to drill up to 55 holes in an area that was historically mined for lithium about 2 miles northwest of Keystone and 2 miles northeast of Mount Rushmore National Memorial. The former Etta mine, near the project area, was the largest source of lithium in the U.S. for decades, according to a presentation on Midwest Lithium's website.

Lithium is a key mineral in the production of modern batteries that power electric vehicles, cell phones, laptops and a host of other electronic devices.

The Black Hills Clean Water Alliance issued a news release condemning the drilling project Tuesday evening after the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, which regulates exploratory drilling, posted public documents about the project online.

"This is outrageous," Liliias Jarding, executive director of the alliance, said in the release. "We need to change state laws so that this doesn't keep happening at sites that are at the core of our tourism industry."

The alliance opposes other drilling in the Black Hills, including a proposal to explore for gold on national forest land near the Pactola Reservoir.

The company planning the lithium project, Midwest Lithium, was formed to pursue opportunities in the Black Hills. The drilling would be on privately owned land.

The effort comes amid a national push – aided by incentives from the federal government – to secure supplies of lithium for the burgeoning electric vehicle industry.

Midwest Lithium's board members have experience in mining and other industries and hail from places as far flung as Switzerland and Australia, but the CEO of SDO Services is mining-industry veteran Michael Schlumpberger, who grew up in Rapid City and has an office there.

Schlumpberger said Wednesday by phone that drilling would not affect Mount Rushmore. The 2 miles between the project area and the national memorial consist of forested and mountainous terrain.

"It's not like we're looking at the president's faces from there," Schlumpberger said.

Rodrigo Pasqua, chairman of Midwest Lithium, said the company is targeting lithium in spodumene ore. Other types of lithium deposits exist elsewhere in the U.S., but he said lithium-bearing spodumene is comparatively easier to mine and process, and is known to exist only in the Black Hills and North Carolina.

He said South Dakotans are uniquely situated to produce lithium and benefit from investments that the federal government and automakers are pouring into lithium mining.

"It's a chance for South Dakota to have its fair part of the amount of money that's going to get deployed in the next decade," Pasqua said.

The company's exploratory holes would be about 4 inches in diameter and as much as 850 feet deep, spread among 11 drilling areas with up to five drill holes per area. Each drilling area, known as a "drill pad," would be 50 by 70 feet. The company does not yet have a schedule but said drilling would last two to three months.

South Dakota laws and policies do not require a permit for exploratory drilling. Instead, companies file a "notice of intent" that they plan to drill. The state Department of Environment Natural Resources studies the plan and imposes restrictions to ensure holes are filled and plugged, that drilling areas are restored to

a natural-looking condition, and that other protective measures are taken. The company is also posting a \$20,000 surety bond, which the state could capture and use to pay for anything the company fails to do.

The exploration area was mined decades ago, producing lithium for use in items such as glass, medicine, ceramics and greases. Pasqua and Schlumpberger said if the drilling leads to a mine, it would be smaller than the large-scale gold mines that have operated in the Black Hills.

They said the drilling results would determine whether a mine would be underground or on the surface, but said most such mining is done underground. Some processing would occur on-site, and the lithium would likely be shipped out of state for further processing.

Midwest Lithium is one of multiple companies looking for lithium in the Black Hills. There are also several companies exploring for gold, while the operators of the region's only active, large-scale gold mine, the Wharf Mine, are seeking permission to expand.

Mining has been continuous in the Black Hills since the discovery of gold in the 1870s. That led to a broken treaty with Native Americans who previously controlled the area.

It also led to jobs and economic development, along with a heavy environmental toll. Whitewood Creek was once so polluted by cyanide from the Homestake Mine that the waterway was known locally as "Cyanide Creek." The abandoned Gilt Edge Mine is so contaminated by acid rock drainage that it's been under the management of the Environmental Protection Agency for more than two decades.

Jarding alluded to that history in the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance's news release.

"I'm tired of foreign corporations treating the Black Hills like a national sacrifice area for the mining industry's profits," she said. "We need to object to this project – now and loudly."

Neither the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources nor the National Park Service, which manages Mount Rushmore National Memorial, immediately responded to messages from South Dakota Searchlight.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Regents prioritize tuition freeze, civics & quantum computing in 2025 budget request

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 19, 2023 5:09 PM

The South Dakota Board of Regents will ask Gov. Kristi Noem and the Legislature to freeze public university tuition for a fourth year in a row, the organization decided in a special Zoom meeting Wednesday, in addition to requesting funds for other priorities such as a system-wide center for civic engagement.

Noem has been a staunch advocate of expanding civics and government education for years, and supported the controversial new social studies standards approved by the state Board of Education Standards earlier this year.

The tuition freeze, designed to keep South Dakota universities affordable and competitive compared to other schools in the region, would cost state government roughly \$4.3 million.

Regent Jeff Partridge said the tuition freeze is the board's number one priority for the year. The civic engagement center was initially identified as a "Tier 1" priority before getting knocked down to "Tier 2" due to a lack of consensus among regents.

During the discussion, Regent Doug Morrison said Noem's willingness to support the regents' tuition freeze and other priorities made it "incumbent that we come up with the next big thing."

"I think she'd like to see something in the area of civics or history that can be delivered across the whole system," Morrison said.

The civic engagement center request includes just over \$880,000 and three full-time hires. Both Black Hills State University in Spearfish and Northern State University in Aberdeen submitted proposals to establish a center, but the board's proposed budget goes beyond the \$300,000 and \$200,000 requested, respectively.

BHSU might already have created a Center for American Exceptionalism had a bill to establish it passed

the Legislature last session. The bill, which failed by one vote in the House, would have established a center to curate supplemental curriculum on American history and civics education for state schools. It also would have developed college courses comparing communist and socialist countries to Western-style democratic countries, and comparing command-style socialist economies to free-market capitalist economies throughout history.

NSU has had its own Center for Public History and Civic Engagement since 2021, focused primarily on public history education.

The new center, if approved, will be a joint effort by the universities focused on system-wide government education and engagement along with instruction on how to debate, argue and interact in today's political climate, Partridge said, though the board isn't finished with "every last detail." NSU and BHSU will collaborate on the details, he added.

Other priorities listed by the Board of Regents include increasing funding for BHSU and its School of Business by \$925,406 and five full-time employees; increasing dual credit funding (for high schoolers earning college credits) by \$147,547; using one-time funding to expand the Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway by \$624,066; using one-time funding to pay construction and maintenance costs at a request of \$10.78 million; and using one-time funding of \$6 million to create a Center for Quantum Information Science and Technology.

The quantum center would use an existing facility at an undecided location to engage in quantum computing, which Partridge described as "the next big thing." A quantum computer uses quantum mechanics to make calculations faster than current supercomputers.

South Dakota recently closed the 2023 budget year with a \$96.8 million surplus. The regents plan to request \$17.4 million in one-time funding, which equates to about 18% of the surplus. The organization plans to request another \$6.28 million in ongoing funding from the Legislature.

The state's public schools are funded by the state and federal government along with student tuition and fees.

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

Public schools banned from sheltering migrants under bill passed by U.S. House

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - JULY 19, 2023 8:59 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House on Wednesday night passed a bill to bar the use of public K-12 school facilities to provide shelter for migrants seeking asylum in the U.S.

The bill, approved 222-201, is known as the "Schools Not Shelters Act" and is a rebuke of the Biden administration's immigration policy.

If enacted into law, public schools and public higher education institutions would risk losing federal funding if they provide shelter to migrants who have not been admitted into the country.

The bill, H.R. 3941, is likely to die in the Senate, where Democrats have a slim majority. The White House also issued a statement on Wednesday that vowed President Joe Biden would veto the bill should Congress pass it because it "would supersede local control, interfering with the ability of States and municipalities to effectively govern and make decisions about their school buildings."

"The bill would do this by prohibiting certain educational institutions that receive Federal funding ... from using their facilities to shelter noncitizens seeking asylum in the United States, as such noncitizens are permitted to do under the law," the White House said.

The House in late June passed a resolution that condemned the use of elementary and secondary schools to provide shelter for immigrants not admitted into the U.S. All Republicans present and seven Democrats voted for the resolution, 223-201.

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Migrants bused from Texas

Wednesday's bill, introduced by Republican Marc Molinaro of New York, stems from a May decision by New York City officials to convert several current and former school gyms to temporarily house about 300 migrants.

Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has sent buses of migrants to several sanctuary cities such as Chicago, New York City and Philadelphia as political statements, often without communicating with the local governments about their arrival.

Abbott has also sent buses to Washington, D.C., dropping off migrants, sometimes in the cold and without proper clothing, outside the residence of Vice President Kamala Harris, who has been tasked by Biden to address the root causes of migration along the Southern border.

Democrats during debate on the House floor on Tuesday and during a House Rules Committee hearing on Monday said that the bill does not address school safety such as gun violence, which is the leading cause of death for children in America, and that Republicans were focusing on "culture war" issues.

Republicans said that the bill is meant to ensure student safety and that public facilities should not be used to house migrants.

The chair of the Education and Workforce Committee, Virginia Foxx, told the Rules Committee the measure "sends a full throated message to the Biden administration" that education facilities should be used only for education purposes.

"The academic success and safety of students should always be put first, no exceptions," Foxx, a North Carolina Republican, said.

The top Democrat on the House Rules Committee, Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, called the bill "deeply unserious," and said what Congress should be doing is directing funds to help states and local governments set up shelters and care for migrants.

The bill has an exemption for short-term sheltering, such as a disaster declaration made by the state or federal government. An amendment from Republican Rep. Andy Ogles of Tennessee defined "short term" as no more than 72 hours. It was the only amendment adopted by a voice vote during Tuesday's floor debate on the bill.

The bill also applies to schools in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Culture wars

The top Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee, Bobby Scott of Virginia, said the bill "gives people the opportunity to disparage immigrants," and does nothing to address the epidemic of school shootings.

"This Congress, House Republicans have focused entirely on culture wars," he said.

This year, the House passed a bill to bar transgender girls from competing in school sports that align with their gender identity and passed another bill that many Democrats argued would lead to book bans, but Republicans called it a "Parents Bill of Rights."

Republican Rep. Ralph Norman of South Carolina during the committee meeting criticized the Biden administration for its immigration policy and pushed back against Democrats' argument that the shelter bill is inhumane.

"What's illegal, inhumane, is what this Biden administration is doing," he said. "There is no wall being built."

Democratic Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon of Pennsylvania, who has worked as an immigration attorney and represented asylum seekers, argued that migrants admitted into the U.S. are "under some status," such as those who are seeking asylum and have pending cases.

Democratic Rep. Joe Neguse of Colorado said the bill was a "back door" to defunding public education, but Foxx disagreed.

"We're going to withdraw funds if you break the law," Foxx said.

Neguse asked her if she supported getting rid of the Department of Education because she voted on an amendment earlier this year that would abolish the agency.

"If the Lord put me in charge, I would get the federal government out of education in a heartbeat," she

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said.

New York City criticized

During Tuesday's floor debate, the sponsor of the bill, Molinaro, said schools should be used "for a single purpose."

"They are not shelters," he said. "Our kids have already lost too much, and schools should be used for the purposes of educating and empowering kids in our neighborhoods."

He called out New York City for being a sanctuary city.

"The city of New York chose, chose to declare that schools within New York City could be used as shelters," he said. "We wouldn't be in this position if the city of New York worked affectively to address the crisis within the city."

Democratic New York Gov. Kathy Hochul has also considered using empty dorms on the State University of New York campuses, which has drawn criticism from Republicans.

Democratic Rep. Suzanne Bonamici of Oregon said the bill was cruel and the continuation of a trend to "delegitimize public schools."

"It would punish public schools and colleges and their students for showing humanity," she said.

She also questioned how the law would even be put in place, especially during an emergency.

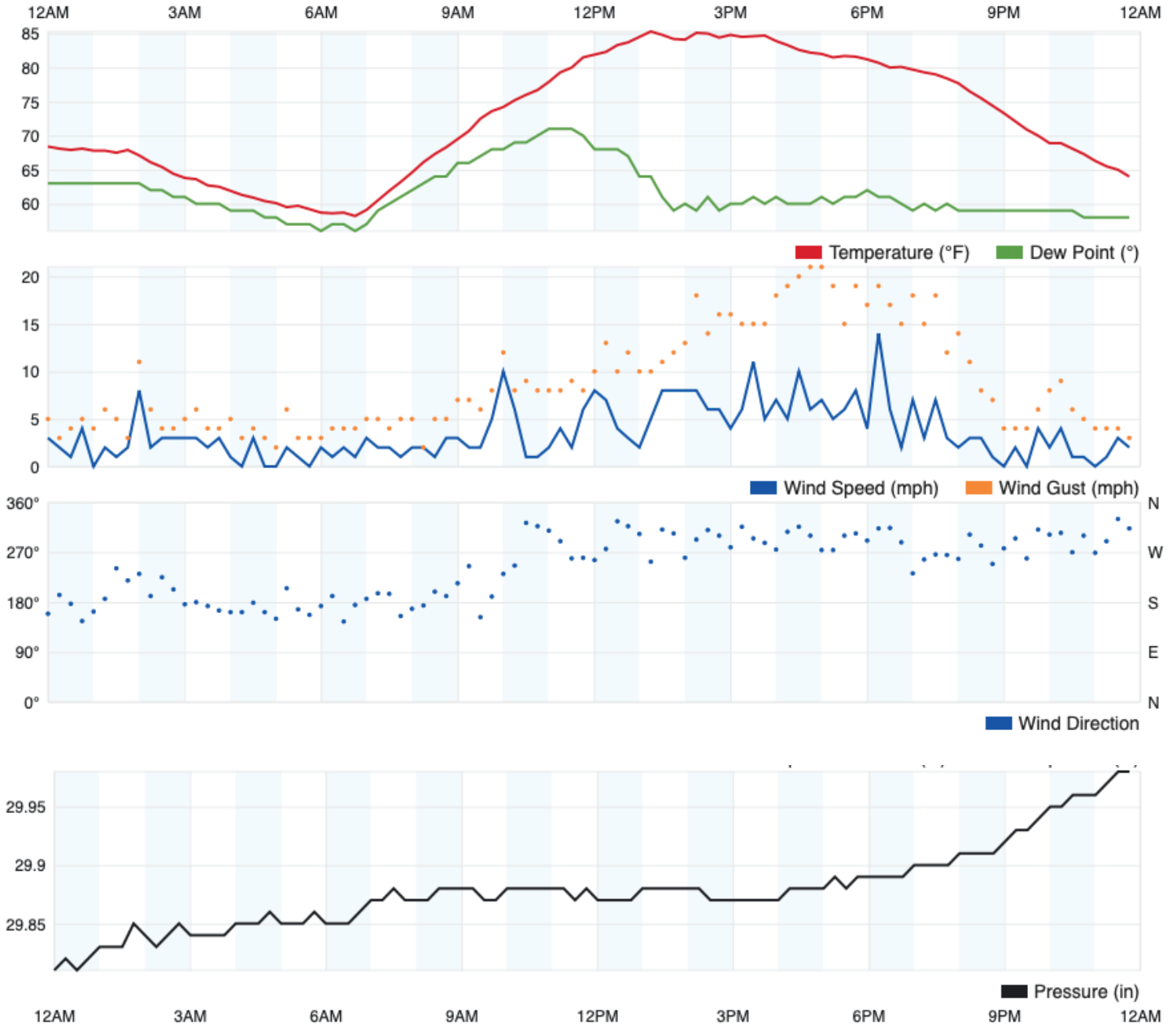
"What would public schools have to do? Check everyone for citizenship before offering shelter to those in need?" she said, adding that if schools did that and lost federal funding, "that hurts all students."

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

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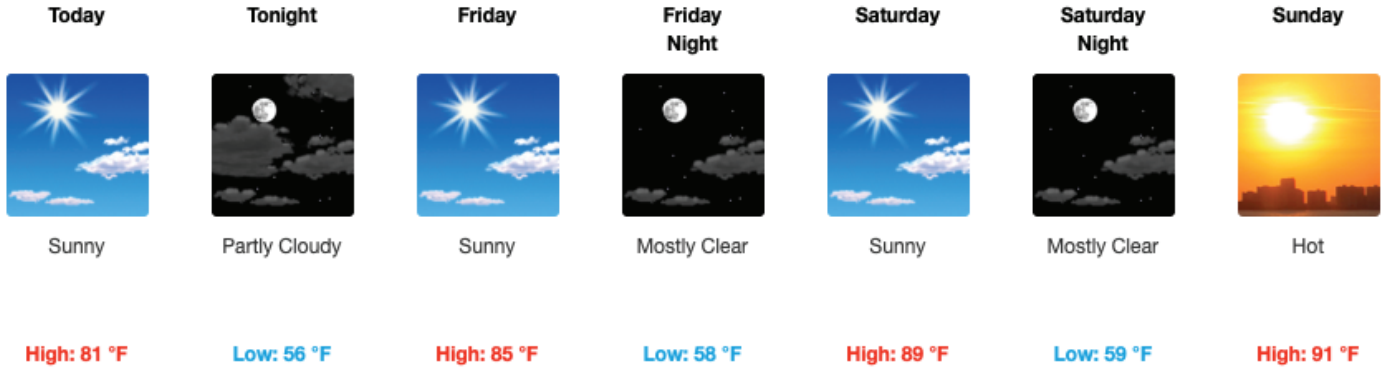
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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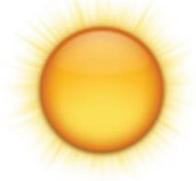
**Below Normal Temperatures Today
Gradually Becoming Above Normal Hot Over The
Weekend Into Next Week**

Maximum Temperature Forecast

	7/20	7/21	7/22	7/23	7/24	7/25	7/26
	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed
Aberdeen	83	85	89	92	95	96	98
Britton	77	80	86	89	91	92	95
Brookings	77	79	84	86	90	88	93
Chamberlain	80	85	90	94	95	97	99
Clark	76	78	83	85	88	90	93
Eagle Butte	78	84	91	94	95	97	97
Ellendale	77	82	87	89	91	93	96
Eureka	77	82	87	91	92	95	93
Gettysburg	78	83	89	91	93	95	96
Huron	80	83	88	90	93	93	95
Kennebec	80	85	90	95	96	97	99
McIntosh	76	81	88	91	92	94	95
Milbank	79	81	87	88	91	93	95
Miller	79	82	87	90	93	95	96
Mobridge	80	85	91	94	95	97	94
Murdo	80	85	90	95	96	98	98
Pierre	83	88	94	97	99	100	97
Redfield	81	84	89	91	95	95	98
Sisseton	79	82	87	89	92	93	96
Watertown	78	80	85	87	90	90	94
Webster	76	78	84	87	89	89	93
Wheaton	79	81	87	87	92	93	95

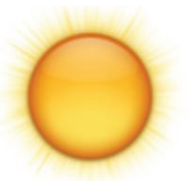
*Table values in °F

Thursday



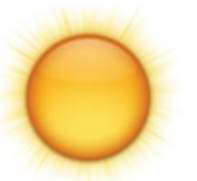
Dry and Mild
Highs: mid 70s to low 80s

Friday



Dry and Warm
Highs: upper 70s to upper 80s

Saturday



Dry and Hot
Highs: mid 80s to low 90s



The vast majority of the 7-day forecast is dry. The mild, or below normal, temperatures that have been happening for much of the past couple of weeks will be coming to an end this weekend. Temperatures will be warming to 5 to 10 degrees above normal for late July, which translates to temperatures in the mid 90s to lower 100s next week.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 1:16 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 6:47 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 4:36 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 14 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1934

Record Low: 43 in 1970

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 2.18

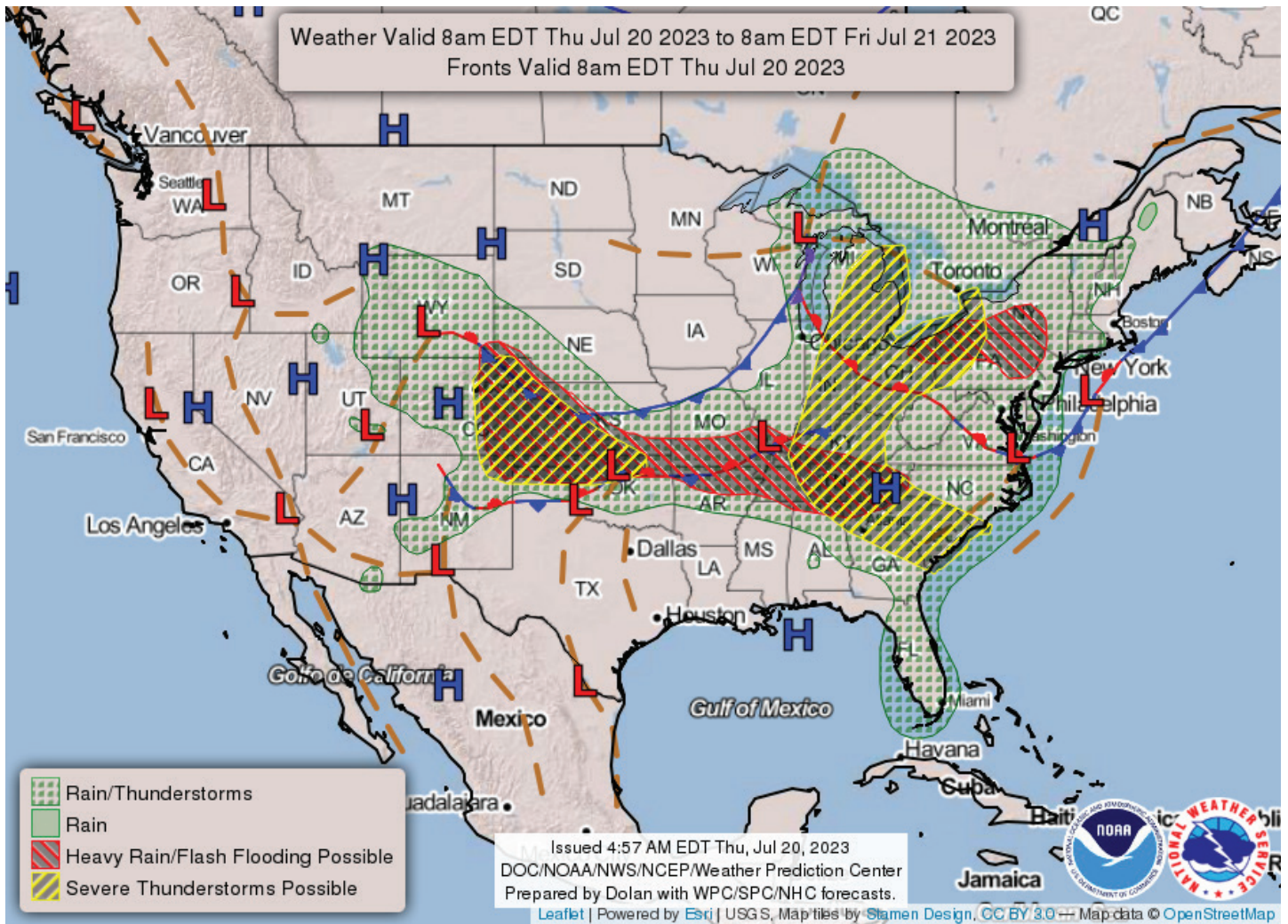
Precip to date in July.: 1.32

Average Precip to date: 13.19

Precip Year to Date: 12.67

Sunset Tonight: 9:15:50 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:02:47 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 20, 1951: From the southeast residential section of Watertown, an estimated F2 tornado moved east, passing near Kranzburg and Goodwin. The storms destroyed one home and several barns.

July 20, 2002: A powerful severe thunderstorm moved over Rapid City and across the adjacent plains east of town. Downburst winds and the associated gust front caused damage along a nearly 30-mile long path. Extensive tree damage occurred throughout the eastern half of the city with countless trees and branches more than 24-inch diameter fell. Two roofs were torn off by the winds. Flying debris damaged numerous cars and buildings. The NWS office in downtown Rapid City measured an 80 mph wind gust, with meteorologists noting winds were sustained at 60 to 70 mph for 5 minutes. Ellsworth AFB wind equipment measured a 106 mph wind gust from the thunderstorm as it passed.

1915: A record high temperature of 115 degrees occurred in Yosemite Valley at the National Park Headquarters, California (around 4,000 feet elevation). This reading was the warmest day in a streak of 7 consecutive days of 110 degrees or higher at Yosemite Valley from the 19th through the 25th.

1977: A flash flood hits Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on this day in 1977, killing 84 people and causing millions of dollars in damages. This flood came 88 years after the infamous Great Flood of 1889 that killed more than 2,000 people in Johnstown.

1930 - The temperature at Washington D.C. soared to an all-time record of 106 degrees. The next day Millsboro reached 110 degrees to set a record for the state of Delaware. July 1930 was one of the hottest and driest summers in the U.S., particularly in the Missouri Valley where severe drought conditions developed. Toward the end of the month state records were set for Kentucky with 114 degrees, and Mississippi with 115 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1934 - The temperature at Keokuk, IA, soared to 118 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1953 - Twenty-two inches of hail reportedly fell northeast of Dickinson, ND. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - The temperature at Charleston, SC, hit 104 degrees for the second day in a row to tie their all-time record high. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather across Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 87 mph at Mosinee, WI, and strong thunderstorm winds capsized twenty-six boats on Grand Traverse Bay drowning two women. Thunderstorms produced nine inches of rain at Shakopee, MN, with 7.83 inches reported in six hours at Chaska, MN. Thunderstorms in north central Nebraska produced hail as large as golf balls in southwestern Cherry County, which accumulated to a depth of 12 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The temperature at Redding, CA, soared to an all-time record high of 118 degrees. Showers and thunderstorms produced much needed rains from New England to southern Texas. Salem, IN, was deluged with 7.2 inches of rain resulting in flash flooding. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region soaked Wilmington, DE, with 2.28 inches of rain, pushing their total for the period May through July past the previous record of 22.43 inches. Heavy rain over that three month period virtually wiped out a 16.82 inch deficit which had been building since drought conditions began in 1985. Thunderstorms in central Indiana deluged Lebanon with 6.50 inches of rain in twelve hours, and thunderstorms over Florida produced wind gusts to 84 mph at Flagler Beach. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005: Hurricane Emily made landfall in northern Mexico. When the central pressure fell to 29.43 inches of mercury, and its sustained winds reached 160 mph on the 16th, Emily became the strongest hurricane ever to form before August, breaking a record set by Hurricane Dennis just six days before. It was also the earliest Category 5 hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic basin, beating Hurricane Allen's old record by nearly three weeks.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

A farmer in rural Georgia was getting behind in his work so he hired a man to help him. The first day he asked him to dig a row of holes for a new fence. After he explained how to use the "digger," he left the man to do his work. The hired hand completed digging the holes for the new fence in record time, and as a reward, the farmer gave him the rest of the day off.

The next day he gave him a much easier job: sorting good potatoes from bad ones. Halfway through the morning, he went to the farmer and said, "I've got to lie down. I have developed a horrible headache from making all of those decisions."

Some of us look for excuses to escape the more difficult responsibilities that God gives us. We'd rather not take the time to develop our minds or make the effort to sharpen our skills and accept the opportunities to develop the gifts that God gives. We look for the "easy way" out. Life's tough enough!

However, we must always remember one critical fact: God will never give us any skill or talent or gift unless He has something special for us to do. His gifts are unique for the work He has for us to do, and are designed to meet His expectations for the plan and purpose He has for our lives. No matter what He asks us to do, He will enable and empower us to do what only we are called to do. Finally, God will not ask us to do what we cannot do. When He calls us, He'll equip us to succeed.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for the gifts You have given us. May we take Your gifts and use them to bring You honor and glory by serving others. Thank You for calling us to be Your partners. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Galatians 5:22-23



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.18.23

19 22 31 37 54 18

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$720,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 35
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.19.23

9 12 16 33 40 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$6,120,000

NEXT 2 Days 14 Hrs 50
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.19.23

12 16 28 32 45 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 5 Mins 23
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.19.23

10 16 19 22 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 5
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.19.23

13 15 28 43 57 25

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 34
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

07.19.23

7 10 11 13 24 24

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 34
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

US says North Korea has not responded to attempts to discuss American soldier who ran across border

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea hasn't responded to U.S. attempts to discuss the American soldier who bolted across the heavily armed border, officials in Washington said, underscoring that the serviceman's prospects for a quick release are unclear at a time of high tensions and inactive communication channels.

Pvt. Travis King, who was supposed to be on his way to Fort Bliss, Texas, after finishing a prison sentence in South Korea for assault, ran into North Korea while on a civilian tour of the border village of Panmunjom on Tuesday. He is the first known American held in North Korea in nearly five years.

"Yesterday the Pentagon reached out to counterparts in the (North) Korean People's Army. My understanding is that those communications have not yet been answered," Matthew Miller, a spokesperson for the U.S. State Department, told reporters Wednesday in Washington.

The U.S. and North Korea, who fought during the 1950-53 Korean War, are still technically at war since that conflict ended in a truce, not a peace treaty, and have no diplomatic ties. Sweden provided consular services for Americans in past cases, but Swedish diplomatic staff reportedly haven't returned since North Korea ordered foreigners to leave the country at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Miller said the State Department has reached out to officials in South Korea and Sweden. Jeon Ha-kyu, a spokesperson of South Korea's Defense Ministry, said Thursday his ministry is sharing information with the American-led U.N. Command in South Korea, without elaborating.

Currently, there are no known, active dialogues between North Korea and the U.S. or South Korea.

The motive for King's border crossing is unknown. A witness on the same tour said she initially thought his dash was some kind of stunt until she heard an American soldier on patrol shouting for others to try to stop him.

King's family members said the soldier may have felt overwhelmed by legal trouble in South Korea that could lead to a discharge from the military.

King, 23, was serving in South Korea as a cavalry scout with the 1st Armored Division. He was released earlier this month from prison. In February, a Seoul court fined him 5 million won (\$3,950) after convicting him of assaulting someone and damaging a police vehicle, according to a transcript of the verdict obtained by The Associated Press. The ruling said King had also been accused of punching a man at a Seoul nightclub, though the court dismissed that charge because the victim didn't want King to be punished.

On Monday, King was escorted to the airport — but left before boarding his plane. It wasn't clear how he spent the hours between that moment and when he joined the Panmunjom tour Tuesday. The Army realized he was missing when he did not get off the flight in Texas as expected.

North Korea has previously held a number of Americans who were arrested for anti-state, espionage and other charges. But no other Americans were known to be detained since North Korea expelled American Bruce Byron Lowrance in 2018. During the Cold War, a small number of U.S. soldiers who fled to North Korea later appeared in North Korean propaganda films.

"North Korea is not going to 'catch and release' a border-crosser. ... However, the Kim regime has little incentive to hold an American citizen very long, as doing so can entail liabilities," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

"For Pyongyang, it makes sense to find a way of extracting some compensation and then expel an American for unauthorized entry into the country before an isolated incident escalates in ways that risk North Korean diplomatic and financial interests," he said.

Other experts say North Korea won't likely easily return King as he is a soldier who apparently voluntarily fled to North Korea, though many previous American civilian detainees were released after the United

States sent high-profile missions to Pyongyang to secure their freedom.

King's case happened as North Korea has stepped up its criticism of the United States over its recent moves to bolster its security commitment to South Korea. On the day of King's border crossing, the U.S. deployed a nuclear-armed submarine in South Korea for the first time in four decades. North Korea later test-fired two missiles with the potential range to strike the South Korean port where the U.S. submarine docked.

Associated Press writers Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin, and Melissa Winder in Kenosha, Wisconsin, contributed to this report.

The Senate Judiciary panel will consider ethics rules for the Supreme Court

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to vote Thursday on a new ethics code for the Supreme Court, an attempt to respond to recent revelations about justices' interactions with wealthy donors and others. Republicans are strongly opposed, arguing the ethics bill could "destroy" the high court.

The committee's legislation would impose new ethics rules on the court and a process to enforce them, including new standards for transparency around recusals, gifts and potential conflicts of interest. Democrats first pushed the legislation after reports earlier this year that Justice Clarence Thomas participated in luxury vacations and a real estate deal with a top GOP donor — and after Chief Justice John Roberts declined to testify before the committee about the ethics of the court.

Since then, news reports also revealed that Justice Samuel Alito had taken a luxury vacation with a GOP donor. And The Associated Press reported last week that Justice Sonia Sotomayor, aided by her staff, has advanced sales of her books through college visits over the past decade.

"Just about every week now, we learn something new and deeply troubling about the justices serving on the Supreme Court, the highest court in the land in the United States, and their conduct outside the courtroom," Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said this week. "Let me tell you, if I or any member of the Senate failed to report an all-expense paid luxury getaway or if we used our government staff to help sell books we wrote, we'd be in big trouble."

Even though the ethics legislation has little chance of passing the Senate — it would need at least nine GOP votes to pass, and Republicans appear united against it — Democrats say the spate of revelations means that enforceable standards on the court are necessary.

"The Roberts court has not been able to clean up its own mess," said Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, the lead sponsor of the ethics bill.

The legislation comes after years of increasing tension, and increasing partisanship, on the committee over the judiciary. Then-President Donald Trump nominated three conservative justices to the Supreme Court, all of whom were confirmed when Republicans were in the Senate majority and with considerable opposition from Democrats. The court has as a result shifted sharply to the right, overturning the nationwide right to an abortion and other liberal priorities.

In a news conference on Wednesday, Republicans on the committee said they would fight the ethics bill, which they said would undermine the separation of powers and is more about Democratic opposition to the court's decisions than its ethics. They are expected to offer several amendments to the legislation in the committee meeting on Thursday.

"It's not about ethics or accountability," said Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, a senior Republican on the panel. "It's about outcomes they don't like."

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, the top Republican on the Judiciary panel, said that if the bill were to ever pass, "the Supreme Court as we know it would be destroyed." Congress should stay out of the court's business, Graham said.

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The legislation would mandate a new Supreme Court "code of conduct" with a process for adjudicating the policy modeled on lower courts that do have ethics codes. It would require that justices provide more information about potential conflicts of interest, allow impartial panels of judges to review justices' decisions not to recuse and require public, written explanations about their decisions not to recuse. It would also seek to improve transparency around gifts received by justices and set up a process to investigate and enforce violations around required disclosures.

Though Democrats had pushed versions of the ethics legislation in the past, the current push came after news reports revealed Thomas' close relationship with Dallas billionaire and GOP donor Harlan Crow. Crow had purchased three properties belonging to Thomas and his family in a transaction worth more than \$100,000 that Thomas never disclosed, according to the nonprofit investigative journalism organization ProPublica. The organization also revealed that Crow gifted Thomas and his wife, Ginni, with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of annual vacations and trips over several decades.

Durbin had invited Roberts to testify at a hearing, but he declined, saying that testimony by a chief justice is exceedingly rare because of the importance of preserving judicial independence. Roberts also provided a "Statement on Ethics Principles and Practices" signed by all nine justices that described the ethical rules they follow about travel, gifts and outside income.

While the rules were not new, the statement provided by Roberts said that the undersigned justices "reaffirm and restate foundational ethics principles and practices to which they subscribe in carrying out their responsibilities as Members of the Supreme Court of the United States."

Besides Sotomayor's push for book sales, the AP reported that universities have used trips by justices as a lure for financial contributions by placing them in event rooms with wealthy donors and that justices have taken expenses-paid teaching trips to attractive locations that are light on actual classroom instruction.

The wait is over as Powerball finally has a winner for its jackpot worth over \$1 billion

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A winning ticket has been sold in California for the Powerball jackpot worth an estimated \$1.08 billion, the sixth largest in U.S. history and the third largest in the history of the game.

The winning numbers for Wednesday night's drawing were: white balls 7, 10, 11, 13, 24 and red Powerball 24. The California Lottery said on Twitter that the winning ticket was sold in Los Angeles at Las Palmitas Mini Market.

Final ticket sales pushed the jackpot beyond its earlier estimate of \$1 billion to \$1.08 billion at the time of the drawing, moving it from the seventh largest to the sixth largest U.S. lottery jackpot ever won.

The winner can choose either the total jackpot paid out in yearly increments or a \$558.1 million, one-time lump sum before taxes.

The game's abysmal odds of 1 in 292.2 million are designed to build big prizes that draw more players. The largest Powerball jackpot was \$2.04 billion Powerball in November.

The last time someone had won the Powerball jackpot was April 19 for a top prize of nearly \$253 million. Since then, no one had won the grand prize.

Powerball is played in 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

At least 2 dead as Russia strikes Odesa and other southern Ukraine cities for a third night

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia pounded Ukraine's southern cities, including the port city of Odesa, with drones and missiles for a third consecutive night in a wave of strikes that has destroyed some of the country's critical grain export infrastructure.

At least two people, in Odesa, were killed in the attacks, which come days after President Vladimir Putin pulled Russia out of a wartime deal that allowed Ukraine to send grain to countries facing the threat of

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hunger.

The attacks intensified after Moscow vowed "retribution" earlier this week for an attack that damaged a crucial bridge between Russia and the Moscow-annexed Crimean Peninsula. Russian officials blamed that strike on Ukraine.

Odesa Governor Oleh Kiper said Ukrainian air defenses destroyed all of the 12 Iranian-made Shahed drones and two Kalibr missiles that targeted Odesa.

But he added that air defense systems were unable to shoot down some incoming missiles, in particular the X-22 and Onyx types. He didn't say how many missiles got through.

The two people who died in Odesa were a 21-year-old security guard and another person who was found dead under rubble during a search and rescue operation, according to Kiper.

In Mykolaiv, another southern city close to the Black Sea, at least 19 people were injured overnight, the region's Governor Vitalii Kim said in a statement on Telegram.

Russian strikes partially destroyed a three-story building and caused a fire that affected an area of 450 square meters (4,800 square feet) and burned for hours. Two people were hospitalized, including a child, according to the regional governor.

The previous night, an intense Russian bombardment using drones and missiles damaged critical port infrastructure in Odesa, including grain and oil terminals. The attack destroyed at least 60,000 tons of grain.

The European Union's foreign affairs chief condemned Russia's targeting of grain storage facilities.

"More than 60,000 tons of grain has been burned," Josep Borrell said in Brussels on Thursday, commenting on Moscow's recent tactics. "So not only they withdraw from the grain agreement ... but they are burning the grain."

German Foreign Affairs Minister Annalena Baerbock, said at the same meeting that the EU is involved in international efforts to get Ukrainian grain on to the world market.

"The fact that the Russian president has canceled the grain agreement and is now bombing the port of Odessa is not only another attack on Ukraine, but an attack on the people, on the poorest people in the world," she said. "Hundreds of thousands of people, not to say millions, urgently need grain from Ukraine."

Furthermore, the White House warned Wednesday that Russia is preparing possible attacks on civilian shipping vessels in the Black Sea. The warning could alarm shippers and further drive up grain prices.

Russia has laid additional sea mines in the approaches to Ukrainian ports, White House National Security Council spokesman Adam Hodge said in a statement.

"We believe that this is a coordinated effort to justify any attacks against civilian ships in the Black Sea and lay blame on Ukraine for these attacks," the statement said.

In the Russian-annexed territory of Crimea, meanwhile, "an enemy drone" — an apparent reference to Ukraine — attacked a settlement in the peninsula's northwest, the region's Moscow-appointed governor Sergei Aksyonov reported Thursday. He said that the attack damaged several administrative buildings and killed a teenage girl.

Meanwhile, the Belarusian Defense Ministry on Thursday said the country's military continues to train with fighters from the Wagner private military contractor, on a training ground near the border with Poland.

The exercises will continue for a week, the ministry said on Telegram, and promised to share more details later.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who brokered a deal that ended last month's rebellion launched by Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, has said that his country's military could benefit from the mercenaries' combat experience.

Raf Casert in Brussels contributed.

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

India's Modi breaks silence over ethnic violence in Manipur after video shows mob molesting women

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke more than two months of public silence over deadly ethnic clashes in India's northeast, saying Thursday that the assaults of two women as they were being paraded naked by a mob in Manipur state were unforgivable.

A video showing the assaults triggered massive outrage and was widely shared on social media late Wednesday despite the internet being largely blocked and journalists being locked out in the remote state. It shows two naked women surrounded by scores of young men who grope their genitals and drag them to a field.

"The guilty will not be spared. What has happened to the daughters of Manipur can never be forgiven," Modi told reporters ahead of a parliamentary session in his first public comments related to the Manipur conflict.

Without making any direct references to the violence in Manipur, Modi urged heads of state governments to ensure the safety of women and said the incident is "shameful for any civilized nation."

"My heart is filled with pain and anger," he said.

The violence depicted in the video was emblematic of the near-civil war in Manipur that has left more than 130 people dead since May, as mobs rampage through villages killing people and torching houses. The ethnic violence was sparked by an affirmative action controversy in which Christian Kukis protested a demand from the mostly Hindu Meiteis for a special status that would let them buy land in the hills populated by Kukis and other tribal groups and get a share of government jobs.

The clashes have persisted despite the army's presence in Manipur, a state of 3.7 million people tucked in the mountains on India's border with Myanmar that is now divided in two ethnic zones. The two warring factions have also formed armed militias, and isolated villages are still raked with gunfire. More than 60,000 people have fled to packed relief camps.

Police said the assault on the two women happened May 4, a day after the violence started in the state. According to a police complaint filed May 18, the two women were part of a family attacked by a mob that killed its two male members. The complaint alleges rape and murder by "unknown miscreants."

The state police have made the first arrest in the case, Manipur's Chief Minister Biren Singh said on Twitter, without specifying the number of people who were apprehended.

"A thorough investigation is currently underway and we will ensure strict action is taken against all the perpetrators, including considering the possibility of capital punishment. Let it be known, there is absolutely no place for such heinous acts in our society," Singh said.

India's Supreme Court, meanwhile, expressed its concern over the assault and asked the government to inform the court about the steps it has taken to apprehend the accused.

"In a constitutional democracy it is unacceptable. If the government does not act, we will," Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said.

The two women are now safe in a refugee camp.

They are from the Kuki-Zo community, according to the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum, a tribal organization in Manipur.

India's Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani called the incident "condemnable and down-right inhuman." She said Thursday that investigations were underway and that "no effort will be spared to bring perpetrators to justice."

India's main opposition Congress party president Mallikarjun Kharge, however, accused the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party of "turning democracy and the rule of law into mobocracy."

Kharge said Modi should speak about Manipur in Parliament, a demand that has been made by other opposition parties and rights activists.

"India will never forgive your silence," he wrote on Twitter.

Last week the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on Indian authorities to take action to

stop the violence in Manipur and protect religious minorities, especially Christians. India's foreign ministry condemned the resolution, describing it as "interference" in its internal affairs.

A gunman in New Zealand kills 2 people hours ahead of first game in Women's World Cup

By NICK PERRY and JENNA FRYER Associated Press

AUCKLAND, New Zealand (AP) — A man stormed a high-rise construction site in downtown Auckland early Thursday morning, shooting at terrified workers and killing two people hours before New Zealand planned to host the first game of the FIFA Women's World Cup tournament.

The gunman was found dead after a police shootout, during which an officer was shot and wounded. Four civilians were also injured.

The shooting happened near hotels where Team Norway and other soccer teams have been staying.

New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said the tournament would go ahead as scheduled. Police said there would be heightened security at the tournament's opening game to help reassure fans, and FIFA said a minute of silence would be observed before each of the two opening games.

"Clearly with the FIFA World Cup kicking off this evening, there are a lot of eyes on Auckland," Hipkins said. "The government has spoken to FIFA organizers this morning and the tournament will proceed as planned."

"I want to reiterate that there is no wider national security threat," he added. "This appears to be the action of one individual."

The shooting jarred New Zealand, where active shooter incidents are rare, leading the country's the main news websites and broadcasts.

Hipkins said the man was armed with a shotgun, adding that police arrived within minutes of the first emergency call and ran into harm's way to save lives.

"These kinds of situations move fast, and the actions of those who risk their lives to save others are nothing short of heroic," Hipkins said.

Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said the gunman was a 24-year-old who had previously worked at the building site, and his motive appeared to be connected to his work there.

The man identified as the shooter had a history of family violence and was serving a sentence of home detention, but had an exemption to work at the lower Queen Street site, Coster said.

The shooting began at about 7:20 a.m., and police soon swarmed the area.

The shooter moved through the unfinished building firing at people, Coster said, as many workers fled or hid. He then barricaded himself in an elevator shaft on the third floor, Coster said, where SWAT-type officers engaged him after securing the floors above and below.

"The offender fired at police, injuring an officer," Coster said. "Shots were exchanged and the offender was later found deceased."

Coster said it wasn't yet clear whether police had shot the man or he had killed himself. He said the suspected shooter didn't have a gun license and so shouldn't have been in possession of a firearm.

Outside, armed police officers placed an area in Auckland's downtown on heavy lockdown, with streets cordoned off surrounding the harbor ferry terminal, which is popular with tourists. Police ordered bystanders to disperse and told people inside office buildings to shelter in place.

The shooting happened as soccer teams and fans gathered in New Zealand for the FIFA Women's World Cup, which the country is hosting jointly with Australia. The opening match is scheduled to be played in Auckland on Thursday evening, between New Zealand and Norway. Hipkins said he was considering whether he'd attend the match as planned.

Team Norway captain Maren Mjelde said her teammates were woken up abruptly when a helicopter began hovering outside the hotel window.

"We felt safe the whole time," she said in a statement. "FIFA has a good security system at the hotel, and we have our own security officer in the squad. Everyone seems calm and we are preparing as normal

for the game tonight.”

Team USA said all its players and staff were safe and accounted for. It said the team was in contact with local authorities and proceeding with its daily schedule.

Officials at Eden Park, where the opening match of the FIFA tournament is taking place, said they were encouraging ticket holders to arrive early and there would be an increased security presence at the venue.

New Zealand has tight gun laws, imposed in 2019 after the country’s worst mass shooting prompted a sea change in attitudes toward guns. A shooter killed 51 Muslim worshippers at two Christchurch mosques during Friday prayers in March 2019.

The prime minister at the time, Jacinda Ardern, vowed to ban most semiautomatic weapons within a month and she succeeded, with only a single member of Parliament voting against the ban.

A subsequent buyback scheme saw gun owners hand over more than 50,000 of the newly banned weapons to police in exchange for cash.

Coster said the shotgun used in Thursday’s shooting is not on the list of banned weapons.

“I want to acknowledge that this has been a shocking and traumatic event for those people who came to work and found themselves in the middle of an armed emergency,” Coster said. “Thankfully, many people were able to escape the building, but I know for those who hid or remained trapped, this was a terrifying experience.”

Coster said the officer who was shot was taken to a nearby hospital in critical condition, had stabilized, and was expected to undergo surgery Thursday. He said the others had injuries ranging from moderate to critical. It wasn’t immediately clear if all those injured had been shot.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino said that he and Secretary-General Fatma Samoura had met with New Zealand Sports Minister Grant Robertson following the shooting to discuss security arrangements for the tournament.

“We appreciate the collaboration with the New Zealand authorities from the earliest moment of this tragic incident,” Infantino said in a statement. “We have been involved in ongoing communication from the outset, and we have also received the necessary reassurances.”

Jennifer Deering, a tourist from Orlando, Florida, said she was initially shocked to learn of the shooting after a tour guide had previously assured her that Auckland “was very safe here, other than some petty thieves.”

Then she went about her day.

“It’s sad that it’s normal for us (Americans) to see something like this on the news,” she added.

Tourism New Zealand canceled a media welcome party that was to have been held Thursday afternoon at a location within the cordoned-off area downtown.

Perry reported from Wellington, New Zealand.

Flooded with sightseers, Europe’s iconic churches struggle to accommodate both worship and tourism

By GIOVANNA DELL’ORTO Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — A recent Saturday evening Mass at Sagrada Familia parish had all the hallmarks of a neighborhood worship service, from prayers for ill and deceased members to name-day wishes for two congregants in the pews.

But it also featured security checks to get in and curious tourists peering down to take photos of the worshippers from above. The regular Mass is held in the crypt of modernist architect Antoni Gaudí’s masterpiece church, one of Europe’s most visited monuments.

With tourism reaching or surpassing pre-pandemic records in Barcelona and across southern Europe, iconic sacred sites are struggling to accommodate the faithful who come to pray and the millions of visitors who often pay to view the art and architecture.

“We’re working to get ahead of this, so that we don’t get to a collapse,” said the Rev. Josep Maria Turull,

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rector at Sagrada Familia and the Barcelona archdiocese's director for tourism, pilgrimage and sanctuaries. An increasingly popular strategy is to have visitors and the faithful go separate ways – with services held in discrete places, visits barred at worship times, or altogether different entry queues.

This spring, the Vatican opened a separate "pathway" starting outside St. Peter's Basilica for those who want to enter to pray or attend Mass, so they wouldn't be discouraged by sometimes hours-long lines for the average of 55,000 daily visitors, said Basilica spokesperson Roberta Leone.

But the challenge remains: how to balance the churches' competing roles amid the tourism surge without sacrificing their spiritual purpose.

"It's just really hard because you also want people to experience your faith," said Daniel Olsen, a Brigham Young University professor who researches religious tourism. With an estimated 330 million people visiting religious sites yearly around the world, it's one of the tourism market's largest segments.

Worshippers, who often come because celebrated churches tend to have more services than regular parishes, need free access even as tourists often pay fees that are crucial to maintaining the sites.

"The temple needs to be a place for services and not a theme park," said Joan Albaiges after Mass in the Sagrada Familia crypt, which he's attended regularly for six decades.

He praised the move in recent years to celebrate one multilingual Sunday Mass at the main altar in the soaring, color-filled basilica. There's such demand for the 800 free tickets, however, that several hundred people queueing routinely don't get in, Turull said.

Lay and religious leaders say the histories of the sacred sites should be presented to visitors, who are increasingly unfamiliar with faith traditions in rapidly secularizing countries where lesser-known churches are emptying out or being repurposed.

"Some people go to the cathedral, and they don't realize they're in a church. It's a situation that's developing in nations that were majority Christian, and now faith is cooling off," said José Fernández Lago, rector of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Filled with masterpieces from Romanesque sculpture to lavish Baroque decorations, Santiago's cathedral attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists and pilgrims who since the Middle Ages have traveled along the Camino routes to venerate St. James's tomb.

To preserve its role as a revered pilgrims' church, Lago said, the cathedral doesn't charge entry fees, cap visitor numbers or require a dress code. On a hot early summer morning, a steady stream of pilgrims ducked each other's selfie sticks in front of the jewel-encrusted St. James statue, some still in tight cycling shorts or sweat-stained hiking shirts.

But visits aren't allowed during the four daily Masses celebrated at the main altar, and priests as well as security guards constantly ask visitors to lower their voices to allow others to pray.

"It keeps getting harder," said Juan Sexto, who in 10 years working security at the cathedral has noticed a change in how many visitors behave.

As crowds surged before the always-packed noon pilgrims' Mass, he kept stepping to the main microphone asking for silence – which lasted a minute or so before enthusiastic visitors resumed chatting.

Sexto had a supporter in the second pew. Waiting for Mass to start, pilgrim Miguel Angel Ariño said the church did well to allow only the faithful during worship times, while leaving the cathedral open long hours for cultural visits.

"As people, we need the transcendent. Leisure and rest, and time with God, are not incompatible," Ariño said.

Without some strategy, however, they can become so. Co-existence between worshippers and tourists has been controversial at Istanbul's Hagia Sophia. Built as a landmark cathedral in the Byzantine era, turned into a mosque by the conquering Ottoman empire in the 1400s, and open as a museum for the last century, it was converted back into a functioning mosque in 2020 by Turkey's Islamic-oriented government.

Now visitors can tour the structure for free outside of prayer hours. In Hagia Sophia's main section where prayers are held, the vast mosaics depicting Christian figures are hidden behind drapes and most of the marble floor is covered with carpeting.

"We would like it to be a museum again," said Ricardo Bravo, a tourist from Mexico visiting the monument

with his family. "We would like to see more things to understand more, to appreciate more Turkish culture."

At many of Spain's most-visited churches, the balance was often off-kilter in the opposite direction. So many visitors thronged the vast Basilica del Pilar in Zaragoza on a mid-June Saturday that it was nearly impossible to hear the midday Mass celebrated in the small chapel where a statue of Our Lady of the Pillar is venerated.

With some 2.5 million annual visitors, Barcelona Cathedral was also close to a breaking point before its council revolutionized the worship vs. tours balance over the last few years.

"It was like being in a market," recalled Anna Vilanova, who directs the cathedral's tourism strategy. "We had to put some order."

The cathedral instituted caps on visitor numbers, required tour groups to use wireless audio guides to reduce noise, and added staffers to explain the new policies to visitors and those coming for daily Mass or confession, held in a side chapel with crystal doors to preserve silence.

"The point comes when tourism is so massive that it occupies the worship space," said Xavier Monjo, who oversees the cathedral's publications. "The cathedral is alive, it's not a museum."

The visitor guides included with the entry fee seek to prioritize the church's role as an active place of worship.

The nave description in the "unmissable" list, for example, starts by stating that "this cathedral has been and is a space dedicated to prayer" before describing its stunning Catalan Gothic architecture. The entry for the rooftop terraces explains that this is where the blessing of the city happens each May on the feast of the Holy Cross.

"As tourism has been growing, it's also an opportunity – not to proselytize, but to discover the deep meaning of what they can see," Turull said. "All those who enter like tourists can leave like pilgrims, can have a spiritual experience."

While 3.7 million tourists explored the Sagrada Familia's arresting architecture and mesmerizing stained glass windows last year, Fenelon Mendez remains focused on the parish activity literally underneath.

Originally from Venezuela, he's lived in the neighborhood with his family for a decade and often serves as sacristan and altar server. There are ministry programs for single moms and for migrants, and regular food distributions, he said.

The basilica provides a unique experience, so the faithful should continue to get full access to it, Mendez said. But the crypt where regular worshippers gather is the true core where many like him feel at home.

"You could take the basilica to New York, but we are here," he said in the sacristy, long after the day's tourists had stopped wandering above.

Associated Press journalists Francisco Seco in Istanbul and Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

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In a refugee camp in Kenya, food shortages left kids hungry even before Russia ended grain deal

By EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

DADAAB, Kenya (AP) — Abdikadir Omar was trapped in an extremist-controlled town in Somalia for years until May, when he slipped out to make a 12-day journey with his wife and seven children to neighboring Kenya in search of food and safety.

To his surprise, "I found peace but no food," the 30-year-old told The Associated Press. He stood near the withered maize he tried to plant around his family's makeshift shelter of branches and plastic sheeting outside one of the world's largest refugee camps.

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As global food insecurity suffers another shock with Russia's termination of a deal to keep grain flowing from Ukraine, the hundreds of thousands of Somalis who have fled climate change and insecurity offer a stark example of what happens when aid runs low.

Omar, a farmer, was forced to give most of his produce as tax to al-Shabab, the al-Qaida-linked extremists who have controlled parts of Somalia for years, and the little that remained wasn't enough to feed his family during Somalia's worst drought in decades. The final blow came when al-Shabab, under pressure from a Somali military offensive, killed his younger brother.

Omar and his family joined a new wave of Somalis on the run. They were among 135,000 new refugees who arrived at Dadaab in recent months and eventually were allowed to access food aid when the Kenyan government resumed refugee registrations in February at the camp located 55 miles (90 kilometers) from the Somali border.

Dadaab is home to more than 360,000 registered refugees and many unregistered ones. The camp was established in the 1990s, its permanence reflected in the neat rows of corrugated iron homes in its older sections.

Food rations, however, are more fragile. They have been cut from 80% of the minimum daily nutritional requirement to 60% due to reduced donor funding, according to the World Food Program. Traditional donors have been quick to bring up hunger in places like Somalia when criticizing Russia for ending the grain deal, however they have focused their giving elsewhere, including Ukraine. In May, a high-level donors' conference for Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia raised less than \$3 billion of the \$7 billion that organizers wanted for humanitarian aid.

Refugee camps like Dadaab, especially in Africa, will see further cuts in aid because of Russia's action, the WFP's executive director, Cindy McCain, told the AP on Tuesday. Under the recently ended deal, WFP was procuring 80% of its global wheat supply from Ukraine.

"There are going to be some serious shortages and, in some cases, none at all as a result of this," she said, adding that it was too soon to predict what those cuts would be.

Already, "families that used to prepare probably three meals a day have now reduced to prepare either two meals or a meal a day, and that's quite extreme," the WFP head of programs at Dadaab, Colin Buleti, told the AP at a food distribution center during a visit last week.

Families receive monthly rations of sorghum, rice, beans, maize and vegetable oil, alongside a cash transfer for buying fresh produce that has been halved to \$3.

Aid workers say the reduced rations are likely to worsen malnutrition. In one of Dadaab's three sections, Hagadera, 384 malnutrition cases were reported in the first half of the year, already exceeding the 347 reported there all of last year, according to the International Rescue Committee, which provides health services.

The malnutrition ward in Hagadera is filled beyond capacity with crying babies. It is meant to handle 30 patients and is currently at 56.

Dool Abdirahman, 25, arrived with her malnourished baby daughter in November. The family fled Somalia when the infant developed hydrocephalus, or a buildup of fluid on the brain. Until then, the family had struggled to hold out at home, Abdirahman said.

The International Rescue Committee's health manager in Dadaab, Barbara Muttimos, said that even the nutrient-dense peanut paste used to treat children who are acutely and severely malnourished is threatened by reduced funding and the growing number of hungry people.

But for mothers like Mabina Ali Hassan, 38, the conditions in Dadaab are better than the nonexistent services back home, where conflict has destabilized the country over the past three decades.

"I regret going back to Somalia in 2016 when I heard it was safer," the mother of eight said. "This baby was born there and couldn't get health care because the hospitals were not equipped." She said she returned to the refugee camp when her son, now a year old, became malnourished.

Maryan Mohamed, 30, said she was lucky to be among the newly registered refugees. The former tea-shop owner and her six children arrived at Dadaab in March and for four months lived off food handouts from friends who were already registered.

"While stability welcomed me here, I'm still striving for the life I dreamed of," she said.

The threat of insecurity remains, even for the refugees. Al-Shabab this month attacked a Somali military base just 7 miles (12 kilometers) from the Kenya border. Somali forces are under pressure to assume security responsibilities as an African Union peacekeeping force continues its withdrawal from the country.

Kenya's government is now in discussions with the United Nations on how to integrate the hundreds of thousands of refugees into host communities in the future. The U.N. refugee agency says such integration is the best way to host refugees as donor funding shrinks.

Associated Press writer Sam Mednick in Dakar, Senegal, contributed.

They fled Syria's shattering civil war. Now, Syrian refugees in Jordan fear being forced to return

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — As Jordan hosted regional talks this spring aimed at ending Syria's isolation after more than a decade of civil war, Syrian refugee Suzanne Dabdoob felt a deep pressure in her brain and in her ears, she said, a fear she hadn't felt since arriving to Jordan 10 years ago.

Ahead of the meeting, Syrian President Bashar Assad agreed that 1,000 Syrian refugees living in Jordan would be allowed to safely return home — a test case for the repatriation of far greater numbers. Jordan's top diplomat spoke only of voluntary returns. But panic spread through working-class east Amman, where Dabdoob and many other Syrians have built new lives in multistory, cement-block buildings.

"I would rather die right here than go back to Syria," said Dabdoob, 37, whose home was razed by air-strikes in the Syrian city of Homs.

She fled to Amman with her five children, her accountant husband, who dodged military service, and her sister, who she said is wanted for abandoning her civil service job.

"We are scared that, even indirectly, the Jordanian government will pressure us to leave," she said.

As Middle East countries strained by vast numbers of refugees restore relations with Assad, many Syrians who fled are now terrified by the prospect of returning to a country shattered by war and controlled by the same authoritarian leader who brutally crushed the 2011 rebellion.

Even as public hostility and economic misery in neighboring countries has squeezed Syrian refugees, few are clamoring to return. The number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon has remained roughly the same for the last seven years, according to U.N. figures.

Hoping to speed up their exodus, Lebanon and Turkey have deported hundreds of Syrians since April in what rights groups consider a violation of international law.

Now Jordan, a close American ally generally praised for its acceptance of millions of Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees, is also changing.

The "Jordan Initiative" unveiled in May to encourage cooperation with Assad on refugee returns and illicit drug trafficking capped the country's painful transformation, advocates say, from one of the world's most accommodating hosts to one of its biggest proponents for sending refugees home.

"Jordan long has said that refugees are welcome. But now the official rhetoric has moved toward supporting their return," said Adam Coogle, deputy director of the Middle East and North Africa division at Human Rights Watch. "It's a cause for significant concern."

Human rights groups say it's still too unsafe for refugees to return to Syria given the risks of arbitrary detention, disappearance and extrajudicial killings there. Even the most fortunate returnees encounter bread lines, a currency collapse and electricity shortages after a dozen years of a conflict that has killed nearly half a million people and displaced half of its pre-war population of 23 million.

"My family tells me there is no more war, sure, but there is also nothing left," said Mohammed, a 34-year-old carpenter who fled Syria in 2013 and opened a hand-carved wooden furniture shop in Amman identical to his father's workshop in Damascus.

elderly," said Kurdi, the local advocate. "They return to die."

Trimmed trees outside LA studio become flashpoint for striking Hollywood writers and actors

By JEFF TURNER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A row of tightly trimmed ficus trees along a stretch of sidewalk outside Universal Studios has become a hot spot in the face-off between Hollywood studios and striking screenwriters and actors.

Some members of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and Writers Guild of America unions — along with sympathetic local politicians — think the studio purposely pruned the trees in an effort to remove a source of shade for workers picketing under the hot Southern California sun. They gathered regardless on Wednesday, with one woman wearing a green wreath on her head and holding a sign depicting a full, untrimmed tree under the words "Never Forget."

"Universal, get your ducks in order. We don't want to see any more shady nonsense because the people are watching," said Konstantine Anthony, a SAG-AFTRA member and the Democratic mayor of nearby Burbank.

Burbank's city limits don't include the stretch of Barham Boulevard where the trees were trimmed, which is part of Los Angeles. Anthony said he had consulted with Los Angeles political leaders about the trimming.

"We can't find any work orders done for this particular tree trimming, which is problematic because in Southern California we have a lot of laws governing trees," he said. "Normally, you don't trim until October, and in fact, the exact same style and type of tree about 200 feet this way are not trimmed. But those aren't providing shade to the picketers, are they?"

Los Angeles City Council member Nithya Raman, whose district includes Universal City, said in a statement that no permits had been issued for tree trimming at the site. City Controller Kenneth Mejia said his office was investigating the issue.

An NBCUniversal spokesperson said in a statement that it knew the trimming had "created unintended challenges for demonstrators, that was not our intention." The studio said it was working to provide some shade coverage for picketers.

Awash in pink, everyone wants a piece of the 'Barbie' movie marketing mania

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Pink sauce on that Burger King burger? What about "Barbie-fying" your pet with sweaters and beds with Barbie motifs? If that's too low-brow, perhaps you'd be interested in hot pink Barbie monogrammed knit leggings by luxury designer Balmain instead, selling at Neiman Marcus for a cool \$2,150.

Welcome to the wonderful and weird world of "Barbie" movie marketing.

Ahead of Friday's U.S. release of the "Barbie" movie, parent company Mattel has created a product marketing blitz with more than 100 brands plastering pink everywhere.

There are pink benches at bus stops and pink clothing displayed in store windows. Microsoft's Xbox has come up with a Barbie console series and HGTV is hosting a four-part Barbie Dreamhouse Challenge.

And then there are all the unofficial collaborators trying to grab a piece of Barbie craze. Restaurants across the country are offering special pink cocktails, while interior decorators are showing options like vibrant pink backsplashes to "Barbiefy" your kitchen.

Even the organization I Support the Girls — a nonprofit that has provided 22 million bras and menstrual hygiene products to homeless people, refugees and immigrants — is creating a social media campaign around menstrual periods using Barbie and having volunteers create miniature packages of Barbie-sized menstrual pads and tampons as teaching tools.

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"The capability to share stories and knowledge through playing with Barbie is what made us realize we need to jump on this pop culture Barbie bandwagon," said Dana Marlowe, founder and executive of I Support the Girls. "If you can see yourself in a toy or in a doll, we want to also make sure that we're raising awareness about bras and and clean underwear and the like."

Some experts say all the marketing beyond the movie is only good for the 64-year-old brand, helping to attract multi-generations of fans.

"When a brand owns something as iconic as the color pink, it's good news and bad news," said Marc Rosenberg, a Chicago-based toy consultant who led the global marketing teams for Hasbro's brands like Furby, GigaPets, and Hit Clips. "In this case, I think it's all good news. Everyone in the world wants a piece of pink now."

But pundits also say it's going to be hard for many of the products to stand out when the world is awash in pink.

"There is such a stampede toward this that most people are going to get stepped on and will not be noticed," said Allen Adamson, co-founder of marketing consultancy Metaforce, noting he believes there will be more losers than winners.

For some shoppers like Hollie Krause of Mahwah, New Jersey, Barbie pink blitz that ramped up since June is already getting too much.

Krause, 31, said that she loved her Barbie dolls growing up and had about 20 of them along with a Barbie Dreamhouse. So when some of the merchandise started to roll in earlier this year, she bought Barbie-themed pajamas, a Barbie T-shirt, Barbie-trademarked pink lemonade, along with some other pink outfits.

Now she's feeling overwhelmed.

"Barbie is supposed to be for everyone, but these nostalgic collaborations should feel a little bit more unique or a little bit more creative," said Krause, who plans to focus on limited edition items.

Barbie's first live action movie, an homage to the doll with some biting satire, comes at a time when Barbie sales have been up and down after slumping from 2012 to 2015, when it faced stiff competition from other dolls and was under attack for pushing unrealistic beauty standards to girls and lost some relevance. It enjoyed a big bump in sales during the depths of the pandemic when parents were looking to entertain their children.

Barbie now accounts for one-third of Mattel's revenue and it has been diversifying the dolls with more skin tones and versions with prosthetic legs, wheelchairs and hearing aids. This year, it unveiled its first Down Syndrome doll.

As a result, according to market research firm Circana, Barbie has remained the top fashion doll for the past four years starting in 2019 and through June of this year in the U.S. as well in the combined 12 countries that Circana tracks.

So far, product marketing around the movie has done well.

Mattel's Barbie that was specifically made for the movie and is dressed in a pink gingham dress, is No. 1 in sales for dolls and for the pre-school dolls and dollhouse category sold on Amazon, according to the retailer's website.

Neiman Marcus noted that it launched its exclusive Barbie collaboration with Balmain last year and sold out of many items in the first few days. Based on the success of last year's collaboration and the current Barbiecore cultural phenomenon, it has reissued the collection starting July 10, the retailer said.

Then there's the mixed social media reviews for the "Pink Burger" offered by Burger King's franchisee in Brazil. It's offering a slice of melted cheese, bacon and a smoky-flavored hot pink sauce. The Pink Burger comes in a Barbie Combo, which also features French fries (dubbed "Ken's Potatoes"), a pink shake and a pink-frosted donut.

"Has BK completely lost its creativity or is just too lazy to think of something better?" said one comment on Burger King Brazil's Instagram account.

Restaurant Brands noted it is a limited-time partnership sold exclusively in the Brazil market and will not be available in the United States nor elsewhere.

AP Business Writer Dee-Ann Durbin in Detroit contributed to this story.

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Video appears to show Russian mercenary chief Prigozhin for first time since short-lived mutiny

MOSCOW (AP) — A video released Wednesday appears to show Russian mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin for the first time since he led a short-lived rebellion last month, and he is seen telling his troops they will spend some time in Belarus training its military before deploying to Africa.

Messaging app channels linked to Prigozhin's Wagner private military company said he spoke at a field camp in Belarus and ran a blurry video purported to show him there, his silhouette seen against the sky at dusk. His gravelly voice was clearly distinguishable.

"Welcome guys! I am happy to greet you all. Welcome to the Belarusian land!" the video showed him saying. "We fought with dignity! We have done a lot for Russia."

Prigozhin's mutiny, which posed the most serious threat to President Vladimir Putin's 23-year rule, was billed by the mercenary chief as being aimed at ousting Russia's top military leaders whom he accused of incompetence.

Prigozhin's criticism of the conduct of the fighting in Ukraine was repeated in the new video, the authenticity of which could not be immediately verified.

"What is going on the front line today is a shame in which we shouldn't take part," he said, adding that Wagner forces could return to Ukraine in the future.

"We may return to the special military operation when we feel sure that we will not be forced to put shame on ourselves," Prigozhin said, using the same term that the Kremlin calls the fighting in Ukraine.

"We need to wait for the moment when we can show ourselves in full," he said. "That is why a decision has been made that we would spend some time here in Belarus. During that time, we will make the Belarusian army the second strongest army in the world. We will train, raise our level and set off for a new journey to Africa."

In addition to their involvement in Ukraine, Wagner mercenaries have been sent to Syria and several African countries since the private army was created in 2014.

Under the deal that was brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Prigozhin agreed to end his rebellion in exchange for an amnesty for him and his fighters and a permission to relocate to Belarus.

Before moving to Belarus, Wagner handed over its weapons to the Russian military, part of efforts by Russian authorities to defuse the threat posed by the mercenaries.

Until the video was posted Wednesday, Prigozhin had released only a couple of audio messages after the mutiny — contrasting with an almost-daily barrage of blustery statements before the June 23-24 events. Some saw that as a sign the deal obliged him to cut his rhetoric and stay away from politics.

Starting last week, several Wagner convoys flying Russian flags and Wagner insignias have been seen rolling into Belarus, heading toward a field camp that Belarusian authorities had offered to the company.

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC and analyzed by The Associated Press showed a convoy of vehicles at the base near Tsel in the Asipovichy region of Belarus, about 90 kilometers (about 55 miles) southeast of Minsk. The photos taken Monday showed a long line of vehicles coming off a highway.

Belaruski Hajun, an activist group that monitors troops movements in Belarus, said several convoys with Wagner fighters have entered the country since last week, including at least 170 vehicles on Tuesday. It estimated that about 2,500 Wagner mercenaries are now in Belarus.

On Monday, a messaging app channel linked to the contractor ran a video showing Russian and Wagner flags lowered at the mercenaries' main home base in Molkino in the Krasnodar region of southern Russia. The channel said that the base would close on July 30, and one of the mercenaries in the video declared that Wagner was moving to unspecified new locations. Wagner also has used camps in the Russia-occupied

Luhansk region of Ukraine.

Prigozhin presented the flag to cheering mercenaries in the video posted Wednesday.

Prigozhin said Belarusians met them “not only like heroes, but like brothers” and added to their laughter that “local girls are whispering full of desire that Wagner troops have come. Be accurate not to offend any of them, let’s treat them in a brotherly way.”

Lukashenko has said that his country’s military could benefit from the mercenaries’ combat experience and rejected claims that their presence could destabilize the ex-Soviet nation. Last week, Belarusian state TV broadcast video of Wagner instructors training Belarus’ territorial defense forces.

In his revolt that began on June 23 and lasted less than 24 hours, Prigozhin’s mercenaries swept through the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don and captured the military headquarters there without firing a shot, before moving as close as 200 kilometers (125 miles) of Moscow.

The mutiny faced little resistance and the mercenaries downed at least six military helicopters and a command post aircraft, killing at least 10 airmen.

Prigozhin had called it a “march of justice” to oust Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and General Staff chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov, who demanded that Wagner forces sign contracts with the Defense Ministry. He ordered his troops back to their camps after striking the deal to end the rebellion, the terms of which have remained murky.

Putin has declared that Wagner troops had a choice between signing contracts with the Defense Ministry, moving to Belarus or retiring from service. He said last week that he met with Prigozhin and 34 Wagner officers on June 29 and offered them the option of continuing to serve as a single unit under their same commander.

New York City agrees to pay \$13 million to 2020 racial injustice protesters in historic class action

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City has agreed to pay more than \$13 million to settle a civil rights lawsuit brought on behalf of roughly 1,300 people who were arrested or beaten by police during racial injustice demonstrations that swept through the city during the summer of 2020.

If approved by a judge, the settlement, which was filed in Manhattan federal court Wednesday, would be among the most expensive pay-outs ever awarded in a lawsuit over mass arrests, experts said.

The lawsuit focused on 18 of the many protests that erupted in New York City in the week following the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis. With certain exceptions, people arrested or subjected to force by NYPD officers at those events will each be eligible for \$9,950 in compensation, according to attorneys for the plaintiffs.

The agreement, one of several stemming from the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, allows the city to avoid a trial that could be both expensive and politically fraught.

It comes as many other cities across the U.S. are negotiating their own settlements with protesters who spilled into the streets to decry racist police brutality after Floyd’s death, a period of unrest that saw 10,000 people arrested in the span of a few days.

Attorneys with the National Lawyers Guild, which represented the plaintiffs in New York, accused NYPD leaders of depriving protesters of their 1st Amendment rights through a “coordinated” campaign of indiscriminate brutality and unlawful arrests.

Through more than two years of litigation, attorneys for the city maintained that police were responding to a chaotic and unprecedented situation, pointing to some unruly protests in which police vehicles were set on fire and officers pelted with rocks and plastic bottles.

A spokesperson for the NYPD deferred questions to the city’s Law Department, which did not respond to a request for comment.

During some of the 2020 protest marches, officers deployed a crowd control tactic known as kettling

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against peaceful protesters, corralling them in tight spaces and attacking them with batons and pepper spray before making mass arrests.

Adama Sow, one of the named plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said their group of marchers were trapped by police without warning. Sow and the other arrestees were placed in zip ties until their hands turned purple, then held in a sweltering correctional bus for several hours.

"It was so disorganized, but so intentional," Sow said. "They seemed set on traumatizing everyone."

The city invoked qualified immunity, which protects police officers from lawsuits stemming from lawful work performed in the line of duty, and defended the decision to arrest medics and legal observers as within the rights of the department.

While attorneys for the plaintiffs cited past crackdowns on large demonstrations, including during the 2004 Republican National Convention, as evidence of longstanding "systemic violations" by the NYPD, attorneys for the city said there was no systematic effort to deprive people of their right to protest.

"There is no history — or present or future — of unconstitutional policing," Georgia Pestana, an attorney for the city, wrote in a memo. "There is no frequent deprivation of constitutional rights."

The lawsuit named former Mayor Bill de Blasio and retired NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea as well as other police leaders as defendants. Under the settlement agreement, neither the city nor the NYPD is required to admit any wrongdoing.

Protesters who were arrested on certain charges — including trespassing, property destruction, assaulting an officer, arson or weapons possession — will be excluded from the settlement. Those who were seen on video blocking police from making arrests may also be ineligible.

Unlike some other lawsuits related to the 2020 protests, the class action was not meant to force the NYPD to change its practices. There are several other lawsuits aimed at injunctive relief that are ongoing, including one brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James that calls for a federal monitor to oversee the NYPD's policing of protests.

Another class action settlement announced earlier this year would award \$21,500 to those arrested by police during one demonstration in the Bronx, a pay-out that could total around \$10 million including legal fees.

Separately, more than 600 people have brought individual claims against New York City related to police action during the 2020 protests, according to the city's comptroller, Brad Lander. Roughly half of them have resulted in settlements and resolutions, costing the city nearly \$12 million to date.

Wylie Stecklow, an attorney for the protesters in the class action lawsuit, said the growing cost to taxpayers should serve as a "red flag" for city leaders about the NYPD's inability to correct its "decades old problem with constitutionally compliant protest policing."

"While the arc of the moral universe is indeed long, sometimes it needs reform to bend towards justice" he said.

Wrexham opens US tour with 5-0 loss to Chelsea before 50,596 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina

By BOB SUTTON Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP) — Sue Martin had the summer mapped out for her family from St. Augustine, Florida.

Then along came word that Chelsea and Wrexham would play a preseason friendly on U.S. soil.

"We had a whole vacation planned and they dropped this game," Martin said before . "We needed to be here. We love soccer. We love Ryan Reynolds."

Reynolds and co-owner Rob McElhenney have taken Wrexham from a struggling fifth-tier side to a fan favorite, largely through the globally-streamed docuseries "Welcome to Wrexham." The Red Dragons opened a four-game preseason U.S. tour Wednesday night with a 5-0 loss to Chelsea, which got two goals from Ian Maatsen and one each from Conor Gallagher, Christopher Nkunku and Ben Chilwell. The game drew 50,596 to Kenan Memorial Stadium.

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Giving only his first name for security reasons, Mohammed said he hoped never to return, citing stories of Syrian security forces arresting returnees to squeeze thousands of dollars in bribes out of their families. His two daughters, 4 and 10, know no other home.

"Here, I know what it's like to live with dignity," he said.

With its reputation as a humanitarian hub — an oasis of relative stability in a volatile Middle East — the kingdom currently hosts an estimated 1.3 million of the 5.2 million Syrian refugees spread across the region, according to government figures.

While Jordanian security forces have not ramped up deportation raids in recent months, the government has expelled tens of thousands of Syrians over the years, mostly for alleged crimes or for failing to register with the authorities. As soaring unemployment and inflation stokes anti-refugee feeling among Jordanians and the government speaks more openly about returns, that history now alarms the country's Syrian refugees.

"Almost all of us know someone who was kicked out for a reason we don't understand," said Dadoob, whose friend, she said, was shot and killed by government forces in the southern Syrian city of Daraa after being deported in 2016. Jordanian security forces accused him, and many others, of communication with extremist and opposition groups in Syria, according to rights groups.

"With the overreach of security services in Jordan and in the region, there's a lot of distrust now," said Samer Kurdi from the Collateral Repair Project, which provides aid to refugees in Amman. "The re-embracing of Assad doesn't make sense to Syrians here."

Since Assad attended his first annual Arab League summit in 13 years this spring, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi has described his country's hopes for refugee returns as an inevitable result of Assad's rehabilitation.

For Jordan, a large displaced population lingering in the country for generations raises the sobering prospect of the country's 2.2 million Palestinians.

The experience of those refugees, whose families fled or were pushed out during the war surrounding Israel's creation in 1948, has taught Jordan that the longer refugees stay, the less likely they are to return, said Hassan Momani, professor of international relations at University of Jordan.

"There's this fear in Jordan's collective memory," he said.

Jordan's foreign and information ministries declined to comment on the issue of Syrian refugee returns, pointing only to recent public statements.

"We are way above our capacity. We ring the alarm," Safadi told a conference on Syria in Brussels last month.

Earlier this month, he visited Damascus and held talks with Assad. "What we are sure of is that refugees' futures lie in their country," he said.

Few Syrians who fled the war for Jordan appear to agree. Just a small number of Syrian refugees in Jordan are voluntarily returning home: 4,013 people in 2022, down from 5,800 in 2021, according to United Nations figures.

A U.N. refugee agency survey of some 3,000 Syrian refugees across the region in February found that just 1.1% of refugees intend to return to Syria in the next year even as most say they harbor hope to return one day. Among respondents in Jordan, just 0.8% said they intended to return in the coming year.

"This is an important indication that right now, today, conditions are not conducive for returns," said Dominik Bartsch, the UNHCR representative to Jordan.

Even as the Jordanian government insists that all refugee returns will be optional, the line between voluntary and forced return can be blurry.

After 2016, when Jordan shut its border with Syria following a cross-border suicide attack, authorities refused to let Syrians who had left briefly enter back into Jordan. In other cases, refugees were deported for alleged work violations, and then their relatives who followed them to Syria because of their loss of income were registered as voluntary returnees.

"What we see now, 12 years on, is that most of the Syrians in Jordan who really want to return are

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The match was a must-see event and the first of its kind in this college town. Chelsea, coming off a miserable 13th-place finish in the Premier League, was the 2021 European champion, Wrexham, the oldest club from Wales, earned promotion to English soccer's fourth tier.

Both teams soaked in the atmosphere.

"It was amazing," Mauricio Pochettino said after his first friendly as Chelsea manager. "It was full. We really enjoyed the game."

There were even perks for the Red Dragons.

"It has been incredible with a great few days," Wrexham manager Phil Parkinson said. "It was a really enjoyable night. You want to keep the score down in terms of the performance."

Brian and Jenny Roper and their 11-year-old son Logan from St. Petersburg, Florida, saw Chelsea play last year in Orlando. They didn't flinch at making a longer trek. As a bonus, this one included Wrexham.

"(Logan) plays a lot of soccer," Brian Roper said. "I want to show him what real soccer looks like. There's the novelty of them playing Wrexham. My wife would even enjoy this because she knows Wrexham."

Martin's family of four sported gear supporting both Chelsea and Wrexham. Pregame festivities on the humid night were spread around campus.

Matseu scored in the third and 42d minutes, the second goal on a shot from the top of penalty area. Gallagher added a goal in the 80th, Nkunku in the 90th and Chilwell in the third minute of stoppage time.

Wrexham, which opened the preseason last weekend with a 4-2 win over Wales' Bala Town. plays at LA Galaxy II on Saturday against the Manchester United youth academy on July 25 at San Diego at Philadelphia Union II on July 29. Wrexham opens the League 2 season at home against the MK Dons on Aug. 5.

Chelsea faces Brighton on Saturday at Philadelphia, Newcastle on July 26 in Atlanta, Fulham on July 30 at Landover, Maryland, and Borussia Dortmund on Aug. 2 at Chicago. The Blues open the Premier League at home against Liverpool on Aug. 13.

"It has been fantastic," North Carolina athletics director Bubba Cunningham said. "It's a great event. We all get excited about unique, fun events and this is one of them."

The locals were checking it out as well.

Nathan Gardner, a teacher from nearby Efland, brought his 16-year-old son Carson to take in the scene. The elder Gardner said he became familiar with Wrexham through the streaming show.

"When it was announced, I saw it and said, 'They're coming here?'" Gardner said. "I was pretty shocked, but I want to see it."

North Carolina men's basketball coach Hubert Davis and family walked into the stadium without much fanfare about 40 minutes prior to the scheduled start. This is the same venue where in less than two months Tar Heels quarterback Drake Maye will try to bolster his Heisman Trophy candidacy.

More than 1.5 million pounds of sod was installed last week to cover the stadium's artificial turf surface. Hedges that circled the stadium's field were removed in 2019.

"We couldn't do it until the hedges came out," Cunningham said of the stadium set-up. "One thing we all talk about in college athletics is it brings community. This is one that is a community event. It's a nice economic impact. And when I looked at the other cities that are hosting this, we're barely a neighborhood compared to some of those cities."

From a global perspective, the past few days marked a huge chance to embellish the brands.

"It's important to spread the word that it's a great game," Parkinson said. "The amount of people with Wrexham shirts and Wrexham caps has blown us all away."

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

Tornado damages Pfizer plant in North Carolina as scorching heat and floods sock other parts of US

By BEN FINLEY and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A tornado heavily damaged a major Pfizer pharmaceutical plant in North Carolina on Wednesday, while torrential rain flooded communities in Kentucky and an area from California to South Florida endured more scorching heat.

Pfizer confirmed that the large manufacturing complex was damaged by a twister that touched down shortly after midday near Rocky Mount, but said in an email that it had no reports of serious injuries. A later company statement said all employees were safely evacuated and accounted for.

Parts of roofs were ripped open atop its massive buildings. The Pfizer plant stores large quantities of medicine that were tossed about, said Nash County Sheriff Keith Stone.

"I've got reports of 50,000 pallets of medicine that are strewn across the facility and damaged through the rain and the wind," Stone said.

The plant produces anesthesia and other drugs as well as nearly 25% of all sterile injectable medications used in U.S. hospitals, Pfizer said on its website. Erin Fox, senior pharmacy director at University of Utah Health, said the damage "will likely lead to long-term shortages while Pfizer works to either move production to other sites or rebuilds."

The National Weather Service said in a tweet that the damage was consistent with an EF3 tornado with wind speeds up to 150 mph (240 kph).

The Edgecombe County Sheriff's Office, where part of Rocky Mount is located, said on Facebook that they had reports of three people injured in the tornado, and that two of them had life-threatening injuries.

A preliminary report from neighboring Nash County said 13 people were injured and 89 structures were damaged, WRAL-TV reported.

Three homes owned by Brian Varnell and his family members in the nearby Dortches area were damaged. He told the news outlet he is thankful they are all alive. His sister and her children hid in their home's laundry room.

"They got where they needed to be within the house and it all worked out for the best," Varnell said near a home that was missing exterior walls and a large chunk of the roof.

Elsewhere in the U.S., an onslaught of searing temperatures and rising floodwaters continued, with Phoenix breaking an all-time temperature record and rescuers pulling people from rain-swamped homes and vehicles in Kentucky.

Forecasters said little relief appears in sight from the heat and storms. For example, Miami has endured a heat index of 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius) or more for weeks, with temperatures expected to rise this weekend.

In Kentucky, meteorologists warned of a "life-threatening situation" in the communities of Mayfield and Wingo, which were inundated by flash flooding this week from thunderstorms. Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear declared a state of emergency there Wednesday as more storms threatened.

Forecasters expect up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain could yet fall on parts of Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri near where the Ohio and Mississippi rivers converge.

The storm system is forecast to move Thursday and Friday over New England, where the ground remains saturated after recent floods. In Connecticut, a mother and her 5-year-old daughter died after being swept down a swollen river Tuesday. In southeastern Pennsylvania, a search continued for two children caught in flash flooding Saturday night.

Meanwhile, Phoenix broke an all-time record Wednesday morning for a warm low temperature of 97 F (36.1 C), raising the threat of heat-related illness for residents unable to cool off adequately overnight. The previous record was 96 F (35.6 C) in 2003, the weather service reported.

Lindsay LaMont, who works at the Sweet Republic ice cream shop Phoenix, said business had been slow during the day with people sheltering inside to escape the heat. "But I'm definitely seeing a lot more people come in the evening to get their ice cream when things start cooling off," LaMont said.

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Heat-related deaths continue to rise in Maricopa County, where Phoenix is located. Public health officials Wednesday reported that six more heat-associated fatalities were confirmed last week, bringing the year's total so far to 18. All six deaths didn't necessarily occur last week as some may have happened weeks earlier but were confirmed as heat-related only after a thorough investigation.

By this time last year, there had been 29 confirmed heat-associated deaths in the county and another 193 under investigation.

Phoenix, a desert city of more than 1.6 million people, had set a separate record Tuesday among U.S. cities by marking 19 straight days of temperatures of 110 F (43.3 C) or more. It topped 110 again Wednesday.

National Weather Service meteorologist Matthew Hirsh said Phoenix's 119 F (48.3 C) high Wednesday tied the fourth highest temperature recorded in the city ever. The highest temperature of all time was 122 F (50 C), set in 1990.

Across the country, Miami marked its 16th straight day of heat indexes in excess of 105 F (40.6 C). The previous record was five days in June 2019.

"And it's only looking to increase as we head into the later part of the week and the weekend," said Cameron Pine, a National Weather Service meteorologist.

The region has also seen 38 consecutive days with a heat index threshold of 100 F (37.8 C), and sea surface temperatures are reported to be several degrees warmer than normal.

"There really is no immediate relief in sight," Pine said.

A 71-year-old Los Angeles-area man died at a trailhead in Death Valley National Park in eastern California on Tuesday afternoon as temperatures reached 121 F (49.4 C) or higher and rangers suspect heat was a factor, the National Park Service said in a statement Wednesday.

It is possibly the second heat-related fatality in Death Valley this summer. A 65-year-old man was found dead in a car on July 3.

Human-caused climate change and a newly formed El Nino are combining to shatter heat records worldwide, scientists say.

The entire globe has simmered to record heat both in June and July. Nearly every day this month, the global average temperature has been warmer than the unofficial hottest day recorded before 2023, according to University of Maine's Climate Reanalyzer.

Atmospheric scientists say the global warming responsible for unrelenting heat in the Southwest also is making extreme rainfall a more frequent reality.

Finley reported from Norfolk, Virginia. Associated Press reporters Anita Snow in Phoenix, Freida Frisaro in Miami, JoNel Aleccia in Temecula, California, and Rebecca Reynolds in Louisville, Kentucky, contributed to this report.

IRS whistleblowers air claims to Congress about 'slow-walking' of the Hunter Biden case

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans raised unsubstantiated allegations Wednesday against President Joe Biden over his family's finances as they summoned IRS whistleblowers to testify publicly for the first time about claims the Justice Department improperly interfered with a tax investigation into Biden's son Hunter.

Lawmakers heard from the two IRS agents assigned to the Hunter Biden case, which looked into his failure to pay taxes, for six hours of what was often grueling back-and-forth testimony. The hearing came after the president's son pleaded guilty last month to misdemeanor tax charges in what Republicans have derided as a "sweetheart" deal.

Still, House Republicans are deepening their own investigation, making broad claims of corruption and wrongdoing by the Bidens, which they acknowledge have not been proven to be true.

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"We will continue to follow the money trail," said Rep. James Comer, chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, as he opened the session. The Justice Department has denied the whistleblowers' allegations. And the White House, in a statement, called the investigation and subsequent hearing part of "politically-motivated attacks on a Trump-appointed U.S. attorney, the rule of law, and the independence of our justice system."

The top Democrat on the committee, Maryland Rep. Jamie Raskin, said the hearing was "a theater of the absurd."

IRS supervisory special agent Greg Shapley, and a second agent, Joe Ziegler, claimed there was what Shapley called in testimony a pattern of "slow-walking investigative steps" into Hunter Biden, including during the Trump administration in the months before the 2020 election that Joe Biden won.

One of Shapley's most detailed claims was that U.S. Attorney David Weiss in Delaware, the federal prosecutor who led the investigation, asked for special counsel status in order to bring the tax cases against Hunter Biden in jurisdictions outside Delaware, including the District of Columbia and California, but was denied.

Weiss and the Justice Department have denied that, saying he had "full authority" and never sought to bring charges in other states.

Shapley testified during an exchange with Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, that he wrote an email later that day to memorialize the October 2022 meeting with Weiss and five others. Shapley insisted Wednesday on his own recollection of what was said.

The second IRS whistleblower, Ziegler, described his frustrations with the way the case was handled, dating to the Trump administration under Attorney General William Barr. The tax agency employee said he started the investigation into Hunter Biden in 2015 and began to delve deeply into the now 53-year-old's life and finances.

Ziegler, whose name was withheld in closed-door interview transcripts released last month by Republicans, said Wednesday that he decided to come forward publicly "not as a hero or a victim," but as a married, gay Democrat "compelled to disclose the truth."

Democrats on the committee pushed back on the whistleblower claims that Hunter Biden received special treatment because his father was the nominee for president in the upcoming 2020 election. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill., made the point that it was Donald Trump who was president during the 2020 time frame when the whistleblowers allege there was interference.

Trump's Justice Department, he noted, issued a memorandum in February 2020 telling prosecutors to "exercise particular care regarding sensitive investigations and prosecutions that relate to political candidates, campaigns and other politically sensitive individuals and organizations," his voice rising. "Especially in an election year!"

Democrats also pointed out that Weiss was appointed by Trump and the federal investigation into Hunter Biden was initiated under Trump. Biden kept Weiss on the case after he won the election. But the hearing took several twists and turns as dozens of members from both sides of the dais sought to maximize their time with the two witnesses.

In one startling moment, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., displayed graphic sexual images of Hunter Biden with women, suggesting he had paid for them to travel to Washington, D.C., presumably for sex, in a potential violation of the law. Democrats led by Raskin objected to the graphic content being shown at a public hearing by Greene, saying it was inappropriate.

Rep. Shontel Brown, D-Ohio, questioned whether this was an investigation into the president or "of his son, who does not and has never worked at the White House."

As Republicans decry what they say is a justice system favoring the politically connected, Rep. Maxwell Frost, D-Fla., pointed to the killing of Emmett Till and the treatment of other Black Americans across U.S. history and said, "This is the two-tiered justice system."

Republicans for their part have sought testimony from other agents involved in the case and held a transcribed interview this week with an FBI agent, now retired, who they said was involved. But other witnesses have declined to appear before the panel.

Before the hearing, Comer, R-Ky., acknowledged it has been difficult for Republicans to succinctly outline Hunter Biden's tangled financial affairs or to provide convincing evidence of any specific wrongdoing by the president or his family.

"It's so hard to explain," Comer told reporters. "Hopefully these IRS agents can do a better job explaining than I can."

In the previous closed-door interviews, Shapley had described IRS agents' efforts to execute a search warrant of a Virginia storage facility where the younger Biden's documents were being stored. He said the assistant U.S. attorney involved in the case reached out to Hunter Biden's lawyers, in a move that is seen as customary in cases involving high-profile individuals, but it ruined "our chance to get to evidence before being destroyed, manipulated, or concealed."

A similar occurrence happened when the FBI officials notified Hunter Biden's Secret Service detail ahead of an effort to interview him and several of his business associates in order to avoid a potential shoot-off between two law enforcement bodies.

Justice Department officials have countered these claims by pointing to the extraordinary set of circumstances surrounding a criminal case into a subject who at the time was the son of a leading presidential candidate. Department policy has long warned prosecutors to take care in charging cases with potential political overtones around the time of an election, to avoid any possible influence on the outcome.

During the hourslong testimony, Democrats sought to chalk up the entirety of the whistleblowers' claims as a disagreement between prosecutors and investigators on how to move forward with charges against Hunter Biden.

"My view here is that we're spending hours on a disagreement on whether to charge someone and we have a whole democratic process that decides that," said Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif. "You don't get to decide that."

Republicans pushed back, saying that beyond charging decisions, it was clear that the prosecutors didn't want to touch anything that would include Hunter Biden's father. In one instance, Shapley testified that in a meeting with Weiss and Assistant U.S. Attorney Lesley Wolf after the 2020 election, he and other agents wanted to discuss an email between Hunter Biden associates where one person made reference to the "big guy." Shapley said Wolf refused to do so, saying she did not want to ask questions about "dad."

Republicans have moved ahead, issuing a series of requests for voluntary testimony from senior Justice officials, including Weiss.

Weiss said in a letter to Jordan earlier this month that he would be happy to testify before the committee when he is legally able to share information with Congress without violating the longstanding department policy of discussing an ongoing investigation.

Testimony from Justice Department officials could come after Hunter Biden appears for his plea hearing next week.

American soldier's dash into North Korea leaves family members wondering why

By SCOTT BAUER and MELISSA WINDER Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Family members of the U.S. Army private who sprinted across the border into North Korea said Wednesday that he may have felt overwhelmed as he faced legal troubles and his possible looming discharge from the military.

Relatives described Pvt. Travis King, 23, as a quiet loner who did not drink or smoke and enjoyed reading the Bible. After growing up in southeast Wisconsin, he was excited about serving his country in South Korea. Now King's family is struggling to understand what changed before he dashed into a country with a long history of holding Americans and using them as bargaining chips.

"I can't see him doing that intentionally if he was in his right mind," King's maternal grandfather, Carl Gates, told The Associated Press from his Kenosha, Wisconsin, home. "Travis is a good guy. He wouldn't do nothing to hurt nobody. And I can't see him trying to hurt himself."

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King was supposed to be returned to the U.S. this week to face military discipline after serving nearly two months in a South Korea prison on assault charges. But instead of boarding a flight for Texas on Monday, as planned, King slipped away and quietly joined a civilian tour group on Tuesday morning headed for the Demilitarized Zone that divides South and North Korea.

Even with legal troubles hanging over him, King's relatives said they are at a loss to explain why he acted as he did.

King's uncle, Myron Gates, questioned whether his nephew was experiencing a mental problem.

"I don't understand why he would do that, because it seemed like he was on his way back here to the United States," Myron Gates said. "He was on his way home."

Another relative said King was despondent over the recent loss of a young cousin. Lakeia Nard said King was close with her 7-year-old son, King'nazier Gates, who died in February of a rare genetic disease.

Carl Gates said his grandson joined the military three years ago out of a desire to serve his country and because he "wanted to do better for himself." He has an older brother who is a police officer and a cousin who is in the Navy.

King served as a cavalry scout with the 1st Armored Division.

"He's a nice, quiet guy," Carl Gates said. "He doesn't bother anybody. He keeps to himself."

King was facing discharge from the Army because he was convicted of a crime in a foreign country, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

In February, a court fined King 5 million won (\$3,950) after he was convicted of assaulting an unidentified person and damaging a police vehicle in Seoul last October, according to a transcript of the verdict obtained by the AP.

The ruling said King was also accused of punching a 23-year-old man at a Seoul nightclub, though the court dismissed that charge because the victim did not want the soldier to be punished. King served 47 days in prison.

According to the U.S. official, King was escorted to the airport on Monday by two U.S. service members. He was supposed to board an American Airlines flight to Texas that was scheduled to leave at 5:40 p.m. Upon arrival, he was to be met by military personnel who would escort him to Fort Bliss.

On the way to his departing flight, King was escorted as far as customs but left the airport before boarding the plane. It was unclear how he spent the hours until joining the tour in the border village of Panmunjom and running across the border Tuesday afternoon.

Sarah Leslie, a tourist from New Zealand, said King was in her tour group and was traveling alone. He initially acted like any other tourist, buying a DMZ hat from a gift shop. He was casually dressed in jeans and a T-shirt.

As the tour was ending, the group members were milling about and taking photos. That's when Leslie saw King running "really fast." She thought it was a stunt.

"I assumed initially he had a mate filming him in some kind of really stupid prank or stunt, like a TikTok, the most stupid thing you could do," Leslie said. "But then I heard one of the soldiers shout, 'Get that guy.'"

Before soldiers could catch him, King was across the border. It took just a few seconds.

U.S. officials were saying little about what may have motivated King.

"We are still gathering facts," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the administration was trying to figure out where King was being held, his condition and his reason for crossing into North Korea. She said administration officials would work to ensure his safe return to his family.

King's mother, Claudine Gates, told reporters outside her Racine, Wisconsin, home that all she cares about is bringing her son home.

"I just want my son back," she said in video posted by Milwaukee television station WISN. "Get my son home."

King's grandfather called on his country to help rescue his grandson.

"We're the United States. We make things happen. If they get him out of there, we appreciate it as a

family," Carl Gates said. "Save my grandson."

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin. Associated Press writers Hyung-Jin Kim and Kim Tong-Hung in Seoul, South Korea; Darlene Superville, Tara Copp and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington; Nick Perry in Wellington, New Zealand; Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin; and Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

New Hampshire Republican Gov. Chris Sununu won't seek reelection in 2024

By KATHY McCORMACK and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu announced Wednesday that he will not seek reelection to a fifth term in 2024, an unexpected move for the popular Republican that gives Democrats real hope of reclaiming the battleground state's top elected office during a presidential election year.

Sununu, who took office the same year Donald Trump entered the White House, said in an interview that the nation's toxic political climate had no impact on his decision. But he decried Trump's impact on the GOP and vowed to use his political capital to help Trump's Republican rivals in the state's first-in-the-nation presidential primary over the coming weeks and months.

"They call it 'public service,' not 'public career,'" said Sununu, who has also decided against runs for president and the U.S. Senate in recent months. Turning to the 2024 presidential primary, he said, "I'm gonna be an aggressive proponent of everybody else (besides Trump) and a proponent of the Republican Party. Donald Trump does not represent the Republican Party. He might be our nominee, but he doesn't represent the future. He's yesterday's news."

While Sununu, 48, intends to play an outsized role in state and national politics through the 2024 election, his decision gives Democrats reason to be optimistic about winning the governorship for the first time Sununu took office in 2017.

"Before Sununu, the Democrats had a lock on the governor office for a dozen years. Sununu changed all that," said University of New Hampshire political science professor Dante Scala. "He would have been the significant favorite had he decided to run for a fifth term. For the first time since 2016, we will be more likely to see a competitive race for governor. Democrats will have their best shot in a while."

Already, several high-profile Republicans have signaled interest in succeeding Sununu.

Chuck Morse, former Republican president of the New Hampshire Senate and a former U.S. Senate candidate, announced his campaign for governor shortly after Sununu announced his decision in an email to supporters. Morse said in a statement that he's proud to have worked with Sununu "to put together a conservative, pro-jobs, pro-growth, family first economic agenda that has made New Hampshire the envy of New England and the nation."

Former Republican U.S. Sen. Kelly Ayotte may also be joining the field of candidates. She said "the battle to ensure that New Hampshire keeps our Live Free or Die spirit must continue" and teased the announcement of "some big news in the coming days."

At least two Democrats have already launched bids for governor, Executive Councilor Cinde Warmington and Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig.

Democrats have struggled to identify a top-tier candidate for governor since former Gov. Maggie Hassan left office to join the U.S. Senate. But they have a definite advantage in 2024 — on paper at least.

New Hampshire is still considered a swing state, but no Republican presidential contender has carried the state since George Bush in 2000. Trump, who is seeking the GOP nomination for a third time and leads early primary polls in the state, lost New Hampshire by 7 points in the 2020 general election.

A popular governor who made the rounds on national talk shows this year, Sununu announced in June that he would not seek the presidency in 2024. He argued that Republican candidates with "no path to victory must have the courage to get out" of their party's increasingly crowded primary to prevent Trump from being reelected.

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He told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Trump has “no chance of winning” the presidency in 2024. “He’s going to drag everybody else down with him as he has year after year after year,” he said.

Sununu said he plans to campaign with several Trump rivals in the weeks ahead, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and former Texas U.S. Rep. Will Hurd.

National Democrats cheered the news.

Democratic Governors Association Executive Director Meghan Meehan-Draper predicted “a nasty, extreme and expensive Republican primary for governor” featuring several supporters of what has become known as the ‘Make America Great Again’ movement.”

“Not only have Granite State voters consistently rejected that type of division and chaos, but after four terms of Sununu’s failures on worsening problems — like the housing crisis, attacks on public education and harmful abortion restrictions — they know it’s time for a change,” she said.

Sununu previously irked Washington Republicans by deciding against a U.S. Senate bid in 2021. They had hoped he could defeat Hassan, the Democratic incumbent, and help them retake the chamber in the 2022 midterms.

Instead, Sununu won reelection by more than 15 points last year, and said he could have a bigger and more direct impact as governor than as a senator. In a nod to the slow speed of politics in Washington, he said he didn’t want to spend the next six years “sitting around having meeting after meeting, waiting for votes to maybe happen.”

Sununu, whose father was governor from 1983 to 1989 and later served as White House chief of staff under President George H.W. Bush, was the youngest top executive in the country when he took office in 2017 at age 42. During his tenure, the easy-going politician known for folksy manners was praised for his pro-business policies, efforts to combat inflation and his leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Republican Governors Association Chair and Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds issued a statement praising Sununu after his announcement, saying he “never backed down from a challenge.”

“He made it a priority to deliver balanced budgets, lower taxes, improve education, and address substance use disorders for New Hampshire citizens,” she said. “And, thanks to Governor Sununu’s leadership, New Hampshire now ranks number one in the nation for personal freedom.”

Peoples reported from Hudson, N.H.

Jason Aldean’s new music video was filmed at a lynching site. A big country music network pulled it

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

Country music star Jason Aldean’s latest music video for “Try That In A Small Town,” lasted just one weekend on Country Music Television before the network pulled it in response to an outcry over its setting and lyrics.

In the video, Aldean — who has been awarded country music artist of the decade by the Academy of Country Music — performs in front of the Maury County Courthouse in Columbia, Tennessee. This is the site of the 1946 Columbia race riot and the 1927 mob lynching of an 18-year-old Black teenager named Henry Choate.

Aldean’s video, which was released last Friday, has received fervent criticism online, with some claiming the visual is a “dog whistle” and others labeling it “pro-lynching.”

Interspersed between performance footage of Aldean are news clips of violent riots and flag burning. A Fox News chyron reads: “State of emergency declared in Georgia.”

“Cuss out a cop, spit in his face / Stomp on the flag and light it up / Yeah, ya think you’re tough,” Aldean, who is from Macon, Georgia, sings. “Got a gun that my granddad gave me / They say one day they’re gonna round up / Well, that shit might fly in the city, good luck / Try that in a small town.”

“There is not a single lyric in the song that references race or points to it- and there isn’t a single video

clip that isn't real news footage -and while I can try and respect others to have their own interpretation of a song with music- this one goes too far," Aldean wrote in a tweet posted Tuesday.

The production company behind the video, Tacklebox, said in a statement Wednesday that it picked a "popular filming location outside of Nashville" that had been used on numerous productions, including holiday films starring Tanya Tucker and one starring Mario Lopez and Jana Kramer.

"Any alternative narrative suggesting the music video's location decision is false," the company said, adding that Aldean did not choose the location.

Aldean has long identified as conservative, and has been a vocal supporter of former President Donald Trump. "My political views have never been something I've hidden from," he tweeted Tuesday.

The video and its subsequent removal from CMT quickly blew up into one of the periodic culture war clashes, with several conservative figures speaking out in favor of Aldean — including Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and Colorado Republican Rep. Lauren Boebert.

This isn't the first time Aldean has been at the center of controversy. In 2015, he made headlines for dressing as rapper Lil Wayne as a Halloween costume, wearing blackface makeup and a wig with dreadlocks.

In 2017, the country singer was on stage at the Route 91 Festival in Las Vegas during the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history. Over the years, Aldean has given conflicting statements about his stance on U.S. gun laws, though his music celebrates gun ownership.

"It's too easy to get guns, first and foremost," he told The Associated Press after the Las Vegas shooting. "When you can walk in somewhere and you can get one in 5 minutes, do a background check that takes 5 minutes, like how in-depth is that background check? Those are the issues I have. It's not necessarily the guns themselves or that I don't think people should have guns. I have a lot of them."

"In the past 24 hours I have been accused of releasing a pro-lynching song (a song that has been out since May) and was subject to the comparison that I (direct quote) was not too pleased with the nationwide BLM protests," Aldean said on Twitter Tuesday. "These references are not only meritless, but dangerous."

A CMT spokesperson did not immediately respond to AP's request for comment.

This story has been updated to correct the day Aldean tweeted to Tuesday, not Wednesday.

Jan. 6 charges against Trump would add to his mounting legal peril as he campaigns for 2024

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hush-money payments. Classified records. And now, his efforts to overturn the 2020 election that led to the Capitol attack. Already facing criminal cases in New York and Florida, Donald Trump is in increasing legal peril as investigations into his struggle to cling to power after his election loss appear to be coming to a head.

A target letter sent to Trump by special counsel Jack Smith suggests he may soon be indicted on new federal charges, adding to the remarkable situation of a former president up against possible prison time while vying to reclaim the White House as the frontrunner for the Republican nomination.

Smith's wide-ranging probe into the chaotic weeks between Trump's election loss and his supporters' attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, seems to be nearing an end just as another case could be on the horizon. A grand jury that was sworn in this month in Georgia will likely consider whether to charge Trump and his Republican allies for their efforts to reverse his election loss in the state.

Trump has denied wrongdoing in all the cases and dismissed the prosecutions as a malign effort to hurt his 2024 campaign.

Here's a look at the Jan. 6 investigation, Trump's legal cases and what could happen next:

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE JAN. 6 PROBE?

The team led by Smith, who was appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland in November, has questioned a host of former White House officials, Trump allies, lawyers and state election officials both

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in voluntary interviews and before the grand jury that has been meeting behind closed doors in Washington. Those who have testified before the grand jury — which would ultimately hand down any indictment — include Trump's Vice President Mike Pence, who has spoken extensively in public about the former president's efforts to pressure him into rejecting President Joe Biden's electoral victory.

Smith's team appears to be interested in a late night Dec. 18, 2020, White House meeting one aide has called "unhinged" in which Trump's private lawyers suggested he order the U.S. military to seize state voting machines in an unprecedented effort to pursue his false claims of voter fraud. In videos shown by the U.S. House Committee that investigated the Jan. 6 attack, one White House lawyer said he thought the idea was "nuts." Judges — including some appointed by Trump — uniformly rejected his claims of voter fraud.

Smith has also questioned witnesses about schemes by Trump associates to enlist electors in battleground states to sign certificates claiming that Trump — instead of Biden — had won their states. The fake electors' certificates were mailed to the National Archives and Congress, where some Republicans used them to try to justify delaying or blocking certification of the election.

Smith's team has also shown interest in the story of a Georgia election worker, Ruby Freeman, who along with her daughter has recounted living in fear following death threats after Trump and his allies falsely accused them of pulling fraudulent ballots from a suitcase in Georgia. That interest is according to a person familiar with the investigation who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing criminal probe.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

It's unclear when Smith's investigation may wrap up. Trump said he was invited to appear before the grand jury this week, though targets of investigations don't have to testify and rarely agree to do so. The grand jury, which meets in secret, would ultimately vote on whether there is enough evidence to charge him with a crime. Federal grand juries are made up of about 16 to 23 people, and at least 12 must agree in order to hand down an indictment.

Among the potential charges legal experts have said Trump could face are conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruction of an official proceeding: Congress' certification of Biden's electoral victory. Hundreds of the more than 1,000 people accused of federal crimes in the Jan. 6 riot have been charged with the obstruction offense, which carries up to 20 years in prison.

If charged in the Jan. 6 case, Trump could face a challenging jury pool in overwhelmingly Democratic Washington, whose residents — many of whom work on Capitol Hill — had a front-row seat to the chaos that unfolded after Trump urged his supporters to "fight like hell."

Many Jan. 6 rioters have tried unsuccessfully to get their trials moved out of the nation's capital, saying Trump supporters can't get a fair trial there. Only two defendants have been acquitted of all charges after trials, and those were trials decided by a judge, not a jury. In the most serious Jan. 6 cases brought so far, juries have convicted the leaders of two far-right extremist groups — the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys — of seditious conspiracy and other charges for what prosecutors described as plots to block the transfer of power from Trump to Biden. More than 600 other Jan. 6 defendants have pleaded guilty to federal crimes.

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH TRUMP'S OTHER CASES?

Trump pleaded not guilty last month to 37 federal felony counts accusing him of illegally hoarding classified records at his Florida Mar-a-Lago estate and rejecting government demands to give them back. A judge in that case heard arguments on Tuesday over whether that trial — which would take place in Florida — should happen before or after the 2024 election. While prosecutors are seeking a December trial date, Trump's lawyers have pushed for an indefinite delay, arguing he can't get a fair trial while he's campaigning for president.

In New York state court, a trial is scheduled to begin in March — in the thick of primary season — in another Trump case brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg that alleges a scheme to bury allegations of extramarital affairs that arose during his first White House campaign. Trump has pleaded not guilty in that case to 34 felony counts of falsifying internal business records at his private company about a hush-money payoff to porn actor Stormy Daniels. Trump was trying to get the case moved to federal court, but a judge ruled against that on Wednesday.

In Georgia, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who has been investigating Trump and his allies for their efforts to overturn his election loss in that state, is expected to present her case before one of two grand juries seated earlier this month. Willis has suggested that any indictments would likely come in August. A separate special grand jury — which didn't have charging power and dissolved in January — submitted a report with recommendations to Willis. Though most of that report remains under wraps for now, the panel's foreperson has said without naming names that the special grand jury recommended charging multiple people.

Meanwhile, in Michigan on Tuesday, the state's attorney general filed felony charges, including forgery against 16 Republicans who acted as fake electors for Trump in 2020, accusing them of submitting false certificates that said they were legitimate electors despite Biden's victory there.

Richer reported from Boston.

More on Donald Trump-related investigations: <https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump>

Stanford University president announces resignation over concerns about his research

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The president of Stanford University said Wednesday he would resign, citing an independent review that cleared him of research misconduct but found "serious flaws" in five scientific papers on subjects such as brain development in which he was the principal author.

Marc Tessier-Lavigne said in a statement to students and staff that he would step down Aug. 31.

The resignation comes after the board of trustees launched a review in December following allegations he engaged in fraud and other unethical conduct related to research and papers that are in some cases two decades old (1999, 2001, 2001)

Tessier-Lavigne, a neuroscientist, says he "never submitted a scientific paper without firmly believing that the data were correct and accurately presented." But he says he should have been more diligent in seeking corrections regarding his work and he should have operated laboratories with tighter controls.

Panelists found multiple instances of manipulated data in the 12 papers they investigated, but concluded he was not responsible for the misconduct. Still, they found that each of the five papers in which he was principal author "has serious flaws in the presentation of research data" and in at least four of them, there was apparent manipulation of data by others.

Tessier-Lavigne said he was aware of issues with four of the five papers but acknowledged taking "insufficient" steps to deal with the issues. He said he'll retract three of the papers and correct two.

The papers were published before Tessier-Lavigne became Stanford president.

Misconduct allegations about the work were first aired on PubPeer, a website where members of the scientific community can discuss research papers, the report stated. Questions resurfaced after The Stanford Daily, the university's student-run newspaper, published several stories about the integrity of reports published by his laboratories.

The aggressive reporting merited investigations editor and then-college freshman Theo Baker a special George Polk journalism award. Baker told The Associated Press Wednesday that the retractions and corrections would not have occurred otherwise.

"The fact that we're able to contribute to the scientific record being corrected for five widely cited papers is important," he said.

The panel cleared Tessier-Lavigne of the most serious allegations, that a 2009 paper published in the scientific journal Nature was the subject of a fraud investigation and that fraud was found. There was no investigation and no fraud discovered, the panel ruled. The paper proposed a model of neurodegeneration, which could have great potential for Alzheimer's disease research and therapy, the panel wrote in its report.

But the panel also concluded the paper had multiple problems, including a lack of rigor in its development and that the research that went into the paper and its presentation contained "various errors and

shortcomings." The panel did not find evidence that Tessier-Lavigne was aware of the lack of rigor.

"People tend to think of scientists as these individuals that they've heard of like Einstein and Marie Curie," said H. Holden Thorp, editor-in-chief of the Science family of journals. "The truth is that researchers run laboratories filled with people, and everything that happens in that laboratory is a product of many individuals there."

While the report cleared Tessier-Lavigne of research misconduct, Thorp said ultimately the boss is responsible for what happens in the lab – and shouldn't be distracted by doing other jobs. He pointed to the report's finding that lab culture played a role.

Tessier-Lavigne says he's stepping down because he expects continued debate about his ability to lead the university. He will remain on faculty as a biology professor. He also said he will continue his research into brain development and neurodegeneration.

The board named Richard Saller, a classics professor, as interim president starting Sept. 1, said board chair Jerry Yang.

In a statement, Yang said Tessier-Lavigne was key to creating the university's first new school in 70 years, the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, and in 2019, he unveiled a strategic long-range plan that will continue to guide the university's growth.

Tessier-Lavigne has been president for nearly seven years.

Associated Press reporter Lauran Neergaard contributed to this report from Washington.

North Korea stays silent on its apparent detention of a US soldier who bolted across the border

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, KIM TONG-HYUNG, TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press
SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea stayed silent Wednesday about the detention of an American soldier who sprinted across the Koreas' heavily fortified border as members of his tour group looked on in shock. Some observers said heightened tensions between the two countries make it unlikely that he will return any time soon.

Pvt. Travis King bolted into North Korea while on a tour of the Demilitarized Zone on Tuesday, a day after he was supposed to go back to a base in the U.S. He was released from a South Korean prison July 10 after serving time for assault and was scheduled to return to Fort Bliss, Texas.

King, who was imprisoned for 47 days, faced discharge from the Army because of his conviction in a foreign country, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

King is the first known American held in North Korea in nearly five years, and his detention comes at a time of elevated animosity. On Wednesday, North Korea test-fired two ballistic missiles into the sea in an apparent protest of the deployment of a U.S. nuclear-armed submarine in South Korea for the first time in decades.

"It's likely that North Korea will use the soldier for propaganda purposes in the short term and then as a bargaining chip," said Yang Moo-jin, president of the University of North Korean Studies in South Korea.

King, a 23-year-old cavalry scout with the 1st Armored Division, was supposed to leave Monday for Texas. He was escorted as far as customs but left the airport before boarding his plane.

It wasn't clear how he spent the hours until joining the tour in the border village of Panmunjom and running across the border Tuesday afternoon. The Army realized he was missing when he did not get off the flight in Texas as expected. Military officials released his name and limited information after King's family was notified.

One woman who was on the tour with King said she initially thought his dash was some kind of stunt — and that she and others in the group couldn't believe what happened.

King's stint in prison was the result of an altercation last year.

In February, a court fined him 5 million won (\$3,950) after he was convicted of assaulting an unidenti-

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fied person and damaging a police vehicle in Seoul last October, according to a transcript of the verdict obtained by The Associated Press.

The ruling said King had also been accused of punching a 23-year-old man at a Seoul nightclub, though the court dismissed that charge because the victim didn't want King to be punished.

King's maternal grandfather, Carl Gates, said his grandson joined the Army roughly three years ago because he "wanted to do better for himself." He was drawn to service because he has a brother who is a police officer and a cousin in the Navy, Gates said.

Gates said he hoped his grandson could be brought home to get help.

"I think right now he might have a problem or something. I can't see him doing that intentionally if he was in his right mind," Gates said.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the administration was working to figure out where King was being held, his condition and his reason for crossing into North Korea. She said administration officials would seek his safe return to his family.

The American-led U.N. Command said Tuesday that the U.S. soldier was believed to be in North Korean custody.

It wasn't known whether or how the U.S. and North Korea would communicate. The two countries have no diplomatic relations and are still officially at war because the Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

In the past, Sweden, which has an embassy in Pyongyang, provided consular services for other Americans detained in North Korea. But Swedish diplomatic staff reportedly haven't returned to North Korea since the country imposed a COVID-19 lockdown in early 2020 and ordered all foreigners to leave.

Some observers said North Korea and the U.S. could still talk via Panmunjom or the North Korean mission at the U.N. in New York.

It's rare for Americans or South Koreans to defect to North Korea, but more than 30,000 North Koreans have fled to South Korea to escape political oppression and economic difficulties since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Tae Yongho, a former minister at the North Korean Embassy in London, said North Korea is likely pleased to have "an opportunity to get the U.S. to lose its face" because King's crossing happened on the same day the U.S. submarine arrived in South Korea.

Tae, now a South Korean lawmaker, said North Korea was unlikely to return King easily because he is a soldier from a nation technically at war with North Korea, and he voluntarily went to the North.

The U.S. still stations about 28,000 troops in South Korea.

Panmunjom, located inside the 248-kilometer-long (154-mile-long) Demilitarized Zone, has been jointly overseen by the U.N. Command and North Korea since the close of the Korean War.

Bloodshed has occasionally occurred there, but it has also been a venue for diplomacy and tourism, drawing visitors who want to see the Cold War's last frontier. No civilians live there, but North and South Korean soldiers face off while tourists on both sides snap photographs.

A small number of U.S. soldiers went to North Korea during the Cold War, including Charles Jenkins, who deserted his army post in South Korea in 1965 and fled across the DMZ. He appeared in North Korean propaganda films and married a Japanese nursing student who was abducted from Japan by North Korean agents. Jenkins died in Japan in 2017.

In recent years, some American civilians have been arrested in North Korea on allegations of espionage, subversion and other anti-state acts, but were released after the U.S. sent high-profile missions to secure their freedom. The last releases occurred in 2018.

Those releases stood in striking contrast to the fate of Otto Warmbier, an American university student who died in 2017, days after he was released by North Korea in a coma following 17 months in captivity.

Copp reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Matthew Lee and Zeke Miller in Washington; Scott Bauer in Madison, Wisconsin; and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Israeli president tells Congress his country is committed to democracy but concedes 'painful debate'

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Israeli President Isaac Herzog sought to reassure Congress on Wednesday about the state of Israel's democracy and the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship, acknowledging "heated and painful debate" at home and criticism abroad over actions of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hardline government.

Herzog, whose post in Israel is largely symbolic, became the second Israeli president, after his father, Chaim Herzog, to address Congress. While his speech officially marked modern Israel's celebration of its 75th year, he also indirectly addressed unease in the Biden administration and among Democratic lawmakers over the Netanyahu government's planned sweeping overhaul of Israel's judicial system, expanded Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank and other matters.

The divide was reflected in his audience. While lawmakers repeatedly rose to their feet in thundering applause of Herzog's recounting of Israel's founding, a handful of leading young progressive Democrats boycotted his speech.

On the eve of Herzog's speech to the joint meeting of Congress, the House passed a Republican-led resolution reaffirming its support for Israel with strong bipartisan approval — an implicit rebuke of Rep. Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., who over the weekend called the country a "racist state." She later said her remarks were aimed at Netanyahu, not Israel.

"Mr. Speaker, I am not oblivious to criticism among friends, including some expressed by respected members of this House. I respect criticism, especially from friends, although one does not always have to accept it," Herzog said.

"But criticism of Israel must not cross the line into negation of the state of Israel's right to exist. Questioning the Jewish people's right to self-determination, is not legitimate diplomacy, it is antisemitism."

The House resolution, introduced by Rep. August Pfluger, R-Texas, passed Tuesday with more than 400 lawmakers backing the measure. It did not mention Jayapal by name but was clearly a response to her recent remarks about Israel. The measure was drafted soon after she criticized Israel and its treatment of Palestinians at a conference on Saturday.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., the only Palestinian-American in Congress, boycotted Herzog's speech along with Jayapal and some others. Tlaib criticized the resolution as normalizing violence against those living in the occupied West Bank, given the Netanyahu government's approval of expanded Jewish settlements there.

"We're here again reaffirming Congress' support for apartheid," Tlaib said during floor debate Tuesday on the Republican measure. "Policing the words of women of color who dare to speak up about truths, about oppression."

During an Oval Office meeting with President Joe Biden on Tuesday, Herzog sought to assure him that Israel remains committed to democracy amid deepening U.S. concerns over Netanyahu's plans to overhaul his country's judicial system.

Netanyahu and his allies say restructuring Israel's judicial system is needed to rein in the powers of unelected judges. Opponents say the plan will destroy Israel's fragile system of checks and balances and move the country toward authoritarian rule.

Herzog has appealed for a compromise that has proven elusive. Speaking to Congress, he stressed the importance of an "independent judiciary" and emphasized Israelis were engaged in a fundamental debate, "renegotiating the balance of our institutional powers."

Many American Jewish groups and Democratic lawmakers have expressed concerns about Netanyahu's court plan.

Herzog's visit also comes weeks after Israeli forces carried out one of their most intensive operations in the occupied West Bank in two decades, with a two-day air and ground offensive in Jenin, a militant

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stronghold. Senior members of Netanyahu's government have been pushing for increased construction and other measures to cement Israel's control over the occupied West Bank in response to a more than yearlong wave of violence with the Palestinians.

U.S. officials have broadly supported Israel's right to defend itself from militant attacks but have also urged restraint to minimize harm to civilians and have lobbied against additional settlements that would further diminish the chances of securing a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

Herzog made no explicit mention of the big policy differences among Israelis over the Palestinians, including the disagreements over settlements.

Just before Herzog's visit, Biden spoke with Netanyahu by phone and invited him to meet in the U.S. this fall, although the president expressed reservations about several of the policies from Netanyahu's hard-right coalition.

White House visits are typically standard protocol for Israeli prime ministers, and the delay in Netanyahu receiving one has become an issue in Israel, with opponents citing it as a reflection of deteriorating relations with the U.S.

Much of Herzog's address Wednesday evoked the two countries' strategic, political and cultural connections, in familiar phrases that drew U.S. lawmakers up for ovations each time. "To us it is clear that America is irreplaceable to America and Israel is irreplaceable to America," he said.

He what are now 28 weeks of large grassroots protests at home against the proposed judicial overhaul by Netanyahu's government, a mix of ultra-Orthodox and ultranationalist parties.

"Dear friends, it's no secret that over the past few months, the Israeli people have engaged in a heated and painful debate," he said.

"In practice, the intense debate going on back home, even as we speak, is the clearest tribute to the fortitude of Israel's democracy," Herzog said.

Herzog planned to return to the White House on Wednesday to meet with Vice President Kamala Harris. Her office said the leaders will announce that both governments intend to spend \$70 million over five years to support climate-smart agriculture programs.

What residuals are — and why Hollywood actors and writers are striking over them

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "The residuals are out there," read a picket sign held by actor David Duchovny, echoing the tagline of his TV series, "The X Files."

Residuals are a central issue of the current simultaneous strikes of Hollywood actors and screenwriters, and a subject of constant comment on picket lines. While they once handsomely rewarded stars with rewatchable hits like Duchovny, union members say they've since diminished to a trickle as the industry has shifted to streaming. Here's a look at how the system works and the experience of those who receive them — or don't.

WHAT ARE RESIDUALS?

Residuals are long-term payments to those who worked on films and television shows, negotiated by unions, for reruns and other airings after the initial release. The basic pay structure was developed in 1960, the last time writers and actors were on strike together.

Traditionally, actors and writers are paid for each time a show runs on broadcast or cable television, or when someone buys a DVD, a Blu-ray disc or (long ago) a VHS tape.

The payments, which decline over time, are pegged to several factors including the length of a movie or show, the size of a role, the budget of a production, and where the film or show is offered.

While streaming companies technically pay residuals, both unions and their members say the amounts and pay timelines leave actors and writers with a pittance of what they once received — and those who

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were once paid for reruns of network shows often get nothing now.

"I did an episode of 'Criminal Minds' and was getting residuals," said actor Whitney Morgan Cox, who has a handful of credits for small roles. "And then 'Criminal Minds' moved to Netflix and those checks stopped coming. And then it did a resurgence on cable TV, I got a couple more checks. It went to streaming, the checks stopped coming."

HOW MUCH ARE THEY WORTH?

Like all money in Hollywood, the amounts run the gamut. More than a decade after the show ended, the cast of "Friends" was still making millions annually.

But residual payments can easily amount to just a few cents. Some actors are sharing their residuals on social media, including Kimiko Glenn of Netflix's "Orange Is The New Black, who made a TikTok video of a statement showing only \$27 in total for foreign residuals earned over the decade since the show began.

"I'm always like, 'But why even cut it?'" actor Zoe Lister-Jones said of cashing residual checks.

"It's not worth the paper it's printed on," actor and writer Paul Scheer added.

Getting paid pennies is so common that there's even a bar in Studio City that offers free drinks for actors and writers who show they received a check for less than a dollar.

But even modest payments can be essential to a lower-tier performer's livelihood.

"Residuals, that's how we live," Cox said. "There are our initial paychecks, which helps, but then there are our residuals which help us with our groceries and our day-to-day lives."

The lack of such a steady income can mean the loss of union health insurance for members, who are required to earn \$27,000 annually to qualify for coverage. The vast majority don't qualify.

WHAT'S THE POPULARITY PROBLEM?

Streaming residuals are largely untethered from the popularity of the movie or show they are tied to. Most streaming services are loath to release specific viewership figures at all. Performers say being part of a hit now has little meaning.

Actor Chris Browning appeared in the movie "Bright" with Will Smith, which Netflix touted as a heavily watched hit.

"If it was back in the old DVD residuals days, I would have got a \$25,000 residual check," Browning said. "I got \$271 from Netflix."

David Denman, who appeared on 31 episodes of "The Office," which aired on NBC, said "it doesn't matter if you watch that show once or you watch it 100 times, you're not going to get any more money because more people watch it."

"When it was the Number 1 show on Netflix, they are able to make a significant profit off of that, but that doesn't trickle down to the blue-collar actors like me," Denman said. "We're just asking to share in the profit when the show is successful, that's it."

Quinta Brunson, creator and star of "Abbott Elementary" on traditional broadcast network ABC, said she has had a far better experience in many ways than friends who have had similar roles on streamers.

"I think that ... streamers could learn from what networks had done in the past right now," Brunson said. "I think there's a lot of benefit to the way network TV works."

WHAT WAS ON THE NEGOTIATING TABLE?

While little has been publicly revealed about the details of writers' contract negotiations, which ended May 2, the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists on Monday released an outline of the negotiations when talks broke off July 12.

The union said negotiators asked studios to consider a "comprehensive plan for actors to participate in streaming revenue, since the current business model has eroded our residuals income." The answer, the union said, was simply "no."

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which represents the employers, said in response that SAG-AFTRA's public descriptions "mischaracterize" and "deliberately distort" the negotiations.

SAG-AFTRA said the AMPTP rejected outright its residual proposals for lower budget productions. They included requiring residual payments for the ongoing showing of movies on streaming services, regard-

less of specific budget or length, and paying for shows that stream first and later air on TV at the same rate as shows that aired first on TV. They also proposed an increase in the residuals that apply when a traditional media production then airs on a free streaming platform like Amazon Freevee.

On higher budget productions, the union said it sought improved residuals for the continued availability of movies and shows on subscription streaming services. SAG-AFTRA said there was progress in negotiations on this issue, but that "significant gaps" remain between the two sides.

The AMPTP released far fewer specifics on its take on negotiations. But the group said it included a 76% hike in residuals on overseas streaming video for high budget productions.

Associated Press Writers Krysta Fauria and Leslie Ambriz contributed.

Jill Biden welcomes proposal for Medicare to pay for navigation services for cancer patients

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — First lady Jill Biden on Wednesday welcomed a new proposal to have Medicare pay for navigation services for cancer patients, saying it will make "an enormous difference in people's lives."

She joined other Biden administration officials on a conference call to discuss a proposal by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to pay for "principal illness navigation services," which help patients make decisions about treatment for cancer and other serious illnesses and overcome barriers to quality care.

Biden spoke about her sister Jan, who underwent six weeks of stem cell transplant therapy several years ago to treat lymphoma. Biden said an advocate helped her sister "every step of the way."

She said making these services more widely available is something that she and her husband, Joe Biden, worked on before he was elected president and then made a priority after he took office.

The first lady frequently visits cancer centers around the United States as part of a Biden administration initiative called the Cancer Moonshot, which has a goal of preventing more than 4 million cancer deaths by 2047 and improving the experience of people affected by the disease, including patients.

"Since we began this work, I've consistently heard one thing: these navigation programs are so successful, but since they aren't generally paid for, most medical practices can't afford to provide them," Biden said.

The Bidens also lost a son, Beau, to brain cancer in 2015.

If finalized, the proposed rule would allow Medicare to pay for navigation services. The change would take effect on Jan. 1. Members of the public will have until Sept. 11 to comment on the rule.

"This is a first step. And we hope that the private sector will do its part as well," the first lady said. "We know that these services make an enormous difference in people's lives."

Cracks are emerging in Israel's military. Reservists threaten not to serve if government plan passes

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Cracks are emerging in Israel's military.

The Middle East's best equipped and most powerful force is under one of the worst assaults it has encountered — a battle within its own ranks.

A contentious government plan to overhaul the country's judiciary has cleaved deep rifts within Israeli society. Those rifts have infiltrated the military, where reservists in key units have pledged not to show up for duty if the legislative changes are pushed through.

The letters, signed by thousands of reservists over the last seven months, have up to now mostly remained threats. But this week, 161 critical air force personnel announced they will stop their service, raising concerns about the military's readiness in the face of similar refusals at a time of heightened violence and tensions on several fronts. On Wednesday, hundreds of reservists from various units joined a rally in Tel Aviv, declaring they would not report for duty anymore.

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WHY ARE RESERVISTS REFUSING TO SHOW UP?

Israel's military is compulsory for most Jewish men. After their three-year service is complete, many continue reserve duty well into their 40s or beyond.

Reservists make up a critical pool of soldiers who fill an important role in reinforcing the regular army. They cover a range of positions and forces, from air to land to sea to cyber.

As soon as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government announced the overhaul in January, reservist-led protest groups become central to the grassroots movement demonstrating against the overhaul.

The protesters say they do not want to serve a country that they think is moving toward dictatorship if the overhaul moves ahead. They say the government is violating an unwritten social contract where soldiers risk their lives with the understanding that they are defending a democracy.

Many also believe that loosening judicial oversight could expose Israeli forces to war crimes charges at international courts. One of Israel's defenses against war crimes accusations is that it has an independent legal system capable of investigating any potential wrongdoing.

HOW IS THE MILITARY BEING AFFECTED?

The refusals have largely remained threats, having no immediate impact on the army's readiness. But the declaration from the 161 air force personnel "immediately" halting their service has sent a shock through the establishment.

Israel relies on its air force to strike enemy targets in neighboring Syria. It also is an essential element of battles against militants in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, operations that have become more frequent in recent years. Unmanned aircraft have recently also been used in the West Bank. Israel also has threatened to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon — and a strike on Iran would almost certainly would require warplanes.

All of those fronts require Israel to maintain a highly trained roster of pilots who can be called at little notice to stage airstrikes. When a pilot refuses to show up for training for even just a couple of weeks, his readiness is affected. When ground personnel like those who signed this week's letter, which include target identifiers or coordination experts, refuse to show up, the entire system is shaken.

"I need to maintain competency," said Maj. S., one of the letter's signatories, in an interview with Israeli Army Radio, saying that if he doesn't stay abreast of system updates and operational plans, he can't do his job. "There is no doubt that this harms the country." He was not identified in line with military rules.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO HALT THE REFUSALS?

Fears about the potential effect of refusals to serve on the military's readiness pushed the country's defense minister, Yoav Gallant, to publicly criticize the overhaul in March. That prompted Netanyahu to fire him, setting off a burst of spontaneous protests and a labor strike that forced the Israeli leader to freeze the overhaul and reinstate Gallant.

But this time around, Gallant is silent and political leaders appear to be taking a harder line.

"Refusal to serve endangers the security of every citizen of Israel. The government will not accept refusal to serve," Netanyahu told his Cabinet this week, promising unspecified action against the protest.

The military's top brass have been caught in a balancing act over showing empathy to the concerns of their troops, protecting cohesion within the military despite the deepening societal divisions over the overhaul and ensuring the political dispute doesn't affect the military's performance.

But, in what appears to be a response to growing pressure from political ranks, military leaders have stiffened their tone against those who refuse.

Israel's military chief, Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, visited an air base on Wednesday and met with his air force chief and other top commanders.

He urged for "the cohesion" of active and reserve forces, and called the reservists "an inseparable part" of the military. But, he warned that that "calls for not showing up to reserve service harm the military."

WHAT'S THE LONG TERM IMPACT?

If the government moves ahead with the legislation, more refusals are expected. If these take root, and especially in the air force, the military's performance will take a hit, said Idit Shafran Gittleman, a senior

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researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

How big of a hit will depend on how widespread the refusals become and how the military responds to them, she added.

For the near term, if pilots don't show up for training or service, strikes on Syria might be delayed or in the case of the refusenik air force ground personnel, need to be reorganized, Shafran Gittleman said.

The military will also need to think hard about whether taking harsh punitive steps against pilots is the right move, considering the time and expense to train others to fill in.

Perhaps most significantly, the ethnic, economic and religious divisions being torn open by the overhaul in civilian life are being carried over in the military, testing cohesions in an institution that often serves as a melting pot as Israel faces multiple external threats.

"It's setting off a vibe of tensions between crews that are meant to work together," said Shafran Gittleman. "That's a catastrophe for the military."

'Am I crossing picket lines if I see a movie?' and other Hollywood strike fan questions answered

By The Associated Press undefined

You watch movies. You watch TV. And now you're wondering how the dual Hollywood strikes — a pitched battle with actors and writers on one side, and studios and streaming services on the other — will affect you. We have answers.

Do the strikes mean "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" aren't coming out?

They — and all other summer releases — are still on track! Many flashy premieres have been canceled, however, or dramatically scaled down.

Am I crossing the picket line by seeing one of those movies?

No, the unions have not asked fans to boycott productions, and are quick to make that explicit. Instead, the guilds have asked supporters who aren't members to post on social media and donate to community funds.

Should I cancel Netflix, MAX or the 16 other streaming services I subscribe to if I want to show support?

Nope, there's been no consumer boycott of any kind called yet. Some guild members have said watching their programs on streaming services — if they're still on there — actually helps make their cases to the studios' bargaining arm, the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers.

When will I stop being able to watch new movies and shows?

That's the big question: When will the pipeline dry up? There aren't clear answers. The impact of the writers strike has so far been felt most acutely in the world of television; now, the actors strike has halted the bulk of film production. Your favorite broadcast shows like "Abbott Elementary" definitely aren't coming back by early fall, regardless of whether the strikes are settled by then. Ditto for streaming favorites like "Stranger Things." International productions may be able to fill the gap. As for movies, there's still a steady stream on the horizon.

I have a ticket to a play starring my favorite actor. Do the strikes mean the show is going to be canceled?

No, stage actors in plays and musicals are governed by the Actors' Equity Association. A different union altogether, Equity has expressed solidarity with SAG-AFTRA and many actors are members of both unions. But Broadway dances on.

I love the Emmys — will they still air in September?

The Emmys are still set for Monday, Sept. 18. But history shows that awards shows that proceed during strikes turn out to be bleak affairs. And Emmy campaigning will certainly be affected — SAG-AFTRA and WGA members aren't allowed to take part in "for your consideration" events under their strike notices and they wouldn't be able to accept awards for projects produced by struck companies.

Can actors still post to social media?

Yes! Actors (and writers) do not have to fade gently into that good night while they're on strike. Social media actually helps boost the visibility of their cause, and you'll see many guild members posting content

with bespoke strike-related hashtags. But actors aren't supposed to promote any of their projects in the pipeline while on strike, so it's unlikely that you'll see a sea of #barbie and #oppenheimer hashtags from their star-studded casts.

The SAG-AFTRA strike website had this advice for members wondering if they were allowed to promote themselves (or post #spon): "Yes! Promote yourself as an artist, a fashion icon, a union activist, a commercial actor, and a proud SAG-AFTRA member. You can also promote brands using our groundbreaking Influencer Agreement or start a podcast."

It's my dream to go to Comic-Con — will that be affected this year?

Honestly, yes. Several show and movie panels have already been canceled and the strike notice forbids SAG-AFTRA members from promoting any work made by struck companies — even if those projects were long in the past. There are certain exceptions that would allow members to attend some conventions, but the bottom line is that major events like San Diego's Comic-Con will indeed be diminished during the strikes.

Look, the only thing that helps me unwind is watching celebrity interviews on YouTube. What am I going to do when that well dries up?

It won't — the nature of that content will just be different. Ryan Gosling might not explicitly exude "Kenergy" in his interviews, but he's still allowed to make media appearances (where the "Kenergy" might just be innate). Scores of actors and writers alike have been talking to media — including The Associated Press — on the picket lines for weeks.

Border Patrol fails to assess medical needs for children with preexisting conditions, report says

By LISET CRUZ and VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

Border Patrol does not have protocols for assessing medical needs of children with preexisting conditions, according to an independent report made public Tuesday on the death of an 8-year-old girl from Panama who was in federal custody.

The girl's death was "a preventable tragedy that resulted from" failures in "medical and custodial systems for children" within U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the agency that includes the Border Patrol, the report found.

It's the latest damning finding in the May 17 death of Anadith Danay Reyes Alvarez, who was on her ninth day in custody with family in Harlingen, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, one of the busiest corridors for migrant crossings. She had a chronic heart condition and sickle cell anemia.

An internal investigation found Border Patrol medical staff declined to review the girl's file.

The report made public Tuesday was conducted by an independent monitor working to enforce compliance with the latest terms of the Flores settlement agreement, a measure created to bring child welfare protections to children in immigration custody.

"The failure to consult a physician or a local health facility for more extensive testing raises fundamental concerns regarding the ability of the CBP medical system to care appropriately for children at elevated medical risk," the report says.

New leadership has been appointed to the agency's Office of the Chief Medical Officer, said Troy A. Miller, acting CBP commissioner.

The agency "has undertaken significant steps to address deficiencies identified by the ongoing investigation, as well as to ensure that medically fragile individuals and family units receive the best possible care and spend the minimum amount of time possible in CBP custody," Miller said.

Mabel Alvarez Benedicks, the girl's mother, told The Associated Press she reported her daughter's condition to officials when she and her family were being processed at the border, but officials failed to notify other staff at the time the family was taken to a second facility designated for families, a problem the monitor highlighted in a previous report to the court.

Six days later, the girl tested positive for influenza and had a temperature of 101.8 F (38.78 C), according to the report. She was given medication, put into isolation with her family but three days later, the girl and her mother made numerous visits to the medical unit, the report said.

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Anadith reported vomiting and then a stomachache to the health provider, who failed to contact an on-call physician, the report showed. There is no protocol that highlights when an on-call physician should be contacted.

Alvarez begged officials to call an ambulance in order to hospitalize Anadith as her daughter felt pain in her bones, struggled to breathe and was unable to walk, but the health provider did not consider transferring the girl to a hospital, according to the report.

After Alvarez carried her daughter to the medical unit as she seized and became unresponsive, the girl was then taken to a hospital where she was pronounced dead, the report said.

The "poor clinical decision-making by the health providers" is responsible in Anadith's death, the report said.

"These inexcusable systemic failures were exacerbated by just a sheer disregard for her life," said Melissa Adamson, an attorney at the National Center for Youth Law.

Three other migrant children have died in federal custody this year.

An unaccompanied 15-year-old girl from Guatemala died July 10 from an underlying disease while in federal custody. The girl had been hospitalized at El Paso Children's Hospital for a significant, preexisting illness when she was referred from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to the Office of Refugee Resettlement in May, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said in a statement July 11.

In May, a 17-year-old boy from Honduras died in U.S. custody. Ángel Eduardo Maradiaga Espinoza died at a holding center in Safety Harbor, Florida. His mother said her son had epilepsy but showed no signs of being seriously ill before he left for the United States.

In March, a 4-year-old "medically fragile unaccompanied child from Honduras" died at a hospital in Michigan, according to a Health and Human Services statement at the time.

This story has been updated to correct that the other three migrant children died in federal custody, not Border Patrol custody.

12 MLB teams score in double digits for 1st time since 1894, when record 13 accomplished feat

NEW YORK (AP) — Major League Baseball had a night of offense not seen in 129 years, with 12 teams scoring double-digit runs.

Three games ended 11-10 on the same day for the first time.

Twelve teams tied May 30, 1884, for the second-most with double-digit runs in one day, trailing only 13 on July 4, 1894, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Three teams did it twice on July 4, 1894 as part of doubleheaders.

The Chicago Cubs topped the scoring Tuesday night by routing Washington 17-3 and Arizona outlasted Atlanta 16-13.

San Francisco beat Cincinnati, the New York Mets topped the Chicago White Sox and Kansas City edged Detroit, all by 11-10. Elias said that score had never before occurred three times on the same day.

Four games in which both teams scored double-digit runs matched the record of July 4, 1894, and July 9, 1898, MLB said.

In more mundane 10-3 routs, the Los Angeles Dodgers beat Baltimore and Minnesota defeated Seattle. Cleveland topped Pittsburgh 10-1.

San Diego fell just short, stranding a runner at second in the ninth inning of a 9-1 victory at Toronto.

There were 15 games Tuesday — the completion of the suspended Giants-Reds game counts as Monday in the records.

There were 24 games on May 30, 1884, a year there were three major leagues: the National League, the American Association and the Union Association. Ned Williamson of the Chicago White Sox had the first three-homer game in big league history.

While there was just the 12-team NL on July 4, 1894, every team played a Fourth of July doubleheader.

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

Top progressives are backing Joe Biden's 2024 campaign. But some activists have reservations

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — President Joe Biden would seem an unnatural fit for the activists at Netroots Nation, an annual gathering of progressives that was created to harness online rage over George W. Bush's administration. More recently, it has championed the message of economic populism from Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, two of Biden's rivals for the Democratic nomination in 2020.

But the antipathy toward Democrats seen as too mainstream or moderate did not largely extend to Biden at the group's recent conference in Chicago. Rep. Pramila Jayapal, leader of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, even concluded the event by recounting how she had become a Biden convert.

"When Biden was in, I was like, 'Oh, man,'" said Jayapal, D-Wash., lamenting that Sanders and Warren had fallen short in the presidential primary. "But I gotta tell you, I am a Biden fan now."

That brought cheers, which was no easy feat given that pro-Palestinian activists moments earlier had shouted down Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., on the same stage.

At past Netroots conferences, then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., was booed and Black Lives Matter protesters disrupted a presidential candidate forum in 2016. Biden, as vice president, was heckled over Obama administration immigration policies.

Jayapal's comments point to Biden's progress in winning over his party's left wing, an important part of the coalition he is relying on to win a second term. Many progressives have cheered steep federal spending increases on major social programs and green energy, as well as Biden's renewed plan to offer student debt relief after the Supreme Court struck down his original efforts.

"This isn't someone who's spent the first term doing all kinds of objectionable things," said Karthik Ganapathy, a veteran of Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign who also helped progressive Brandon Johnson win election as Chicago's mayor this spring. "I think the sense is, he's had a much more successful, impactful, consequential presidency than progressives expected."

Similar sentiments have been echoed by Sanders, a Vermont independent, and Warren, D-Mass. Progressive Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., recently endorsed Biden's 2024 campaign. Some, though, remain angry that Biden did not deliver on other big promises, including slashing fossil fuel production, advancing a federal policing overhaul and expanding voting rights.

"The narrative about the successes of the Biden administration is smoke and mirrors," said India Walton, a progressive who beat Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown in the 2021 Democratic primary but lost to him in the general election.

Walton complained that Biden had not done more to protect abortion and civil rights after Supreme Court rulings that weakened both. She also noted that student debt will continue to deal crushing financial blows to millions of people, even with Biden's attempted remedy.

"We have not 'Built Back Better,'" said Walton, referencing Biden's 2020 campaign slogan. "And it's very frustrating to be a working-class American and being fed this 'vote blue' narrative, when the real conditions of our everyday lives are not changing."

Such a backlash could hurt Biden in 2024 given that he is likely to face a challenge from the left — progressive activist Cornel West is mounting a Green Party run — and could be squeezed from the center — the political group No Labels is trying to recruit a centrist candidate.

That means even small erosions of progressive energy for Biden might erase the thin margins that delivered him critical swing states like Arizona and Georgia in 2020.

A factor that could neutralize those threats is that Donald Trump, the early Republican front-runner,

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could again be Biden's general election opponent. In 2020, some hesitant progressives were so appalled by Trump that they turned out to vote for Biden despite their deep reservations.

But it might be difficult to reassemble the same broad voter bloc that put Biden in the White House if some elements are motivated more by fear of Trump than enthusiasm for Biden. This group includes majorities of college graduates, women, urban and suburban residents, young people and Black Americans.

"I think people are not clear about what they actually got for that vote," DaMareo Cooper, co-executive director for the progressive Center for Popular Democracy, said about some Biden supporters from 2020.

Cooper said Biden and top Democrats need to do a better job "messaging what actually has happened." Referring to opposition to Trump's candidacy, he said: "There's going to be a motivation factor. And I don't think we should assume that people are just going to go out and vote for the same reason."

Biden acknowledged the importance of turning out even reluctant progressives in 2020, when he told that year's all-virtual Netroots conference in a taped address, "I badly need you."

The president, who was in Europe and then at Camp David during the group's recent gathering, made such no such pleas this year. His campaign was little mentioned in panel discussions, speeches, training sessions and after-hours parties. At the same time, relatively little attention was paid to West or No Labels, or to Biden's nominal Democratic opponents, anti-vaccine activist Robert Kennedy Jr. and self-help author Marianne Williamson.

Ganapathy said that progressive support for Biden runs deeper than simply attempting to thwart Trump once more.

"There's a lot that this president and this administration can stand on in terms of their record," he said. "It doesn't have to be a 'Don't vote for that guy.'"

Not everyone is convinced.

Anabel Mendoza, a 25-year-old media relations professional and Chicago native who recently moved to California, said Biden "ran on a lot of promises, but many of those have been unfulfilled and I think he could be bolder."

"There is a lot at stake in this country, and young generations are feeling that," said Mendoza, pointing to slow federal progress on combating climate change and gun violence, as well as on immigration, an issue where she said Biden "kept in place a lot of Trump policies and that's something I firmly disagreed with."

But Mendoza also said "in no world am I ever going to go for Trump."

"When I go out and vote for a candidate, it might not be the candidate who has everything that I want," she added.

Walton has similar feelings. "As badly as I would love to sit this one out and prove a point," she said, she'll be voting Democratic in 2024.

"Am I going to not vote and give the country away to another four years of Donald Trump?" Walton asked. "Absolutely not."

Rahna Epting, executive director of the progressive activist organization MoveOn, said Biden "leveraged the first two years of his administration to pass some of the most progressive and people-first policies we could have ever dreamed of."

She said Biden is no "movement candidate," but he does not have to be a star on the left for progressives to turn out for him in 2024.

"When push comes to shove, they're going to vote for Joe Biden," Epting said. "For stability, for someone who is governing for the people, no matter what was left on the table in the last congressional cycle."

Movie Review: A bomb and its fallout in Christopher Nolan's 'Oppenheimer'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" is a kinetic thing of dark, imposing beauty that quakes with the disquieting tremors of a forever rupture in the course of human history.

"Oppenheimer," a feverish three-hour immersion in the life of Manhattan Project mastermind J. Robert

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Oppenheimer (Cillian Murphy), is poised between the shock and aftershock of the terrible revelation, as one character calls it, of a divine power.

There are times in Nolan's latest opus that flames fill the frame and visions of subatomic particles flitter across the screen — montages of Oppenheimer's own churning visions. But for all the immensity of "Oppenheimer," this is Nolan's most human-scaled film — and one of his greatest achievements.

It's told principally in close-ups, which, even in the towering detail of IMAX 70mm, can't resolve the vast paradoxes of Oppenheimer. He was said to be a magnetic man with piercing blue eyes (Murphy has those in spades) who became the father of the atomic bomb but, in speaking against nuclear proliferation and the hydrogen bomb, emerged as America's postwar conscience.

Nolan, writing his own adaptation of Martin J. Sherwin and Kai Bird's Pulitzer Prize-winning 2005 book "American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer," layers the build-up to the Manhattan Project with two moments from years later.

In 1954, a probing inquiry into Oppenheimer's leftist politics by a McCarthy-era Atomic Energy Commission stripped him of his security clearance. This provides the frame of "Oppenheimer," along with a Senate confirmation hearing for Lewis Strauss (Robert Downey Jr.), who chaired the Atomic Energy Commission and was a stealthy nemesis to Oppenheimer.

The grubby, political machinations of these hearings — the Strauss section is captured in black and white — act like a stark X-ray of Oppenheimer's life. It's an often brutal, unfair interrogation that weighs Oppenheimer's decisions and accomplishment, inevitably, in moral terms. "Who'd want to justify their whole life?" someone wonders. For the maker of the world's most lethal weapon, it's an especially complicated question.

These separate timelines give "Oppenheimer" — dimly lit and shadowy even in the desert — a noirish quality (Nolan has said all his films are ultimately noirs) in reckoning with a physicist who spent the first half of his life in headlong pursuit of a new science and the second half wrestling with the consequences of his colossal, world-altering invention.

"Oppenheimer" moves too fast to come to any neat conclusions. Nolan, as if reaching to match the electron, dives into the story at a blistering pace. From start to finish, "Oppenheimer" buzzes with a heady frequency, tracking Oppenheimer as a promising student in the then-unfolding field of quantum mechanics. "Can you hear the music, Robert?" asks the elder Danish physicist Niels Bohr (Kenneth Branagh). He can, absolutely, but that doesn't mean finding harmony.

Nolan, whose last film was the time-traveling, palindrome-rich "Tenet," may be the only filmmaker for whom delving into quantum mechanics could be considered a step down in complexity. But "Oppenheimer" is less interested in equations than the chemistry of an expanding mind. Oppenheimer reads "The Waste Land" and looks at modernist painting. He dabbles in the communist thinking of the day. (His mistress, Jean Tatlock, played arrestingly, tragically by Florence Pugh, is a party member.) But he aligns with no single cause. "I like a little wiggle room," says Oppenheimer.

For a filmmaker synonymous with grand architectures — psychologies mapped onto subconscious worlds ("Inception") and cosmic reaches ("Interstellar") — "Oppenheimer" resides more simply in its subject's fertile imagination and anguished psyche. (The script was written in first person.) Nolan and cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema render Oppenheimer's interiority with flashes of images that stretch across the heavens. His brilliance comes from his limitlessness of thought.

Just how much "wiggle room" Oppenheimer is permitted, though, becomes a more acute point when war breaks out and he's tasked by Lt. Gen. Leslie Groves Jr. (Matt Damon) to lead the race to beat the Nazis to an atomic bomb. The rapid building of Los Alamos on the white-sand mesas of New Mexico — a site chosen by and with personal meaning to Oppenheimer — might not be so different than the erecting of movie sets for Nolan's massive films, which likewise tend to culminate with a spectacular explosion.

There is something inherently queasy about a big-screen spectacle dramatizing the creation — justified or not — of a weapon of mass destruction. Oppenheimer once called the atomic bomb "a weapon for aggressors" wherein "the elements of surprise and terror are as intrinsic to it as are the fissionable nuclei."

Surely a less imperial, leviathan filmmaker than Nolan — a British director making an American epic — might have approached the subject differently.

But the responsibility of power has long been one of Nolan's chief subjects (think of the all-powerful surveillance machine of "The Dark Knight"). And "Oppenheimer" is consumed with not just the ethical quandary of the Manhattan Project but every ethical quandary that Oppenheimer encounters. Big or small, they could all lead to valor or damnation. What makes "Oppenheimer" so unnerving is how indistinguishable one is from the other.

"Oppenheimer" sticks almost entirely to its protagonist's point of view yet also populates its three-hour film with an incredible array of faces, all in exquisite detail. Some of the best are Benny Safdie as the hydrogen bomb designer Edward Teller; Jason Clarke as gruff special counsel Roger Robb; Gary Oldman as President Harry Truman; Alden Ehrenreich as an aide to Strauss; Macon Blair as Oppenheimer's attorney; and Emily Blunt as Kitty Oppenheimer, the physicist's wife.

The greatest of all of them, though, is Murphy. The actor, a Nolan regular, has always been able to communicate something more disturbing underneath his angular, angelic features. But here, his Oppenheimer is a fascinating coil of contradictions: determined and aloof, present and far-away, brilliant but blind.

Dread hangs over him, and over the film, with the inevitable. The future, post-Hiroshima, is sounded most by the wail of children who will grow up in that world; the Oppenheimers' babies do nothing but cry.

When the Trinity test comes at Los Alamos after the toil of some 4,000 people and the expense of \$2 billion, there's a palpable, shuddering sense of history changing inexorably. How Nolan captures these sequences — the quiet before the sound of the explosion; the disquieting, thunderous, flag-waving applause that greets Oppenheimer after — are masterful, unforgettable fusions of sound and image, horror and awe.

"Oppenheimer" has much more to go. Government encroaches on science, with plenty of lessons for today's threats of annihilation. Downey, in his best performance in years, strides toward the center of the film. You could say the film gets bogged down here, relegating a global story to a drab backroom hearing, preferring to vindicate Oppenheimer's legacy rather than wrestle with harder questions of fallout. But "Oppenheimer" is never not balanced, uncomfortably, with wonder at what humans are capable of, and fear that we don't know what to do with it.

"Oppenheimer," a Universal Pictures release is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for some sexuality, nudity and language. Running time: 180 minutes. Four stars out of four.

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

High-water rescue crews save people flooded in Kentucky as death toll rises in northeast US

MAYFIELD, Ky. (AP) — High-water rescue crews pulled people from flooded homes and vehicles Wednesday in Kentucky, where waves of thunderstorms prompted flash flood warnings and watches. A search continued for two children swept away after torrential rains in the northeastern United States.

The National Weather Service issued flash flood watches and warnings, estimating that as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain could fall in the area where Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri meet at the convergence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. The weather system will then move Thursday and Friday over New England, where the ground remains saturated after recent floods.

Atmospheric scientists say the global warming responsible for unrelenting heat in the Southwest also is making this kind of extreme rainfall a more frequent reality, because clouds hold more moisture as the temperature rises, resulting in more destructive storms.

With so much rain falling so quickly, it was a "life-threatening situation" in the Mayfield and Wingo areas early Wednesday, according to Keith Cooley, a senior forecaster with the weather service in Paducah, Kentucky.

In Mayfield, a city of 10,000 that was especially hard hit by storms that produced deadly tornadoes in December 2021, the flooding appeared concentrated in older neighborhoods, where the overflowing Red

Duck Creek usually meanders toward Mayfield Creek, which feeds the Mississippi.

"I know we're weary of this, but also so hopeful for the future," Mayfield Mayor Kathy O'Nan said. "I don't think this is going to set us back any, but we all feel that enough is enough."

In Connecticut, a woman died after being swept down a swollen river Tuesday with her 5-year-old daughter. State Fire officials say the pair were swimming in the Shetucket River in Sprague when they were swept away by currents that have been running high because of the recent heavy rains in New England. They were found unconscious downstream and taken to a local hospital, where the mother, a woman in her 30s, died. Fire officials say the daughter was stabilized at a local hospital and is expected to survive.

And in Pennsylvania, searchers are still trying to find two children visiting from South Carolina who were swept away in what one fire chief called "a wall of water" that hit their family and killed their mother Saturday. Four other people also died in those flash floods.

Emergency officials described the flash flooding as a catastrophic threat in Kentucky's Graves County, where Mayfield is the county seat. With major flooding already occurring and more rain on the way, Sheriff Jon Hayden urged drivers Wednesday to stay off the roads.

"Many roads have been washed out, many cars have driven into water and drowned out," Hayden posted on social media. He said His House Ministries opened their church for anyone needing shelter.

Mayfield police urged people to closely watch for updates since many roads were becoming impassable and the area was expecting another 3 to 6 inches of rain. A short time later they began restricting travel due to flooding, with numerous roads under water.

Crews have had to rescue people from homes, but there haven't been any reports of injuries or deaths, said Trooper Sarah Burgess, a spokesperson for Kentucky State Police Post 1, which covers 11 western Kentucky counties. Graves County appears to be hardest hit so far, she said.

O'Nan said she had no reports of injuries or deaths from the flooding after about six inches had fallen since midnight. Emergency officials and police officers were going door to door and finding that most residents had self-evacuated.

"There have been no injuries reported, which is just a blessing," O'Nan said. She added that power briefly went out in the southern part of the city, which is still recovering from the 2021 tornados that toppled the county courthouse and killed dozens of people.

Tourist who saw US soldier sprint to North Korea initially thought it was a stunt

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Sarah Leslie thought she was witnessing a stunt when she saw an American soldier start sprinting toward North Korea.

Leslie and her father, tourists from New Zealand, were part of a group that left Tuesday morning from Seoul to visit the Demilitarized Zone that divides South and North Korea.

Pvt. Travis King was among the group of 43 tourists, Leslie told The Associated Press, although he was casually dressed in jeans and a T-shirt and she had no idea at the time that he was a soldier, or in legal trouble.

King, 23, was a cavalry scout with the 1st Armored Division who had served nearly two months in a South Korean prison for assault. He was released on July 10 and was supposed to travel home Monday to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he could have faced additional military discipline and discharge from the service.

Leslie said her tour group went a step further than many by visiting the Joint Security Area in the village of Panmunjom, allowing tourists to effectively step on North Korean soil inside one of the buildings, which are jointly held. To get on such a tour, she said, required submitting their passports and getting permits in advance.

The group left Seoul by bus in the early morning, and Leslie noticed that King was traveling alone and didn't seem to talk to others on the tour. At one point, she said, he bought a DMZ hat from a gift shop.

The tour was nearing its end Tuesday afternoon — the group had just walked out of the building and

were milling about taking photos — when she saw King running “really fast.”

“I assumed initially he had a mate filming him in some kind of really stupid prank or stunt, like a TikTok, the most stupid thing you could do,” Leslie said. “But then I heard one of the soldiers shout, ‘Get that guy.’”

Leslie said the command was shouted by an American soldier, one of a group that patrols the area along with South Korean troops.

But the soldiers didn’t have time to respond. She said that after running about 10 meters (30 feet) down a narrow passageway between the distinctive blue buildings, King was over the border and then disappeared from sight. It was all over in a few seconds.

Leslie said she didn’t see any people on the North Korean side. The tour group had been told earlier the North Koreans there had been lying low since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After King ran, she said, the soldiers hustled all the tourists into a building and then took them to an information center to give statements. She said many of the tourists, including her father, hadn’t seen King run but a soldier explained the events to them.

“People couldn’t really quite believe what had happened,” Leslie said. “Quite a few were really shocked. Once we got on the bus and got out of there we were all kind of staring at each other.”

Leslie, a lawyer from New Zealand’s capital, Wellington, said she’d long had an interest in the Koreas after studying politics at university and seeing South Korean movies.

She said she found it hard to understand why King would head to North Korea.

“I just didn’t think anyone would ever want to do that,” she said.

Movie Review: She’s Perfect Barbie. He’s Scene-Stealing Ken. Their life in plastic looks fantastic

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

For someone who’s 11.5 inches tall and weighs under 8 ounces, poor Barbie’s had to carry an awfully heavy load over the years on that slender, plastic back of hers.

Welcomed as a trailblazer in 1959 — An adult doll! With actual breasts! — she was nonetheless branded an anti-feminist a decade later when women’s rights marchers chanted “I Am Not a Barbie Doll,” referring to her unrealistic body type (and perhaps ignoring the fact that she was single, a homeowner and a career woman).

As years went by, Barbie had her hits (adopting a more inclusive body type, running for president) and misses (exclaiming “Math class is TOUGH!” — ouch). Through it all, this lightning rod in tiny pink heels remained uniquely talented at reinventing herself.

Which is why it makes sense that now, writer-director Greta Gerwig takes Barbie in more than one direction — in every direction, really — in her brash, clever, idea-packed (if ultimately TOO packed) and most of all, eye-poppingly lovely “Barbie,” the brand’s first live action movie.

Is it a celebratory homage to Barbie and her history? Yes. Also a cutting critique, and biting satire? Yes, too. The film is co-produced by Mattel, and they must have felt skittish about some elements — perhaps not Will Ferrell’s reliably buffoonish Mattel CEO, but a far more serious scene where a young girl accuses Barbie of making girls feel bad about themselves. The movie’s also about gender dynamics, mothers and daughters, insidious sexism ... and more.

But the neatest trick is how “Barbie,” starring a pitch-perfect Margot Robbie — and after a minute you’ll never be able to imagine anyone else doing it — can simultaneously and smoothly both mock and admire its source material. Gerwig deftly threads that needle, even if the film sags in its second half under the weight of its many ideas and some less-than-developed character arcs.

In any case, boy — or should we say, girl — life in plastic looks fantastic.

A head-spinning opening credits sequence begins with a Barbie history lesson, narrated by Helen Mirren. Then it’s off to Barbie Land, where Barbie lives in her flamingo-pink Dreamhouse, surrounded by other Barbies in theirs.

Other Barbies? Well, we know how many Barbie versions exist on store shelves, and Gerwig and her

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writing (and life) partner Noah Baumbach take this one step further: If they're all Barbies, that means "Barbie" is all of THEM. There's no one Barbie — although Robbie, who plays Stereotypical Barbie (and also produced the film), is the focal point.

And every day's perfect for Stereotypical Barbie, who wakes in her heart-shaped bed, waves to neighbor Barbies, and heads to the shower, which is dry (there's no actual water, wind, sun or gravity in Barbie Land.) Her day's outfit awaits, perhaps a Chanel number, protected by shiny plastic as in a Barbie box. Then she swoops down her hot pink slide to the pool-with-no-water. The sky above is painted blue, the mountains purple. Gerwig was inspired by old soundstage musicals. Architectural Digest even did a piece on the house.

Equally stunning is "Beach" — a place, and also the name of Ken's career. (Sorry Ken, we should have mentioned you before the 11th paragraph, but we had so much to say about Barbie). The beach is also apparently where Ken lives, because, have you ever heard of Ken's house? In any case, a very blond Ryan Gosling gleefully chews the scenery — or, inhales it — and is never better than when conveying Ken's forced enthusiasm with an edge of desperation plus a sprinkle of menace. Also, when dancing.

Speaking of dancing, one night at Barbie's "giant blowout party," she suddenly starts thinking about ... death. The next morning she has bad breath, and OMG, her famously arched feet go flat! Also gravity happens, so she falls off her house.

After consulting with Weird Barbie (Kate McKinnon — who else?) Barbie heads to LA to solve a tear in the boundary between Real World and Barbie Land, singing the Indigo Girls' "Closer to Fine," her signature road song. (The film's high-powered soundtrack features Dua Lipa, Nicki Minaj, HAIM, Lizzo, Billie Eilish, and many others.) There, she and Ken encounter a world with a wrinkle: Men have the upper hand. No all-female Supreme Court here! Hmm, thinks Ken.

On the run from Mattel, Barbie encounters Gloria (America Ferrera), mother of tween Sasha, who has mixed feelings about Barbie, not to mention Mom. In her spare time, Gloria sketches ideas for new Barbies — as in Thoughts of Impending Death Barbie (not to be confused with Depression Barbie.) Gloria helps rescue Barbie and also proves of crucial help when they later discover that Ken and the other Kens — Simu Liu, Kingsley Ben-Adir and others — are up to no good.

There's so much more, and we're over our word limit — which may just be the feeling Gerwig had when trying to fit her ideas under two hours. And all her actors: It would've been great to see more Issa Rae as President Barbie, Emerald Fennell as pregnant, discontinued Midge, and Michael Cera as Allan-who-can-wear-Ken's-clothes. In any case, the snappy pace starts to lag.

Not to discount Ferrera's eloquent monologue, in which Gloria educates newly conscious Barbie about the landmines women face trying to navigate social rules that don't seem to apply to men, like how to be a mom and also a professional, the need to be "thin" but call it "healthy," and other things.

And if, Gloria concludes, all this is true for a doll just trying to represent a woman ... what does that mean for the rest of us? Which is, perhaps, the essential Barbie dilemma — she's always been judged by rather impossible standards.

Nevertheless, she persists. All 11.5 inches of her. And now she's Movie Star Barbie.

"Barbie," a Warner Bros. Pictures release, has been rated PG-13 "for suggestive references and brief language." Running time: 114 minutes. Three stars out of four.

MPAA definition of PG-13: Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Revolving Door: DEA's No.2 quits amid reports of previous consulting work for Big Pharma

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's second-in-command has quietly stepped down amid reporting by The Associated Press that he once consulted for a pharmaceutical dis-

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tributor sanctioned for a deluge of suspicious painkiller shipments and did similar work for the drugmaker that became the face of the opioid epidemic: Purdue Pharma.

Louis Milione's four years of consulting for Big Pharma preceded his 2021 return to the DEA to serve as Administrator Anne Milgram's top deputy, renewing concerns in the agency and beyond about the revolving door between government and industry and its potential impact on the DEA's mission to police drug companies blamed for tens of thousands of American overdose deaths.

"Working for Purdue Pharma should not help you get a higher job in government," said Jeff Hauser, the executive director of the Revolving Door Project, a watchdog for corporate influence in the federal government. "Too much collegiality is a problem. It's hard to view your past and potentially future colleagues as scofflaws. Any independent person would find this abhorrent."

Milione initially left the DEA in 2017 after a 21-year career that included a two-year stint leading the division that controls the sale of highly addictive narcotics. Like dozens of colleagues in the DEA's Office of Diversion Control, he went to work as a consultant for some of the same companies he had been tasked with regulating.

AP reported in May that Milione's consulting included testifying on behalf of the nation's fourth-largest wholesale drug distributor, Morris & Dickson, as it fought to save its license to supply painkillers to hospitals and pharmacies. A federal administrative judge determined four years ago that the Louisiana-based company failed to flag thousands of suspicious orders at the height of the opioid crisis but the DEA didn't move to strip the license until days after the AP inquired about the case.

New reporting has found that during his time in the private sector, Milione also served as a \$600-per-hour expert for Purdue Pharma as it fought legal challenges from Ohio to Oklahoma over its aggressive marketing of OxyContin and other highly addictive painkillers. Milione left the DEA again in late June just four days after AP sought comment from the Justice Department about his prior work for Purdue.

Milione said in a statement this week that he stepped down for personal reasons unrelated to AP's reporting. Both he and the Justice Department said he recused himself at the DEA from all matters involving his private-sector work where there was even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Milione added that his consulting stint helped drug companies comply with DEA rules, just as his return to government gave the DEA insight into how business decisions are made in the real world.

"I care deeply about the DEA, its mission and the brave men and women that sacrifice so much to protect the American public," he said.

But Milione never faced scrutiny from lawmakers over his consulting before taking the DEA's No. 2 position because the DEA has for more than a decade not filled the job of deputy administrator that requires a presidential appointment and Senate confirmation. Instead, the DEA directly hired Milione to fill a career position with essentially the same duties but a slightly different title – "principal deputy administrator" – that requires no such oversight.

"DEA has demonstrated a willingness to take painstaking measures to avoid the Senate's watchful eye – including by potentially using a technicality to shirk Senate confirmation of a key agency decision maker," said U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican and member of the Senate Judiciary Committee. "Avoiding congressional oversight is a tired game the DEA can't stop playing. It begs the question: What else is the DEA trying to hide?"

John Coleman, who was head of operations for the DEA in the 1990s, said the Biden administration likely never nominated Milione to serve as deputy administrator, despite his many qualifications, because his conflicts would have surely raised questions.

"Someone at the agency had to be aware of the implications of bringing someone back who was employed in the industry regulated by the agency," Coleman said. "It was an obvious and classic conflict."

The DEA didn't respond to requests for comment. The Justice Department told the AP that Milione disclosed his potential conflicts when he returned to the DEA and that the principal deputy administrator's position was created before Milgram's tenure. It said the process for filling the confirmed deputy administrator position is ongoing and referred further questions to the White House, which did not respond to a request for comment.

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The DEA made no announcement of Milione's most recent retirement but removed his bio from the agency's website over the July 4 holiday and replaced it with that of his successor, career DEA official George Papadopoulos. But in an internal email to staff, Milgram hailed the 60-year-old Milione as a "DEA legend" best known for leading the overseas sting that in 2008 nabbed Russia's notorious arms trafficker Viktor Bout.

"I was thrilled that he agreed to come back home to DEA," she wrote in a June 26 email obtained by AP. "Lou has used his skills as a master case maker to help us bring cases against entire criminal networks and to investigate the entire globally fentanyl supply chain."

Milione's exit adds to the turmoil at the top of the DEA following a number of other high-level departures, misconduct scandals and the launch of federal watchdog investigation into millions in no-bid contracts awarded to past associates of Milgram.

Mostly Republican members of Congress grilled Milgram during a routine budget request in April, and the administrator also is expected to testify later this month in a House oversight hearing looking into the DEA's operations and effectiveness combating the flood of fentanyl into the U.S. from Mexico.

Since Milgram took the reins of the DEA two years ago, she has cycled through almost three dozen senior aides, many of them veteran agents who were pushed out or quit due to differences with Milgram. That includes the heads of all of the DEA's principal divisions as well as the DEA's chief counsel, its congressional affairs liaison and the top agent in Mexico.

Milgram's defenders say that house cleaning is part of an agency-wide reset to combat the fentanyl crisis. She's also exhibited a zero tolerance for racism and sexism that has festered inside the old-boy network that has long shaped personnel decisions inside the DEA.

"Change is hard and some people don't like it," Chuck Rosenberg, a former DEA administrator, told AP this spring. "Time will tell whether she was right or wrong, but my money is on Anne."

Most of Milione's consulting work was done as a senior managing director of Guidepost Solutions, a private investigative firm based in New York. Under his watch, Guidepost expanded its DEA compliance practice, which now includes nine former DEA employees.

Guidepost declined to comment. Purdue said in a statement that its retention of Milione as an expert on DEA compliance issues ended when the Connecticut-based company filed for bankruptcy protection in September 2019. "To the best of our knowledge, no one at Purdue had any business communications with Mr. Milione after he returned to government," it said.

For Purdue, which has twice pleaded guilty to federal criminal charges for its role in fueling the opioid crisis and last year reached a \$6 billion nationwide settlement aimed at staunching a flood of lawsuits from states, Milione produced a 16-page expert report in 2019 that was never introduced into evidence. That report, obtained by the AP, praises Purdue's efforts going back to 2000 to track the illegal sale of opioids by rogue pharmacies and "pill mill" doctors.

"These are the kinds of programs DEA encourages and supports manufacturers in undertaking," Milione wrote, "as it considers them a valuable part of diversion control efforts."

Former DEA official Coleman questioned why Milgram chose Milione as her No. 2 despite his corporate entanglements and whether it was ever realistic for him to be walled off from many of the position's leadership functions.

"There's no way to isolate that person from the day-to-day business of the agency, which includes regulating companies that make and distribute controlled substances," said Coleman, who is now president of Drug Watch International, a not-for-profit that seeks to reduce drug abuse. "I don't see how that's possible."

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

Climate and violence hobble Nigeria's push to rely on its own wheat after the hit from Russia's war

By TAIWO ADEBAYO Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Abubakar Salisu was terrified when he discovered arid sand in the middle of his farmland, rendering a broad strip unfit for crops. Now, extreme heat is killing his wheat before it is ready for cultivation.

Wheat normally requires heat, but in the last three years, farmers in Nigeria's far north, part of Africa's Sahel region that largely produces the country's homegrown food, have seen an "alarming" increase in heat — much more than required, said Salisu, a local leader of wheat farmers in Kaita, Katsina State. Plus, rain is irregular.

"The unpredictable rain pattern is affecting us because wheat is planted immediately after the rainy season, but sometimes we will plant it thinking the rain has stopped, only to have it start again, thereby spoiling the seeds," said Salisu, 48.

The vicious heat and rain cycle, worsened by climate change, has contributed to his wheat yield dropping in half.

He is not alone — others in northern areas ripped apart by violence suffer even more. Conflict and climate change are driving a food security crisis in Nigeria, exacerbated by supply disruptions tied to Russia's war in Ukraine. It means people are spending more for food in Africa's largest economy as it becomes more reliant on imported grain, which is priced in U.S. dollars, and its currency weakens.

Nigeria is trying to become self-sufficient: The government has launched programs to provide loans to farmers and boost domestic grain production. But extreme weather and violence from both gangs and farmers and cattle herders clashing over resources have hindered those efforts. It's left Nigeria unable to produce enough wheat to bridge a gap in supply of more than 5 million metric tons.

Russia's decision this week to back out of an accord allowing Ukraine to ship grain from the Black Sea could make things worse. Ukraine had announced a plan this year to send more wheat to the West African country at expected lower prices, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Now, that initiative is in doubt.

The Nigerian program providing loans to growers "worked to a reasonable extent, but corruption played a part, as did the failure of farmers to repay the loans as climate change and insecurity undermined their production," said Idayat Hassan, senior Africa program fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Wheat is one of Nigeria's most consumed grains, and it imports largely from the U.S., South America and Europe, according to the Trade Data Monitor. Russia was a key source of affordable wheat, but its shipments have dwindled to almost nothing amid the war.

The loan program for growers failed to help increase local wheat yields, so the government has introduced new initiatives to boost how much land is harvested and distribute high-yielding seeds, pesticides and equipment to wheat farmers.

The flour milling industry, which struggles with Nigeria's weakening currency and high costs like diesel fuel, has also made a deal with farmers to source more wheat locally at competitive prices, potentially encouraging growers to increase production.

With the new efforts, the USDA projects Nigeria's wheat production to increase 42% in the 2023-2024 trading year over the year before. But the agency warned that "the challenges outweigh the opportunities."

Besides climate change creating irregular rainfall, extreme heat and dry land, "security challenges across the wheat-producing region restricts farmers' access to fields," the USDA said in this year's Nigeria grain report.

The same problems will also decrease production of rice and corn, the department said.

"Of course, insecurity is affecting our activities because sometimes we can't go to our farms even if we plant, and some of our colleagues have completely stopped farming, while some of us have reduced the number of our farmlands," said Sama'ila Zubairu, a wheat farmer in Katsina's Faskari area ravaged

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by violence.

Gangs control vast swaths of the north's rural areas, carrying out killings and abductions for ransom. There also are perennial clashes between farmers and cattle herders competing for land and water.

Zubairu has not seen his land degrade like Salisu, but he said "climate change affects me in two ways: excessive heat and rain patterns, which affect my turnout."

He harvested enough wheat to fill 20 bags last year and 18 most recently — down from 35 two years ago. "And I am not alone," Zubairu said.

Farmers being unable to reach their fields amid the violence triggers "both human security and food security crises," said Hassan of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Consumers are struggling with food inflation of 24%, with wheat-based staples like bread and pasta nearly doubling in price.

"The price surge has affected me because I have to double the costs of what I normally buy, and I would still not be able to buy enough," said Chinedu Edeh, cooking gas retailer and installation technician in Nigeria's capital, Abuja. "Pasta has gone from 370 (naira) to 550 per unit."

He avoided the coarse wheat flour semolina in his last trip to the market and bought cheaper cassava flakes instead.

Last week, President Bola Tinubu released a policy statement on food and agriculture acknowledging rising food costs and declaring "a state of emergency," with a commitment to include food and water availability in the government's national security system.

Spokespeople for the president and the ministry of agriculture declined to comment or did not send answers to questions.

The government should "appreciate the full extent of how climate change fuels insecurity and food crisis and localize climate plans so that they affect real people who actually produce food for the country," Hassan said.

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

Today in History: July 20, Armstrong and Aldrin walk on the moon

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 20, the 201st day of 2023. There are 164 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 20, 1969, astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin became the first men to walk on the moon after reaching the surface in their Apollo 11 lunar module.

On this date:

In 1917, America's World War I draft lottery began as Secretary of War Newton Baker, wearing a blindfold, reached into a glass bowl and pulled out a capsule containing the number 258 during a ceremony inside the Senate office building.

In 1944, an attempt by a group of German officials to assassinate Adolf Hitler with a bomb failed as the explosion only wounded the Nazi leader.

In 1951, Jordan's King Abdullah I was assassinated in Jerusalem by a Palestinian gunman who was shot dead on the spot by security.

In 1976, America's Viking 1 robot spacecraft made a successful, first-ever landing on Mars.

In 1977, a flash flood hit Johnstown, Pennsylvania, killing more than 80 people and causing \$350 million worth of damage.

In 1990, Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, one of the court's most liberal voices, announced he was stepping down.

In 1993, White House deputy counsel Vincent Foster Jr., 48, was found shot to death in a park near

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Washington, D.C.; it was ruled a suicide.

In 2006, the Senate voted 98-0 to renew the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act for another quarter-century.

In 2007, President George W. Bush signed an executive order prohibiting cruel and inhuman treatment, including humiliation or denigration of religious beliefs, in the detention and interrogation of terrorism suspects.

In 2010, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted almost totally along party lines, 13-6, to approve Elena Kagan to be the Supreme Court's fourth female justice.

In 2015, the United States and Cuba restored full diplomatic relations after more than five decades of frosty relations rooted in the Cold War. The U.N. Security Council unanimously endorsed a landmark deal to rein in Iran's nuclear program.

Ten years ago: People rallied in dozens of U.S. cities, urging authorities to press federal civil rights charges against George Zimmerman, the former neighborhood watch leader found not guilty in the shooting death of unarmed teen Trayvon Martin. Five employees of an Italian cruise company were convicted of manslaughter in the Costa Concordia shipwreck that killed 32 people, receiving sentences of less than three years. Longtime White House correspondent Helen Thomas, 92, died in Washington.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump escalated his threats to punish China for its trade policies, warning in an interview airing on CNBC that he was prepared to impose tariffs on all Chinese imports. Ohio Gov. John Kasich spared the life of condemned killer Raymond Tibbetts, commuting his sentence to life without parole, after a juror came forward and said information about the extent of Tibbetts' tough childhood wasn't properly presented at trial. Charlotte, North Carolina, was chosen to host the 2020 Republican National Convention.

One year ago: The U.S. Senate unexpectedly launched a new push to protect same-sex marriage in federal law after a surprising number of Republicans helped pass landmark legislation in the House. The bill started as an election-season political effort following the Supreme Court's abortion ruling, which raised concerns that other rights could be at risk. (The legislation would pass months later.) Britain's record-breaking heat wave spurred calls for the government to speed up efforts to adapt to a changing climate, after wildfires created the busiest day for London firefighters since bombs rained down on the city during World War II. An Indiana man ran into a burning home and saved five people, including a 6-year-old girl he jumped out of a second-floor window with. Nick Bostic said the serious injuries he suffered were "all worth it."

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski, D-Md., is 87. Artist Judy Chicago is 84. Rock musician John Lodge (The Moody Blues) is 80. Country singer T.G. Sheppard is 79. Singer Kim Carnes is 78. Rock musician Carlos Santana is 76. Rock musician Jay Jay French (Twisted Sister) is 71. Rock musician Paul Cook (The Sex Pistols, Man Raze) is 67. Actor Donna Dixon is 66. Rock musician Mick MacNeil (Simple Minds) is 65. Country singer Rodney Foster is 64. Actor Frank Whaley is 60. Actor Dean Cain is 59. Rock musician Stone Gossard (Pearl Jam) is 57. Actor Reed Diamond is 56. Actor Josh Holloway is 54. Singer Vitamin C is 54. Actor Sandra Oh is 52. Actor Omar Epps is 50. Actor Simon Rex is 49. Actor Judy Greer is 48. Actor Charlie Korsmo is 45. Singer Elliott Yamin (yah-MEEN') (American Idol) is 45. Supermodel Gisele Bündchen is 43. Rock musician Mike Kennerty (The All-American Rejects) is 43. Actor Percy Daggs III is 41. Actor John Francis Daley is 38. Dancer-singer-actor Julianne Hough is 35. Washington Nationals pitcher Stephen Strasburg is 35.