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Thursday, Aug. 3

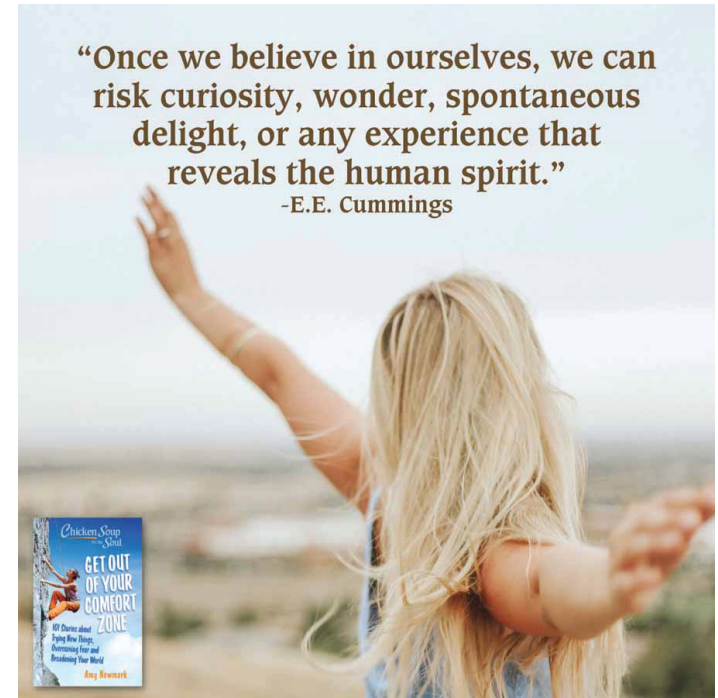
Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, corn, Mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 4

Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, grape juice, muffin, watermelon, carrots.
Wine on Nine Golf Event
State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament in Lennox: Groton vs. SF Christian 30 minutes after the second game.

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

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



“Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit.”

-E.E. Cummings

Saturday, Aug. 5

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.
State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament in Lennox

Sunday, Aug. 6

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship with communion: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m. (Daniel and Karla Grenz will be speaking)
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.
State Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament in Lennox
Groton CM&A: Vacation Bible School (Keepers of the Kingdom), 6:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

At least 18 people died and 22 were injured when a bus crashed into a ravine near Tepic in western Mexico. Local authorities say the passengers were mostly foreigners.

Morocco made history by becoming the first Arab country to qualify for a Women's World Cup knockout round after beating Colombia 1-0. Meanwhile, South Korea sent two-time champions Germany home. The U.S. will face Sweden on Sunday.

Texas A&M University has reached a \$1 million settlement with journalism professor Kathleen McElroy over her botched hiring due to backlash surrounding her past work promoting diversity.

Phoenix Mercury guard Diana Taurasi became the first WNBA player to reach 10,000 points with a three-point shot in the third quarter during Mercury's 91-71 home win against Atlanta Dream.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv's strikes on Russian military storage sites have resulted in Russian forces suffering an ammunition shortage that's "significantly reduced" their ability to mount attacks, Ukrainian official Natalia Humeniuk said..

TALKING POINTS

"Thanks to this fix, 43 million Americans with existing federally held student loans would see their interest rates immediately eliminated. This sliding scale will disincentivize students from taking out loans that they do not need. Importantly, the bill establishes a Trust Fund to pay for the student loan program's administrative expenses that are currently covered by the interest paid by borrowers," Representative Joe Courtney and Senator Peter Welch on a new Democratic proposal to lower the cost of student loans by eliminating interest for thousands of borrowers.

"Hunger and conflict are inexorably linked. Scarce resources heighten tensions between communities and nations. Warring parties weaponize food to subjugate local populations. Indeed, conflict is the largest driver of food insecurity, with violence and unrest pushing 117 million people into extreme deprivation last year," Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivered remarks at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Famine and Conflict-Induced Global Food Insecurity, urging collective action to address the global challenge.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

A reenactment of the 2018 Parkland school shooting, which left 17 people dead and 17 others injured, will occur at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School as part of a civil lawsuit. Ballistics experts will fire up to 139 shots inside the building which will be recorded to show that the school's then-deputy Scot Peterson heard the shots during the six-minute attack.

The closely watched nonfarm payroll data for July is due at 8:30 a.m. ET. Economists expect payrolls to rise by 200,000 jobs following an increase of 209,000 in June. The unemployment rate is expected to remain unchanged at 3.6%.

A verdict is expected for Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny as prosecutors look to hand him another 20 years in prison in a separate criminal case. He's already serving prison time for charges he claims are bogus.

Democratic Reps. Justin Pearson and Justin Jones, who were expelled from the Tennessee legislature for their involvement in a gun control protest, won a special election to reclaim their legislative seats.

A Romanian court has ordered the release of controversial influencer Andrew Tate from house arrest, but he is still awaiting trial on charges of human trafficking.

Two U.S. Navy sailors have been arrested on espionage charges, including conspiracy to send national defense information to Chinese officials.

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The Perfect DOG

This search is gonna be ruff!

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
DAVID ABBINANTI

BOOK BY
JILL ABBINANTI

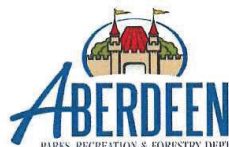
INSPIRED BY THE BOOK
"THE PERFECT DOG"
BY JOHN O'HURLEY

When: Thursday, August 10, 2023

Time: 1:00pm

Where: Groton Community Center – 109 N 3rd St

Entry Fee: \$0

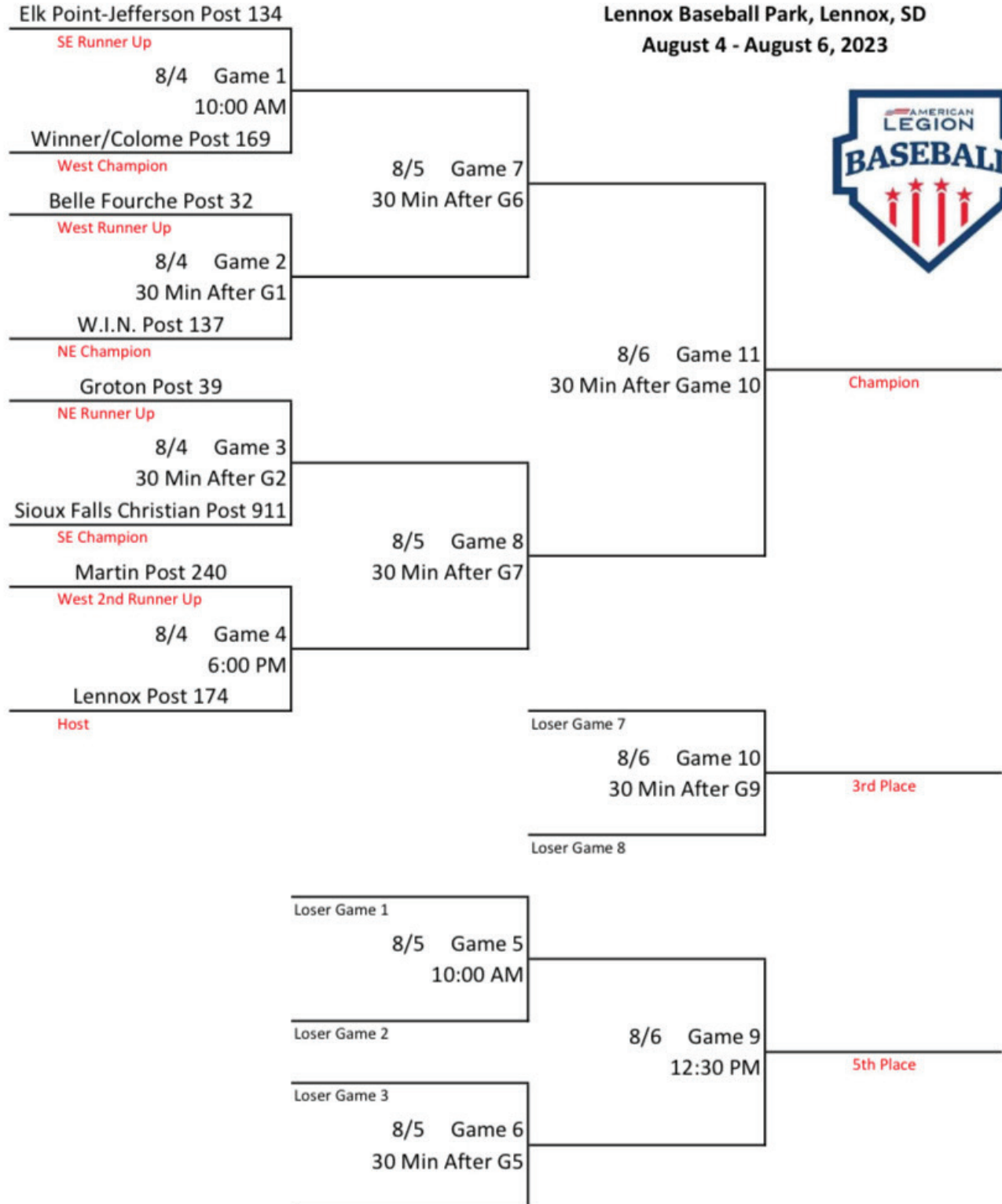


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2023 South Dakota American Legion State Class "B" Jr. Baseball Tournament

South Dakota American Legion
State Class "B" Jr. Baseball Tournament
Lennox Baseball Park, Lennox, SD
August 4 - August 6, 2023



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Simon selected to University of Minnesota Twin Cities Dean's List

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL, Minn. - Alexis P Simon has been named to the 2023 spring semester Dean's List at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Alexis is a senior in the Carlson School of Management.

Gov. Noem's "Freedom Works Here" Surpasses 4,000 Applicants

PIERRE, S.D. –Governor Noem's "Freedom Works Here" national workforce recruitment campaign has surpassed 4,000 applicants. 816 individuals are in the final stages of the process of moving to South Dakota. The ads associated with the campaign have been viewed more than 370 million times.

"Just over a month ago, we took a leap of faith and told South Dakota's story to the nation. 'Freedom Works Here' tells folks about the strength of our economy, our strong apprenticeship programs, and our out-of-state professional license recognition," said Governor Noem. "The nation is responding to our story in an incredible way. Hundreds of folks are already working with our job advisors to find businesses in need of workers. We are excited to welcome these Freedom-loving Americans to South Dakota."

One "Freedom Works Here" applicant called Governor Noem's office and expressed their gratitude for South Dakota's Workforce Freedom bill, which recognizes out-of-state licenses for nearly every profession. Now, "Freedom Works Here" applicants don't have to work through red tape to get a professional license. They can start working in their career fields as soon as they arrive in South Dakota. That applicant was excited to learn that their electrical license would be accepted by the South Dakota Electrical Commission.

The most applications have come from California (751), Texas, (293), Florida (278), Minnesota (267), and New York (171). 131 South Dakotans have also used the campaign as a tool to get plugged into career opportunities. A map showing where applicants are from can be found here.

These results are fantastic – and they only represent those working directly through the "Freedom Works Here" program. Even more people are finding jobs and moving to South Dakota of their own accord after seeing the ads.

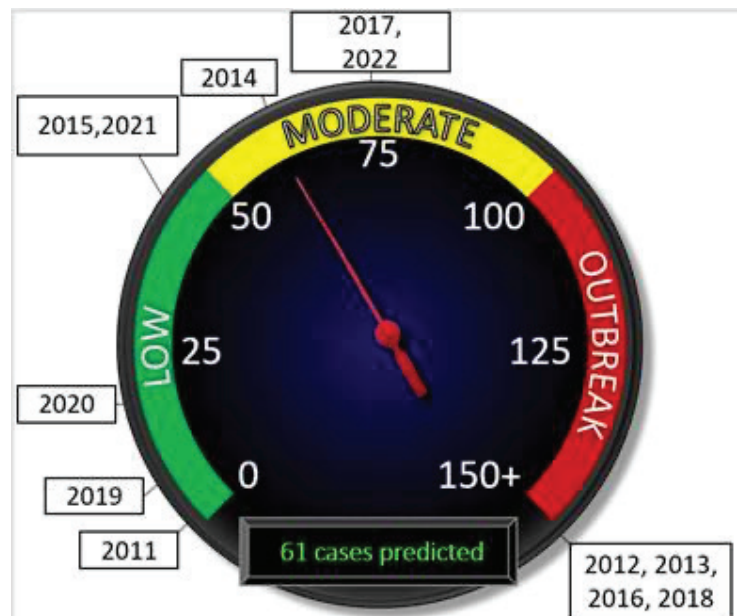
West Nile Update – South Dakota, August 2, 2023

8 human cases reported (Beadle, Campbell, Davison, Hughes, Jerauld, Minnehaha, Sanborn)

8 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brown, Brookings, Codington, Hand, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of August 1): 90 cases (AR, AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, IA, KS, LA, MO, NE, NM, SC, SD, TX, WV, WY)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2023, South Dakota (as of August 2)





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Errors and missing info highlighted as carbon pipeline hearing continues

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 3, 2023 7:00 PM

Public utilities commissioners denied a motion to withhold a permit for a liquid carbon dioxide pipeline Thursday, but they acknowledged lacking some useful information from the company applying to build it.

It was the seventh day of a hearing at the Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center in Fort Pierre, with more days to come.

Navigator CO2 is the company seeking to build the 1,300-mile, multi-state Heartland Greenway pipeline.

Public Utilities Commission Chairwoman Kristie Fiegen – one of the three elected commissioners tasked with deciding on a permit for the project – asked why the commission is expected to make such a consequential decision, “yet there are errors, we’re missing stuff.” She was referring to a number of incomplete safety, cultural and environmental surveys, and errors that have appeared in some of the information given to the commission.

An attorney for the commission, Kristen Edwards, asked the company, “Why didn’t Navigator wait to file for a permit until more surveying was completed?”

Representatives of the company said they have ample time for more surveys, thorough analyses, and communication with impacted communities. South Dakota is the first state to hold hearings on the five-state proposal.

The projected \$3 billion project would capture emissions from 21 ethanol and multiple fertilizer plants, and compress the gas into a liquid form for transport. It would then be injected underground or used for industrial and commercial purposes, such as in oil extraction or as dry ice. The project would be eligible for \$1.3 billion annually in federal tax credits for combating climate change by reducing atmospheric carbon. It would span 112 miles in five South Dakota counties: Brookings, Moody, Minnehaha, Lincoln and Turner.

Brian Sterner, an environmental consultant and soil biologist, testified Thursday that he and a colleague “share the concern” that permitting the project prior to the completion of all the environmental analyses may be premature.

Brian Jorde, a lawyer representing impacted landowners, cited those issues and the company’s earlier failure to provide timely notice to 204 affected South Dakotans along the would-be-route. He moved to deny the permit.

The three commissioners rejected the motion.

“There are still things we need to learn,” said Commissioner Chris Nelson. “We need all the facts on the table.”

Negotiations have produced easements with 30% of affected landowners, with the company offering an average of \$24,000 per acre, according to company officials. Navigator has not yet used eminent domain, a legal process for gaining access to land when a landowner won’t grant it.

Carbon pipeline regulations are currently under federal review in response to a 2020 Mississippi pipeline leak and carbon dioxide plume that hospitalized 45 people. That triggered California to halt the construction of new CO2 pipelines in that state until the federal review is complete. Navigator CO2 has testified that federal regulators are aware of the project and haven’t voiced concerns.

The company’s analysis shows an annual 1% risk of a leak or rupture per 1,000 miles.

Hearings are scheduled to continue through Saturday, and the commissioners’ decision is due by Sept. 26.

Another multi-state carbon pipeline that would cross parts of eastern South Dakota, proposed by Sum-

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mit Carb

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Court: Kevin Costner may need to pay off South Dakota sculptor

BY: JOHN HULT - AUGUST 3, 2023 2:00 PM

Actor Kevin Costner may end up on the hook to pay a South Dakota sculptor for her work after a state Supreme Court decision in her favor.

In 1994, the movie star commissioned Rapid City artist Peggy Detmers to create bronze statues of buffalo and Lakota warriors for a planned Deadwood resort dubbed "The Dunbar," in a nod to the last name of Costner's character in the Best Picture-winning film "Dances with Wolves."

The sculptures were meant to be on display at the Dunbar, but the resort project fizzled. Detmers sued Costner in 2008, asking a court to force the sale of the sculptures and a split of the profits.

The state Supreme Court ruled against her in 2012, though, because Costner had pivoted from the Dunbar project to a tourist attraction called Tatanka, located on some of the same property. Under the terms of their written agreement and the 2012 Supreme Court ruling in Costner's favor, the sculptures would stay on that site or be sold.

Detmers sued again in 2021 because Costner put the property up for sale. The sale notice pointed out that the sculptures "will be relocated by seller."

A sale of everything but the sculptures, she argued, would be a breach of the contract promising to display the sculptures on that site. She asked a judge to either release Costner's copyright claim to her works so she could display, reproduce and profit off them unencumbered by the contract with Costner, or to force Costner to sell the sculptures and split the profits.

A Lawrence County judge ruled against Detmers. Costner argued that the 2012 Supreme Court decision resolved all contractual disputes, and a Lawrence County judge agreed.

That set up a second round of oral arguments at the South Dakota Supreme Court in March. This time, in a decision released Thursday, the court sided with the artist in a 5-0 ruling.

The decision's author, Chief Justice Steven Jensen, wrote that the 2012 case did not settle all disputes and free Costner from his contractual obligations. The issues that have arisen between the artist and the actor since then are new and unique to the current situation, Jensen wrote, and deserve a hearing at the circuit court level.

The court also found that Costner's obligation to either keep the sculptures on display permanently at Tatanka or sell them off is valid – another claim from Detmers that the local judge had rejected.

The justices rejected Detmers' final argument, which was that Costner's bid to sell the property and relocate the sculptures should be enough to force their sale. That obligation on Costner's part won't be triggered unless the sale and/or relocation of the sculptures takes place.

"At present, Costner owes Detmers no obligation with respect to the display or sale of the sculptures that she can enforce against him," Jensen wrote.

The decision sends the case back to Lawrence County for further legal proceedings.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

COMMENTARY

Noem, Trump and the politics of inaction

With pandemic fame fading, event brings governor another shot at the limelight

SETH TUPPER

Gov. Kristi Noem's rise to national prominence began on March 23, 2020.

Fear and speculation were rampant as the coronavirus swept into the state. Noem issued an executive order with instructions for South Dakotans and held a press conference to discuss it.

Her choice of language was peculiar.

She told South Dakotans what they "should" do. In fact, she used the word 13 times during a press conference that was less than 12 minutes long.

The word also prefaced every instruction in her executive order. Employers "should" implement social distancing, it said. Health care providers "should" postpone elective surgeries. Local governments "should" restrict public gatherings of 10 or more people. And so on.

Reporters were baffled. What was the meaning of "should"? Was she issuing South Dakotans a lawful order? A strong suggestion? Friendly advice?

She pointedly refused to elaborate.

"I am telling them what they should be doing in this state," she said.

Passing the buck to locals

Her persistent and seemingly inexplicable ambiguity created a leadership void. The responsibility to keep South Dakotans safe fell to mayors, city council members and county commissioners.

Those local leaders scrambled to consider, and in some cases enact, a hodge-podge of emergency measures. Emotionally charged public meetings birthed a confusing array of restrictions on the conduct of people, businesses and organizations across the state.

In Rapid City, where I live, an ordinance forced bars and restaurants to close, except for takeout and deliveries, and also forced closures at other public places including casinos, bowling alleys, health clubs and theaters.

Of course, that's not how Noem selectively remembers it. She began to capitalize politically on her inaction as the pandemic worsened, by rebranding her approach as "freedom." Local restrictions fell away without her support.

Noem's do-nothing approach also extended to masks, which she carried to the extreme of appearing maskless at a mask-making factory. Many South Dakotans followed her example, and there came a time during the pandemic when the state's per capita COVID-19 death rate was among the worst in the world. Noem avoided talk of human suffering, choosing instead to tout her shepherding of South Dakota's comparatively less-diminished economy.

Through it all, she received a steady stream of praise from pro-Trump national media outlets and critical scrutiny from others.

"As governor, we never implemented a mandate, we never shut down our state, and we never defined which businesses were essential and which were not," Noem tweeted after one appearance on Fox News. "South Dakota will continue to stand for individual freedom and prosperity."

With her political star on the rise, Noem traveled the country supporting other Republican candidates and even hosted then-President Donald Trump for a fireworks show at Mount Rushmore. Commentators began to talk about her as presidential material, and she acknowledged her interest.

Fading fame, and another shot

Then, vaccines and treatments for COVID-19 arrived. The world moved on, and Noem's star faded. She's been relegated to a bystander as other Republicans — even the governor of the other Dakota — have usurped the presidential spotlight. When Noem's imported Floridian Chief of Staff Mark Miller resigned in June, some observers took it as a sign of finality. Her 15 minutes of national fame were over.

Yet Noem remains in Trump's good graces as he bulldozes his way to another Republican presidential

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nomination. And he'll soon need a new running mate, owing to his unhealable rift with former vice president and current presidential candidate Mike Pence.

All of which points to Sept. 8 as Noem's next chance at another rise to national prominence.

Trump is scheduled to attend a rally that day in Rapid City with Noem as his "special guest," even though he has no obvious political reason to visit South Dakota. It has the nation's last presidential primary election date and a tiny fraction of the national Republican Party's convention delegates, along with a dearth of mega-donors and a near total likelihood, based on its strong Republican leanings, to support the Republican nominee whether that nominee campaigns in the state or not.

Granted, Trump has never needed a logical reason to do anything. But if there's any explanation for his visit, it could be to offer Noem an audition as his running mate.

The question for Noem is how to capitalize on the opportunity. It would be out of character for the governor of freedom to tell anyone, let alone a former president, what to do.

Maybe she'll tell Trump what he "should" do. If so, he "should" be warned: That approach might be less ambiguous and more calculated than it seems.

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.

Trump pleads not guilty to charges he sought to subvert 2020 election

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JACOB FISCHLER - AUGUST 3, 2023 4:23 PM

WASHINGTON — Former President Donald Trump pleaded not guilty to four felony charges Thursday in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., after a federal grand jury handed up an indictment against the former chief executive.

Trump, the front-runner in the 2024 GOP presidential primary, was released under the conditions that he must not violate federal, state or local law and must not communicate with witnesses about the facts of the case, unless in the presence of counsel.

The first hearing in the case is set for Aug. 28 at 10 a.m. before U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan.

Chutkan is willing to waive Trump's appearance at the first hearing.

Trump entered Courtroom 22 inside the E. Barrett Prettyman Courthouse at 3:52 p.m. and sat between his lawyers, John Lauro, to his left, and Todd Blanche, on his right.

A limited number of reporters were allowed in the courtroom and more in two media overflow rooms, but no photographs or video were permitted.

The former president could face no more than five years in prison for the first charge against him, and not more than 20 years for each of the following three charges. Each charge could carry a fine of not more than \$250,000, and could require up to three years of supervised release.

Alina Habba, an attorney for Trump, said in a brief appearance outside the courthouse before the arraignment that the prosecutions of the former president were politically motivated. Officials with the U.S. Justice Department are seeking to keep Trump "distracted" as he campaigns to unseat President Joe Biden, she said.

"This is about politics, this is about 2024," she said. "Period, the end."

Trump had the right to dispute the election results, Habba added. While the indictment says Trump was told by several close advisers that he had no chance of legally overturning the election, that advice did not cancel Trump's right to challenge the results, she said.

Trump told supporters gathered on Jan. 6, 2021, to "go patriotically and peacefully" to the Capitol, she noted.

Outside the courthouse, tourists and TV crews

On the sidewalks outside the courthouse, tourists walked next to temporary white canopy tents where dozens of journalists were giving live reports on television about the indictment and the events unfolding in the courtroom.

Dozens of protestors, both supporting Trump and calling for him to go to prison, chanted and in some

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cases sang.

At least two protestors wore fake jailhouse costumes, pressing for Trump to be locked up, while many Trump supporters wore campaign T-shirts and waved flags.

Above the crowd, half a dozen people watched from an apartment complex that overlooked the courthouse. A couple of onlookers on a balcony used binoculars to try to get a glimpse of the former president arriving at the courthouse. Yellow "Do Not Cross" tape was wrapped around removable bike barricades.

Winding through the crowd was a man in a white fedora pulling a cart displaying and selling anti-Trump buttons. One button had a picture of Special Counsel Jack Smith, with "TRUMP DON'T KNOW JACK!" written on it.

Trump's multiple indictments

The 45-page indictment says that despite knowing his statements were false, then-President Trump continued to repeat that he won the election, working with co-conspirators to directly pressure state officials and hatch a plan to switch out legitimate slates of electors in states Biden had won with false electors recruited by Trump and his advisers.

Those states include Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Federal prosecutors wrote that Trump and his co-conspirators' "prolific lies about election fraud included dozens of specific claims that there had been substantial fraud in certain states, such as that large numbers of dead, non-resident, non-citizen or otherwise ineligible voters had cast ballots, or that voting machines had changed votes for the Defendant to votes for Biden."

The indictment also details a pressure campaign by Trump to convince Vice President Mike Pence that he could obstruct the certification of the votes, a largely ceremonial role that was scheduled to occur Jan. 6, 2021.

That day, Trump rallied supporters, urging them to descend on the U.S. Capitol after repeatedly falsely telling them that Pence could stop the proceeding.

A violent crowd attacked the Capitol, chanting "Hang Mike Pence," and injuring law enforcement officers.

The allegations outlined in the indictment handed up Tuesday mirror conclusions that the U.S. House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6, 2021, Attack on the U.S. Capitol made following the panel's two-year probe.

The indictment marks the third this year for Trump.

The former president faces federal criminal charges in Florida — the first levied against a former U.S. president — on allegations he kept, and refused to return, classified materials after he left office.

He also faces criminal charges in New York state, where he's accused of falsifying business records by using campaign funds to cover up an affair.

He has pleaded not guilty in both other cases.

A sweeping Georgia 2020 election interference probe also could lead to high-profile criminal indictments being handed down for Trump and potentially others in Fulton County Superior Court.

D.C. Bureau reporters Jennifer Shutt and Ariana Figueroa contributed to this report.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

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

Veterans exposed to burn pits, toxins urged to apply for retroactive benefits

3,000 South Dakota claims so far from a projected 63,000 eligible vets in the state

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - AUGUST 3, 2023 1:19 PM

WASHINGTON — A deadline for a year's worth of backdated benefits is fast approaching for U.S. veterans suffering illnesses after exposure to open burn pits, Agent Orange and other toxins.

Nearly a year ago, President Joe Biden signed the PACT Act, a law supporters describe as the largest expansion of veteran benefits in U.S. history. The law eases the path to expanded coverage, alleviating veterans from having to prove conditions like respiratory illness and cancer are a result of breathing toxic burn pit fumes or exposure to radiation or chemicals like tactical herbicides.

There is no deadline for qualifying veterans to file under the PACT Act, but former service members or their surviving family members have until Aug. 9 to claim benefits that date back to the law's enactment in August 2022.

"The law helps us to provide generations of veterans and their survivors with the care and benefits that they certainly deserve and have earned," Mike Walljasper, assistant Veteran Service Center manager at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, said Wednesday on a call with reporters hosted by the office of Rep. Joe Neguse, a Colorado Democrat.

As of mid-July, 371,716 veterans and 7,715 survivors had completed PACT Act-related claims. Just under 80% have been approved, according to the latest data from the VA.

Up to 3.5 million post-9/11 former service members could be eligible, according to lawmakers and veterans organizations.

The PACT Act also expands VA eligibility for those who served in the Persian Gulf War, served active duty at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina between 1953 and 1987, participated in chemical or biological warfare testing at the Deseret Test Center in Fort Douglas, Utah from 1962 to 1973, including Project 112 and "Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense," participated in radiation-risk activities during active or inactive duty, or those exposed to a dioxin or a toxic substance found in herbicides or defoliants during the Vietnam era.

The VA has hired thousands of claims processors to support the effort, Walljasper said.

The law presumes several disease and illness categories are related to service in qualifying locations or operations.

"That simply means that the veteran is not required to prove that active military service caused their condition that they're trying to be service connected for," Walljasper said. "Basically it takes a step away so that we can grant a benefit to that veteran."

Some of the presumptive conditions "of note" for Vietnam-era veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange have included hypertension. For many Persian Gulf veterans, VA staff are seeing numerous claims for respiratory illnesses and cancer, Walljasper said.

Lawmakers flag deadline

Many lawmakers have issued statements, posted on social media and conducted other outreach to flag the Aug. 9 deadline for retroactive benefits.

"We passed the PACT Act last summer to finally give all generations of toxic-exposed veterans and their families the care and benefits they have earned. Now it's critically important folks apply for that expanded support, and August 9th is a big deadline," said Sen. Jon Tester, a Montana Democrat and original co-sponsor of the legislation.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, another original co-sponsor, held in-person info sessions through the spring and summer.

"Too many veterans who were exposed to toxins in the line of duty were not getting the benefits and treatment they earned," the Nevada Democrat said in a statement Wednesday.

Sen. Jerry Moran, a Republican from Kansas and original backer of the bill, posted a deadline reminder

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late Wednesday on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

The legislation received broad bipartisan support in both chambers during the summer of 2022 but was held up for weeks at the tail end of the process after retiring Republican Sen. Pat Toomey, of Pennsylvania, rallied GOP colleagues to block a final procedural vote as a protest to funding language that had been in the bill all along.

The delay sparked a days-long campout on the Capitol steps by veterans, their families and comedian Jon Stewart, who took up the cause.

The \$280 billion measure eventually passed the Senate in an 86-11 vote.

How to find more information and apply

Veterans who think they may be eligible should sign up to participate in a Toxic Exposure Screening, which the VA describes as a roughly 10-minute process.

Staff have conducted over 4 million screenings as of mid-July, and 1.7 million veterans identified at least one toxic exposure event, according to VA data.

"So many Virginia veterans are already benefiting from the PACT Act," Sen. Tim Kaine, a Democrat from the commonwealth and original co-sponsor, said in a statement Wednesday. "I urge veterans who may have been exposed to toxins during their service to visit www.va.gov/PACT to see if they're eligible under the PACT Act and apply by August 9, so they can get benefits backdated to when we passed the law last year."

For veterans who do not yet have claims ready, they can submit an intent to file, which is "basically a placeholder" in line, Walljasper said.

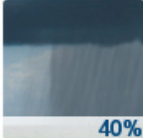






Veterans can also call 1-800-MyVA411, or 1-800-698-2411, or find a walk-in location.

The VA has published a guide to help veterans assess their eligibility for the expanded benefits.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
 40%	 40%	 80%	 70% 70%	 20% 20%		
Chance Showers	Chance T-storms	Showers	T-storms Likely then Showers Likely and Breezy	Breezy. Slight Chance T-storms then Slight Chance Showers	Partly Cloudy and Breezy then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 88 °F	Low: 66 °F	High: 77 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 78 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 80 °F



Unsettled Next Few Days

August 4, 2023
3:19 AM

Highs Today: 80s east river
70s west river

Highs Sat & Sun: 70s

Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	8/4 Fri												8/5 Sat												8/6 Sun											
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm															
Aberdeen	15	20	40	45	35	35	45	40	45	60	75	85	75	70	70	45	45	20	20	10	10															
Britton	10	5	15	20	20	20	30	30	50	60	70	75	75	75	75	55	55	25	25	10	10															
Brookings	0	5	15	25	30	25	20	25	25	60	65	70	75	75	80	80	80	50	50	20	20															
Chamberlain	25	20	20	30	65	80	65	55	35	35	55	75	75	75	70	70	70	25	25	15	15															
Clark	10	10	20	25	25	30	35	35	55	60	65	75	80	80	80	65	65	35	35	20	20															
Eagle Butte	60	75	65	75	80	75	70	70	60	65	70	75	65	60	60	25	25	15	15	10	10															
Ellendale	10	20	25	30	30	30	40	40	65	70	80	85	70	60	60	35	35	20	20	10	10															
Eureka	30	35	45	50	45	50	65	60	65	70	75	85	60	55	55	30	30	15	15	10	10															
Gettysburg	35	40	45	50	60	60	60	55	50	50	65	70	70	70	70	40	40	15	15	10	10															
Huron	10	5	15	20	20	35	40	45	55	55	60	75	80	80	80	70	70	35	35	15	15															
Kennebec	45	35	30	45	70	70	55	45	30	30	40	55	75	75	75	60	60	20	20	15	15															
McIntosh	65	75	80	80	85	80	80	80	80	80	85	85	55	45	45	15	15	10	10	5	5															
Milbank	0	0	5	15	15	15	25	30	40	55	70	75	80	80	80	75	75	45	45	20	20															
Miller	20	20	30	30	45	65	65	55	40	45	60	75	80	80	80	60	60	25	25	15	15															
Mobridge	45	50	60	60	65	70	80	75	70	70	80	80	60	55	55	25	25	10	10	10	10															
Murdo	60	40	35	65	70	65	40	35	25	30	40	55	75	75	75	50	50	20	20	10	10															
Pierre	40	45	45	70	80	65	50	45	30	45	50	65	75	75	75	45	45	20	20	10	10															
Redfield	15	15	35	35	35	45	55	45	45	55	70	80	75	75	75	60	60	25	25	15	15															
Sisseton	0	0	5	15	15	15	20	25	40	55	65	70	80	80	80	65	65	35	35	15	15															
Watertown	5	0	10	25	20	20	30	35	50	60	70	75	80	80	80	70	70	40	40	20	20															
Webster	10	5	15	20	20	20	30	30	50	60	65	75	80	80	80	65	65	30	30	15	15															
Wheaton	0	0	5	10	10	10	15	20	35	50	65	70	80	80	80	65	65	40	40	15	15															



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

We will see increasing coverage of showers and weak storms through the day today, with more potential moisture for Saturday and then a slow draw down Sunday.

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Severe Weather Threat Overview

August 4, 2023

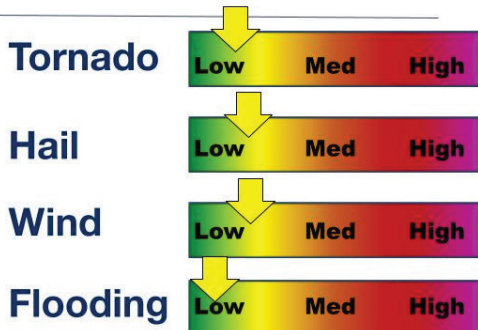
3:55 AM

Saturday Afternoon & Evening

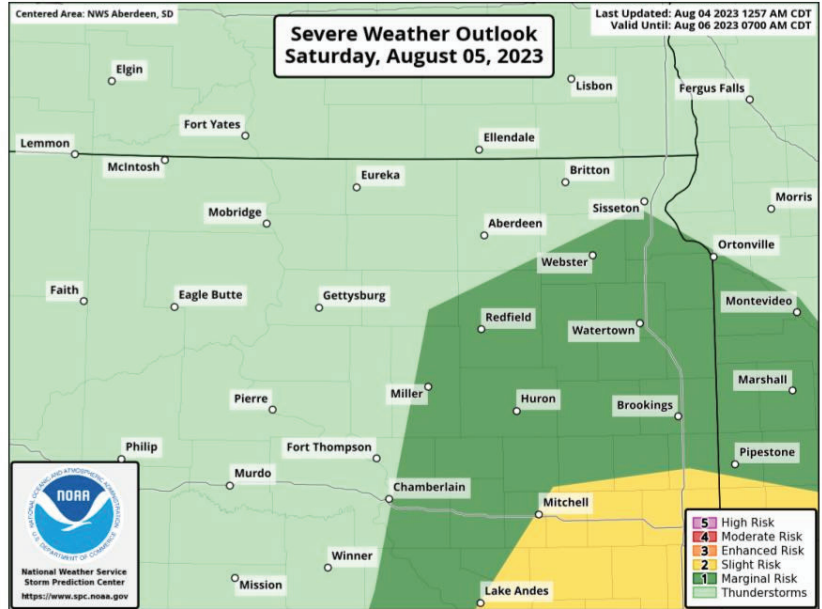
Hazards

Low pressure system and warm front will provide the focus for storms Saturday afternoon & evening for mainly east central South Dakota.

Primary Threats for the Green areas



Additionally, heavy rain potential exists for most of the region, though at this time, flood potential appears to be limited due widespread dry conditions



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

There is a severe weather threat for far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota on Saturday. Strongest storms could contain large hail, strong winds and we cant rule out an isolated tornado. Heavy rain potential exists as well, though not guaranteed for everyone. Dry conditions should help limit any flood potential.

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Today in Weather History

August 4, 1960: At Draper in Jones County, three-inch hail caused substantial damage to roofs, building windows and automobiles. Losses estimated at 100,000 dollars. About 1,000 chickens and turkeys killed on nearby farms.

August 4, 2000: Tennis ball size hail along with high winds caused a lot of damage throughout Selby. Many east and north windows were broken along with many vehicle's windshields. Also, many cars were dented, house siding was damaged, gardens were destroyed, and many acres of crops around Selby were destroyed. Softball hail broke windows and caused extensive damage to a few vehicles and homes west of Faulkton. Baseball size hail and high winds had broken out about every window on all of the buildings at the Brentwood Colony in Edmunds County. The large hail and strong winds also damaged many of the buildings.

1882 - A vivid aurora was visible from Oregon to Maine, down the east coast as far as Mayport FL, and inland as far as Wellington KS. Observers at Louisville KY noted merry dancers across the sky, and observers at Saint Vincent, MN, noted it was probably the most brilliant ever seen at that location. (The Weather Channel)

1930 - The temperature at Moorefield, WV, soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record, having reached 110 degrees the previous day. Widespread drought after April of that year caused some towns to haul water for domestic use, and many manufacturing plants were barely operational. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Spokane, WA, reached an all-time record high of 108 degrees. Kalispell, MT, set an all-time record with a reading of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - A record forty-two consecutive days of 100 degree heat finally came to an end at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. July 1980 proved to be the hottest month of record with a mean temperature of 92 degrees. There was just one day of rain in July, and there was no measurable rain in August. There were 18 more days of 100 degree heat in August, and four in September. Hot weather that summer contributed to the deaths of 1200 people nationally, and losses from the heat across the country were estimated at twenty billion dollars. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought relief from the heat to a large part of the Midwest, while hot weather continued in the south central and eastern U.S. Morning thunderstorms in Nebraska deluged the town of Dalton with 8.71 inches of rain, along with hail three inches in diameter, which accumulated up to four feet deep near the town of Dix. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Iowa to Lower Michigan during the afternoon and evening hours, producing golf ball size hail and spawning several tornadoes. A thunderstorm at Maquoketa, IA, produced wind gusts to 75 mph. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Nebraska and northeastern Kansas to the Great Lakes Region, with 150 reports of large hail or damaging winds during the afternoon, evening, and nighttime hours. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Claremont, MN, and wind gusts to 75 mph at Milwaukee, WI. Thunderstorms representing what once was Hurricane Chantal produced five inches of rain at Grant, MI, and deluged Chicago, IL, with more than three inches of rain in three hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2008: Severe storms moved across northern Illinois and Indiana with tornadoes and stiff winds reported. With tornado sirens blaring, the game at Wrigley Field between Cubs and Astros was stopped as fans were told to evacuate to the lower concourse. Passengers at O'Hare International Airport were evacuated to lower levels of buildings as well. An estimated 350 flights were canceled.

2009: The strongest tornado to hit Quebec since the same date in 1994 ripped through Mont-Laurier. The F2 tornado tore through the small western Quebec town severely damaging about 40 homes. Two men were taken to the hospital with minor injuries.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ONE FATHER'S LEGACY

Fathers always leave a legacy for their children. We do it by word and deed - sometimes consciously and through careful planning. Other times we do it without being aware of what we leave as their inheritance. In preparing to leave the throne to his son, Solomon, David gave him three legacies:

The legacy of courage. "Be strong, prove yourself a man." David knew his son would face difficult times and wanted him to have the strength that only comes from God. Having God's strength would enable Solomon to serve the Lord faithfully and fully.

The legacy of conviction. "Keep the charge of the Lord your God." Here David is advising Solomon to be a man of the Book - keep the charge - to always follow God's Laws. It is important to gain knowledge, but knowledge without God's wisdom is foolishness!

The legacy of conduct. "Keep His statutes." Godly courage is built on convictions that flow from God's Word which result in godly conduct. Godly conduct is a witness of the love and grace of God without ever saying a word. Through us, people see "God in action."

Our legacy lives forever in our children's lives. What legacy are you leaving yours?

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to be fathers who leave godly legacies for our children. May we leave them legacies that are consistent with Your teachings, are established in Your Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Observe the requirements of the Lord your God, and follow all his ways. Keep the decrees, commands, regulations, and laws written in the Law of Moses so that you will be successful in all you do and wherever you go. 1 Kings 2:1-4



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

- 01/28/2024 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/28/2024 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 03/23/2024 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/20/2024 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/21/2024 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/04/2024 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
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.01.23

8 24 30 45 61 12

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$1,250,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 4 Mins 7
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

1 18 33 41 51 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$7,100,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 19
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.03.23

5 18 19 25 48 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 34 Mins 7
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

8 9 12 14 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 34
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

5 23 30 62 63 9

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.02.23

23 24 33 51 64 5

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$124,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 3
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

North Dakota lawmakers eye Minnesota free tuition program that threatens enrollment

By JACK DURA Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota lawmakers and higher education leaders are beginning to chart a path for how to respond to neighboring Minnesota's upcoming program that will offer income-based free tuition to thousands of students.

Higher education leaders on Wednesday detailed the situation to an interim legislative panel. A state senator also presented a bill draft proposing a North Dakota program similar to Minnesota's North Star Promise.

North Star Promise takes effect in fall 2024. It will cover undergraduate tuition and fees at the state's public post-secondary schools for Minnesota residents whose family income is under \$80,000, after they have used other sources of financial aid.

North Dakota higher education leaders are worried about losing Minnesota students. About 1,400 of them at five eastern North Dakota schools could be eligible for North Star Promise. Minnesotans make up nearly half the student body at North Dakota State University in Fargo, the No. 1 out-of-state choice for first-year Minnesota students.

Legislative staff and higher education officials will work on potential options in response to North Star Promise, said Republican state Rep. Mark Sanford, who chairs the Legislature's interim Higher Education Committee.

Tuition cost is "certainly not the only element" Minnesota students consider in where to go to college, he said. Quality and availability of programs "are important parts of this, too," Sanford said Thursday.

Admissions offices already are recruiting 2024 and 2025 high school graduates.

Marketing "the overall quality" of North Dakota programs to Minnesotans will be key, said North Dakota University System Chancellor Mark Hagerott. He said he's confident current Minnesota students will stick with North Dakota.

"The concern is really the new students making decisions, and they and their parents may be confused by what might be a headline and not understanding the total value package, so that's why we need to be sure we get that information out," Hagerott said.

Lawmakers and state officials see higher education as a key component to addressing North Dakota's labor shortage by keeping graduates to fill open jobs.

An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 Minnesota students annually will use North Star Promise. In one scenario, education officials in North Dakota projected an \$8.4 million loss in combined tuition and fees just in the first year.

Democratic state Sen. Tim Mathern has pitched a \$17 million "Dakota Promise" forgivable student loan program for high school graduates of North Dakota and neighboring states, but "targeted to North Dakota residents," he said.

His proposal, which is in early draft form, would cover undergraduate tuition and fees at North Dakota's 11 public colleges and universities as well as the five tribal colleges. The proposal has the same income limit as North Star Promise.

Loan recipients would have to live and work in North Dakota for three years after graduation for their loans to be completely forgiven.

"It's a new way for more North Dakotans to afford to go to college, so if five Minnesotans leave, this gives five more North Dakotans the idea to go to college," Mathern said.

His proposal also includes an income tax credit for employers who pay for an employee's tuition.

North Dakota's Legislature meets every two years and will convene next in January 2025.

Russia accuses Ukraine of attacking Black Sea navy base and Crimea with drones

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia accused Ukraine early Friday of attacking its Black Sea navy base in the port of Novorossiysk with sea drones.

The attack on Novorossiysk is the first time a commercial Russian port has been targeted in the 18-month war. The city is a major port on the Black Sea and hosts a naval base, shipbuilding yards and an oil terminal. It is a key port for Russian exports.

Novorossiysk is just across the water from Crimea, where Russia's Ministry of Defense said it thwarted another attack by Ukraine overnight, taking down 13 drones.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said Russian ships patrolling the perimeter of the naval base destroyed two Ukrainian sea drones. The mayor of Novorossiysk, Andrey Kravchenko, said the crews of the Olenegorsky Gonyak and Suvorovets ships "immediately reacted to the attack and helped to avoid consequences." Veniamin Kondratiev, the governor of the Krasnodar region where the base is located said there were no casualties.

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium, which operates an oil terminal in the port, said Russian navy ships repelled an attack of sea drones and that maritime traffic was banned temporarily. The company said its facilities were not damaged and that loaded tankers will be moved after the ban is lifted.

Footage published on Russian social media channels appeared to show a ship firing into the sea and a burning object exploding. Ukrainian agencies carried footage from social media channels they suggested showed a Russian ship listing to one side after the attack.

The Associated Press could not verify the videos. Ukrainian officials have not commented on the attack, in keeping with the country's security policy.

Minutes after confirming the attack on the Black Sea port, Russia's Ministry of Defense said it had also repelled another attack by Ukraine on Moscow-annexed Crimea. The defense ministry said air defense systems shot down 10 drones and it had electronically jammed another three.

Videos shared on Russian social media channels reportedly from around the city of Feodosia in Crimea showed what appeared to be air defense systems working, as well as loud explosions.

Meanwhile Russia's defense ministry also published videos on Friday of the Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visiting a commander center in Ukraine. The defense ministry did not say exactly where Shoigu was but said he heard a report from the group commander Lt. Gen. Andrei Mordvichev and inspected a captured Swedish infantry fighting vehicle CV90.

The Russian Ministry of Defense said Shoigu thanked personnel for conducting successful offensive operations in the direction of Lyman and for capturing more advantageous positions.

Zimbabwe's opposition leader tells AP intimidation is forcing voters to choose ruling party or death

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Zimbabwe's main opposition leader accused President Emmerson Mnangagwa of violating the law and tearing apart independent institutions to cling to power.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Nelson Chamisa also warned that any evidence of tampering by Mnangagwa's ruling party in upcoming elections could lead to "total disaster" for a beleaguered nation that is in economic ruin and already under United States and European Union sanctions for its human rights record.

Chamisa, who will challenge Mnangagwa and the ruling ZANU-PF party's 43-year hold on power in the Aug. 23 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections, claimed widespread intimidation against his opposition party ahead of the vote.

Chamisa said Mnangagwa has utilized institutions like the police and the courts to crack down on criti-

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cal figures, ban opposition rallies and prevent candidates from running. In the AP interview, he laid out a series of concerns that indicate the country, with its history of violent and disputed elections, could be heading for another one.

In rural areas far from the international spotlight, many of Zimbabwe's 15 million people are making their political choices under the threat of violence, Chamisa alleged. People are getting driven to ruling party rallies and threatened to support Mnangagwa and the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front if they want to stay safe — or even alive.

Chamisa, who leads the Citizens Coalition for Change party, called it a choice of “death or ZANU-PF” for some.

“Mnangagwa is clearly triggering a national crisis,” he said during the interview in his 11th-floor office in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. “He is driving the country into chaos. He is actually instigating instability. He is violating the law. He is tearing apart institutions of the country.”

On Thursday, a man wearing the yellow colors of Chamisa's CCC party was beaten and stoned to death on the way to a political rally, police said. The CCC accused ZANU-PF followers of killing him and attacking other opposition supporters.

Mnangagwa has repeatedly denied allegations of intimidation and violence by authorities or his party and has publicly called on his supporters to act peacefully during the campaign.

But Chamisa's portrayal of a highly repressive political landscape in the southern African nation — where the removal of autocrat Robert Mugabe in 2017 appears to have been a false dawn — is backed by reports released by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch ahead of the elections taking place in less than three weeks.

They will take place amid “five years of brutal crackdowns on human rights,” Amnesty said, since Mnangagwa gained power from Mugabe in a coup and then won a disputed presidential election by a razor-thin margin against Chamisa in 2018. In its assessment, Human Rights Watch said Zimbabwean authorities have “weaponized the criminal justice system against the ruling party's opponents” and the buildup to the vote has not met free and fair international standards.

Zimbabwe has significant mineral resources — including Africa's largest deposits of highly sought-after lithium — and rich agricultural potential, and could be of huge benefit to the continent if it gained the political and economic stability that has eluded it for years. Zimbabwe was shunned by the West for two decades because of abuses during the regime of Mugabe, who died in 2019.

Mugabe's removal sent Zimbabweans into the streets to celebrate, and Mnangagwa promised democracy and freedom would be born from the coup. He maintained recently that “Zimbabwe is now a mature democracy” under him.

Rights groups say it's a mirage and the 80-year-old Mnangagwa, a former Mugabe ally once known as his enforcer, has been as repressive as the man he removed.

Under Mnangagwa, critics and opposition figures have been jailed, including CCC lawmaker Job Sikhala, who has been in detention for over a year after accusing ruling party supporters of hacking to death an opposition activist. Some have faced legal backlash for seemingly minor criticisms, like world-renowned author Tsitsi Dangarembga, who was arrested for participating in a protest that called for better services for citizens.

A court decision disqualified all 12 CCC candidates in Bulawayo, the second-largest city, from standing in the election, even after the electoral agency said they had registered properly. They successfully appealed to the Supreme Court to be allowed to stand.

“I am nowhere near the court,” Mnangagwa said, denying any influence on the initial decision to bar the opposition candidates.

Chamisa, a 45-year-old lawyer and pastor, said Mnangagwa was now overseeing a second coup in Zimbabwe.

“You can't have a contest without contestation. You can't have an election without candidates,” Chamisa said. “Once you eliminate candidates, you are actually eliminating an election. And that's the point we are

making. ... It's a coup on choices."

The elections will be monitored by observers from the European Union and African Union, who were invited by Mnangagwa. He says he has nothing to hide. Human Rights Watch has questioned if the observers will be allowed to access all parts of the country, while their small numbers make it likely they won't be able to monitor the entire vote. There are 150 observers from the EU and more than 12,500 polling stations across the country.

Chamisa told the AP that his party has put in place systems to be able to independently check vote counts, but there are also doubts that the CCC can deploy enough members to watch over those stations, many deep in rural areas regarded as ZANU-PF strongholds.

Should their calculations show fraud this time, as was alleged in 2018 and other elections before that, Chamisa warned it will "plunge the country into total disaster and chaos."

He urged Mnangagwa to step back from his repressive policies in a country denied democracy under white minority rule before 1980 and again — according to international rights groups — under the only two leaders it has seen since: Mugabe and Mnangagwa.

"He must be stopped because he can't drive the whole nation and plunge it into darkness and an abyss on account of just wanting to retain power," Chamisa said of Mnangagwa. "Zimbabweans deserve peace, they deserve rest. They have suffered for a long time."

India's top court stays conviction of opposition leader for mocking the prime minister's surname

By ASHOK SHARMA Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's top court on Friday stayed the criminal defamation conviction of opposition leader Rahul Gandhi for mocking the prime minister's surname. His party said it would now seek to have Gandhi reinstated as a member of parliament.

A fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his main challenger in 2024 polls, Gandhi was ousted from Parliament after his conviction by a magistrate's court in March.

The stay by the Supreme Court means a temporary halt to the conviction while the court goes into Gandhi's appeal in detail before issuing a final ruling.

Gandhi's disqualification as a lawmaker also now remains in abeyance, said Live Law, an online portal for Indian legal news. Congress party leader K.C. Venugopal said the party would approach the Parliament speaker to restore his seat.

The court's order also means that Gandhi will be able to contest next year's general elections unless a final court decision goes against him.

Despite its decision, the Supreme Court observed that Gandhi's comments were not in "good taste" and said that a person in public life ought to have been more careful while making public speeches.

The defamation case involved comments Gandhi made in a 2019 election speech. Gandhi asked, "Why do all thieves have Modi as their surname?" He then referred to three well-known and unrelated Modis: a fugitive Indian diamond tycoon, a cricket executive banned from the Indian Premier League and the prime minister.

The case was filed by Purnesh Modi, who is a member of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in Gujarat state but is also not related to the prime minister.

Gandhi was sentenced to two years in prison but the court suspended his prison sentence in April. The conviction was upheld by the Gujarat state High Court so he filed an appeal in the country's Supreme Court last month.

The Supreme Court said the trial judge gave the maximum sentence of two years to Gandhi. Except for the admonition to Gandhi, no other reason was given for that sentence, the court said.

The case against Gandhi, the great-grandson of India's first prime minister and scion of the dynastic Congress party, was widely condemned by opponents of Modi as the latest assault against democracy and free speech by a government seeking to crush dissent. The speed of his removal from Parliament

shocked Indian politics.

Legal experts had earlier said Gandhi's case is unusual as defamation convictions remain rare, especially with the maximum sentence.

Gandhi on Wednesday reiterated in an affidavit before the Supreme Court that he is not guilty of the offense of criminal defamation. He said he will not apologize for his remark and that if he wanted he could have made it much earlier.

Gandhi also said that there is no community going by the name 'Modi' and so he cannot be accused of defaming Modi community as a whole. People having the surname Modi may fall into different communities and castes, he said.

Purnesh Modi said in his counter affidavit that Gandhi has shown arrogance rather than being apologetic.

India, with 1.4 billion people, is the world's largest democracy. However, Modi's critics say democracy has been in retreat since he came to power in 2014. They accuse his government of pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda. The government denies that, saying its policies benefit all Indians.

The Nehru-Gandhi family has produced three prime ministers. Rahul Gandhi's grandmother, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated while in office, as was his father, Rajiv Gandhi, after he left office.

Trump was told not to talk to witnesses in 2020 election conspiracy case. That could be a challenge

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was a routine part of a federal court hearing: The defendant was told not to discuss the case with any witnesses without lawyers present.

But there's nothing routine about this case. The defendant is Donald Trump, accused of orchestrating a conspiracy to overturn the results of the 2020 election. The potential witness pool is vast and includes members of the former president's inner circle deeply involved in his reelection campaign, including some currently on his payroll. His lies about the election — which form the basis of the charges — are repeated in nearly every speech he gives.

"The standard language may not work here, when you have thousands of Americans who could be witnesses and he continues to have daily contact with people who may be involved," said Laurie Levenson, a law professor at Loyola Law School of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. "Everything is more complicated in this case because of who the defendant is, what he has done and that he wants to be president again."

A test for Trump may come as early as Friday. He is attending the Alabama Republican Party's annual Summer Dinner. On Saturday he will deliver the keynote speech at the South Carolina GOP's 56th Annual Silver Elephant Gala.

As his campaign unfolds, the potential witness pool in his latest case is very broad. The congressional hearings on the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot could offer some insight — those interviews spanned more than 1,000 people, and included some of Trump's closest advisers and family members, including his daughter Ivanka and his son Donald Trump Jr.

So it's possible he may already be talking about the case in front of witnesses.

Even as he traveled to Washington Thursday for his arraignment, Trump was accompanied by top aides including Jason Miller, a communications staffer who had been featured heavily in the Jan. 6 congressional hearings, and Boris Epshteyn, a longtime adviser who was part of the efforts to overturn the election results by organizing fake electors. The complications reflect the reality that Trump's campaign and his legal issues are now intertwined.

"The legal messaging is the political messaging and the political messaging is the legal messaging," Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said before the latest indictment. "It's part of what we're running on. Trump has made the legal issues a big focus of his campaign and from our standpoint, it's messaging that works."

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Trump makes reference to the 2020 election in almost every speech he gives, telling his supporters that he ran twice and won twice as he vows to do it again. Trump's speeches also often include extensive discussion of the cases he faces as he tries the cast the investigations as part of a politicized effort to damage his candidacy.

And many close advisers are potential witnesses. His 2024 campaign includes some, like Miller, who worked for his 2020 effort, as well as some new leaders who were not involved in his efforts to overturn the election.

The issue has come up before, after Trump was charged by federal prosecutors with illegally hoarding classified records at his Florida Mar-a-Lago estate and rejecting government demands to give them back.

In that case, there was a back-and-forth between the judge and Trump lawyers over whether he could speak to his co-defendant, valet Walt Nauta. Trump's attorney Todd Blanche noted that Nauta and potential witnesses are people with whom Trump interacts daily, whether at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida or his other clubs.

The judge said he could speak with Nauta, just not about the case. Nauta was with Trump again in Washington on Thursday, holding an umbrella as the former president spoke to reporters before he boarded a plane back to Bedminster, New Jersey.

The former president and current Republican front-runner said on the tarmac that the latest case was "persecution" of a political opponent by President Joe Biden.

During his arraignment in Washington, where he pleaded not guilty to four counts, including conspiracy to defraud the United States, he agreed not to talk about the case with any witnesses without lawyers present, and not to attempt to influence any potential jurors or tamper with witnesses.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Moxila Upadhyaya told him that if he failed to comply with any conditions of his release, a warrant might be issued for his arrest. A formal witness list is usually presented closer to trial, though prosecutors often signal candidates earlier in the process.

The former president is not known to hold back or refrain from talking about off-limits subjects. He's also been accused of defying court orders before, and he's already been reprimanded by one judge overseeing a hush-money prosecution to refrain from comments that were "likely to incite violence or civil unrest."

Georgia prosecutors have also been probing Trump and his allies for their efforts to overturn his election loss in that state.

South Korea detains suspect in high school teacher's stabbing a day after separate attack wounded 14

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean police detained a man suspected of stabbing a high school teacher with a knife Friday in the city of Daejeon. The stabbing follows a separate, apparently random attack on Thursday in which 14 people were wounded near a busy subway station in Seongnam.

Officials at the Daejeon Metropolitan Police Agency didn't immediately release the personal details of the suspect in the Friday morning attack on the teacher at Songchon High School, describing him only as a man in his late 20s.

According to police, the suspect waited for the teacher to step out of a classroom before stabbing him and fleeing the scene, which, according to officials, suggests they were acquaintances.

Police and fire department authorities did not specify the teacher's health condition.

The attack in Daejeon, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) south of Seongnam, came hours after President Yoon Suk Yeol called for "ultra-strong" law enforcement measures to restore faith in public safety after Thursday's violence, which he described as a "terrorist attack on innocent citizens."

At least two people were in life-threatening conditions after Thursday's attack in Seongnam, in which a car rammed onto a sidewalk before the driver stepped out and began stabbing people at random at a shopping mall linked to the Seohyeon subway station at the heart of a bustling leisure and business district.

Among the five people who were hurt by the car, at least two were hospitalized in critical condition.

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Among the nine who were stabbed, eight were being treated for serious injuries, according to Gyeonggi Province fire department officials.

Police are questioning the 22-year-old suspect. They did not identify the suspect or offer any immediate information about a potential motive.

During police interviews, the suspect talked incoherently and said he was being stalked by an unspecified source, said Park Gyeong-won, an official at Gyeonggi's Bundang district police station.

The suspect purchased the two knives he used in the stabbings from a different shopping mall on Wednesday, Park said, but there isn't clear evidence he planned the attack in advance.

Photos from the scene showed forensic units examining the halls of the AK Plaza, where the attack took place Thursday. A white Kia hatchback with a broken front window and ruptured front tire could be seen on a sidewalk near the subway station.

A witness named Hwang Hee-woon told YTN television that he "heard a sound from the first floor that seemed like a scream, so customers and shop workers were gathering on the rails of the second floor near the escalator to see what was happening below."

"Suddenly, someone told us the person who committed the crime was coming up to the second floor, so we ran away in panic," he said. He ended up hiding inside a refrigerated storage room with some mall employees.

Thursday's attack was the country's second mass-stabbing case involving random targets in a month.

In July, a knife-wielding man stabbed at least four pedestrians on a street in the capital, Seoul, killing one person. Attacks by firearms are rare in South Korea, which tightly controls gun possession, but there aren't meaningful restrictions applying to knives, including kitchen tools that are often used for attacks.

In response to Thursday's attack, Yoon called for closer monitoring of social media to detect threats, deploying more law enforcement officers for prevention and equipping them with better suppression gear, according to his office.

In response to the president's comments, National Police Agency Commissioner General Yoon Hee-keun declared in a televised statement the start of an indefinite "special surveillance" period, during which police officers will step up patrols and stop-and-search activities to guard against "people suspected of carrying weapons or acting abnormally."

Yoon said police officers will also be instructed to actively use firearms or taser guns to suppress suspects when violent crimes occur.

Deadly flooding in China worsens as rescues continue and areas downriver brace for high water

BEIJING (AP) — Heavy rain and high water levels on rivers in northeastern China were threatening cities downstream on Friday, prompting the evacuation of thousands, although the country appears to have averted the worst effects of the typhoon season battering parts of east Asia.

Hebei province surrounding the capital Beijing on three sides issued alerts for several of its cities. The province of Heilongjiang to the north, was evacuating entire villages in anticipation of life-threatening deluges.

Rescue work remains underway. At least 20 people have been reported killed in Beijing's outer suburbs and another 27 were missing following the weekend storms that quickly overwhelmed drainage systems.

Beijing usually has dry summers, but had a stretch of record-breaking heat this year that broke dramatically over the weekend with almost a week of constant rain and drizzle. Power was knocked out in areas, public transport and summer classes were suspended and citizens of the metropolis of more than 20 million were told to stay home.

The nearby cities of Tianjin and Zhuozhou were also hit hard. Fire services aided by volunteer rescue groups searched apartment buildings and railway tunnels for stranded people, bringing hundreds to safety.

With its status as the nation's capital, the headquarters of the ruling Communist Party and home to cultural treasures such as the ancient Forbidden City, Beijing has provided special protection from flooding

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through the diversion of waters to neighboring regions. That sparked complaints on social media Friday of flooding in surrounding areas that could allegedly have been avoided if the rainwater had been flushed through the capital's system of canals and rivers.

Other regions, especially in China's south, have suffered unusual deadly summer flooding. Other parts of the country are struggling with drought, putting further pressure on food supplies for the nation's 1.4 billion people already struggling with the disruption in grain shipments resulting from Russia's war against Ukraine.

Muddy water surging down streets washed away cars in the hilly Mentougou district on Beijing's western edge.

"A couple of cars parked behind my apartment building disappeared in just one minute," said resident Liu Shuanbao.

In Zhuozhou, southwest of Beijing, some 125,000 people from high-risk areas were moved to shelters, Xinhua said.

President Xi Jinping issued an order for local governments to go "all out" to rescue those trapped and minimize loss of life and property damage.

The government of Tianjin, a port east of Beijing, said 35,000 people were evacuated from near the swollen Yongding River.

As much as 500 millimeters (almost 20 inches) of rain has fallen in some places since Saturday, according to the Hebei province weather agency. Some areas reported as much as 90 millimeters (3 1/2 inches) of rainfall per hour.

Some 13 rivers exceeded warning levels in the Haihe Basin, which includes Beijing, Tianjin and Shijiazhuang, Xinhua said, citing the Ministry of Water Resources.

About 42,000 people were evacuated from areas of Shanxi province to Hebei's west, it reported, citing emergency officials.

In early July, at least 15 people were killed by floods in the southwestern region of Chongqing, and about 5,590 people in the far northwestern province of Liaoning had to be evacuated. In the central province of Hubei, rainstorms trapped residents in their vehicles and homes.

China's deadliest and most destructive floods in recent history were in 1998, when 4,150 people died, most of them along the Yangtze River.

In 2021, more than 300 people died in flooding in the central province of Henan. Record rainfall inundated the provincial capital of Zhengzhou on July 20 that year, turning streets into rushing rivers and flooding at least part of a subway line, trapping passengers in the cars.

Meanwhile, in the eastern Shandong province, authorities also warned of flooding risks as water levels on the Zhangwei River continued to rise.

China was largely spared by Typhoon Khanun, which on Thursday lashed Japan, damaging homes and knocking out power on Okinawa and other islands. China's National Meteorological Center had initially expected the typhoon to make landfall in the southeastern Zhejiang province, where local authorities called ships into port and halted passenger ferry services.

Breastfeeding Olympians want it all: Top careers and motherhood

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — When Clarisse Agbégénou won her sixth world judo title, confirming the reigning Olympic champion as one of the athletes to watch at next year's Paris Games, the French star's smallest but greatest fan was less wild about her mother's newest gold medal than she was about her breast milk.

After a peckish day of few feeds — because mum had been busy putting opponents through the wringer — 10-month-old Athéna made amends that night.

"She didn't let my boobs out of her mouth," Agbégénou says. "I was like, 'Wow, okay.' I think it was really something for her."

Breastfeeding and high-performance sports were long an almost impossible combination for top female

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athletes, torn for decades between careers or motherhood, because having both was so tough.

But that's becoming less true ahead of the 2024 Olympics, where women will take another step forward in their long march for equality, competing in equal numbers with men for the first time, and with pioneering super-moms like Agbégénéou showing that it is possible to breastfeed and be competitive.

They don't pretend that late-night feeds, broken sleep, pumping milk and having to eat for two people are easy. But some female athletes are also discovering that juggling their careers with the rigors of motherhood can pay off with powerful emotional well-being.

Speaking in an interview with The Associated Press, Agbégénéou said she stunned even herself by coming back so quickly from childbirth to win at the worlds in May, with Athéna in tow and expecting to be fed every few hours.

In training, Agbégénéou would stop for quick feeds when Athéna needed milk, nestling her hungry baby in the folds of her kimono, while other athletes in the judo hall paid them no mind, carrying on with their bouts.

"I was sweating on her, poor baby," she says. "But she didn't pay attention. She just wanted to eat."

Women who have breastfed and carried on competing say that support from coaches and sports administrators is essential. Agbégénéou credits the International Judo Federation for allowing her to take Athéna to competitions. IJF officials sounded out other competitors and coaches about whether the baby was a nuisance for them and were told, "No, she was really perfect, we didn't hear the baby," she says.

"It's amazing," she says of her peers' acceptance and support. "They are part of my fight and I am really proud of them."

As well as Agbégénéou, three other women also asked and were allowed to nurse their babies at IJF World Tour competitions in the past six years, with arrangements made each time that enabled the moms "to care for the child and to not disturb other athletes' preparation," says the governing body's secretary general, Lisa Allan. She says the IJF is now drawing up specific policies for judokas who are pregnant or postpartum because "more and more athletes are continuing their careers whilst balancing having a family."

The Paris Olympics' chief organizer, Tony Estanguet, says they're also exploring the possibility of providing facilities for nursing athletes at the Games.

"They should have access to their children — for the well-being of the mothers and the children," he said in an AP interview. "The status of athletes who are young mothers needs to evolve a bit. We need to find solutions to perhaps make it easier for these athletes to bring babies" into the Olympic village where athletes are housed.

For some breastfeeding athletes, being a pioneer is part of the kick.

Two-time Olympic rowing champion Helen Glover, now aiming for her fourth Summer Games, gave birth to twins at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, breastfed them and then came out of what she'd intended to be retirement to compete at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021. Glover was the first rower to compete for Britain at the Olympics as a mother.

Glover's eldest, Logan, lost interest in her milk about the time of his first birthday, but twins Kit and Willow kept feeding to 14 months old. She says that mixing her punishing rowing training with long feeds for two babies was "very draining. It was taking every calorie I had."

"But I could do it because it was my own time and my own choice," she says.

"Everyone should have the choice," Glover adds. "Our bodies ... are sometimes very changed through childbirth and pregnancy and breastfeeding. So the answers are never going to be one-size-fits-all. But I think it's really exciting that these conversations are even being had."

For some athletes, Milk Stork has also been a help. The U.S.-based transporter ships working moms' milk when they're separated from their babies. It says it shipped milk pumped by athletes who competed at the 2021 Paralympic Games in Tokyo and also transported 21 gallons (80 liters) of milk from coaches, trainers and other support staff at the Olympics that year.

The daughter of British archery athlete Naomi Folkard was just 5 1/2-months old and breastfeeding exclusively when her mother traveled to Tokyo for her fifth and final Olympic Games.

Nursing mothers successfully pushed to be able to take babies to those Olympics, held with social distancing and without full crowds because of the coronavirus pandemic. Rather than put her daughter, Emily, through the ordeal of having to live apart from her, in a Tokyo hotel outside of the athletes' village, Folkard reluctantly left her behind with a large stock of frozen milk. She built that up over months, pumping into the night so Emily wouldn't go hungry while she was in Japan.

But that created another problem: Because Folkard's breasts had become so good at making milk, she had to pump regularly at the Games to stop them from becoming painfully swollen. She threw that milk away.

"I was having to get up in the night and pump just because my supply was so much," she says. "It wasn't great for performance preparation really. But I did what I had to do to be there."

And with each drop, progress.

"There's still a long way to go, but people are talking about it now. Women aren't retiring to have children. They're still competing," Folkard says.

"I feel like things are changing."

Another harrowing escape puts attention on open prostitution market along Seattle's Aurora Avenue

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A vanload of church volunteers drove along a main street in north Seattle one night last month with sandwiches, water bottles and blankets for homeless people. They didn't find any — but they did see dozens of barely clothed women walking along the road or leaning into traffic to advertise their services.

"Just woman after woman after woman," recalled one of the volunteers, Stuart Jenner. "We prayed for them as we drove south."

About two hours later, the FBI said, a man posing as an undercover police officer shackled and abducted a woman from the area after soliciting her to engage in prostitution. He then drove her hundreds of miles to his home in southern Oregon, where he locked her in a makeshift cell in his garage — a cinder block cage with a metal door, charging papers say. She escaped by punching the door, bloodying her knuckles, until it broke.

Authorities say they are looking for more possible victims after linking the man, Negasi Zuberi, to violent sexual assaults in at least four other states. His newly appointed public defender, Devin Huseby, declined to comment Thursday.

The July 15 abduction is one of at least three cases in the past year in which police say women engaged in prostitution along Aurora Avenue had to make harrowing escapes or otherwise be rescued after being held against their will, and it raised questions about the consequences of tolerating an open sex market along the busy thoroughfare.

"The Aurora Avenue North corridor has been a longstanding public safety challenge with human trafficking, street prostitution, drug dealing, and gun violence," Jamie Housen, a spokesperson for Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell, said in an email.

Seattle has been clamping down, Housen said. Police regularly make arrests in the area and issued nuisance notices last week to two budget motels on Aurora that authorities said were hotbeds of prostitution and other crime.

Aurora, an urban highway also known as State Route 99, is one of the city's main north-south arterials. Especially known for prostitution is a stretch of about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) close to the city's northern limit that is flanked by home-improvement stores, single-story businesses, strip malls and cheap motels.

Residents have noticed a dramatic increase in the activity since the pandemic struck in 2020, as the Seattle Police Department has contended with a severe shortage of officers.

That was also the year the City Council eliminated loitering crimes as they relate to drug trafficking and prostitution. Loitering charges were rarely filed anyway, but the council cited the racist history of such laws, which were preceded by Jim Crow-era vagrancy statutes designed to target formerly enslaved people, in

eliminating them.

Last November, a 20-year-old woman who had been trafficked along Aurora tried to escape her pimp by jumping nearly naked out of the third-floor window of a home in south Seattle where she'd been kept. The escape failed, and after the pimp drove her back up to Aurora, she tried again, this time running from him and sitting topless in the roadway. A rideshare driver stopped and rescued her — and then engaged in a rolling gunfight with the pimp, who chased them in his car, police said.

The defendant in that case, Winston Burt, was arrested soon after and now faces federal sex trafficking and gun charges. He has pleaded not guilty.

Last month, a 19-year-old man and 17-year-old boy were charged with trafficking two young women out of one of the motels on Aurora, after one of the women called her father to report she was being held against her will.

The city followed up by declaring the Emerald Motel and the Seattle Inn to be chronic nuisances. The declaration requires the owners to submit a plan explaining how they will prevent their properties from being used for criminal behavior, Housen said. Failure to comply can result in fines.

Calls to those establishments seeking comment did not go through Thursday, with an automated message saying the lines were busy.

"Human trafficking takes a tragic, significant, and unacceptable toll on victims and the entire community," Housen said. "Mayor Harrell recognizes that addressing this issue requires more than just law enforcement, including a special emphasis on victim services, support, and advocacy."

Cory Cocktail, the co-founder of the Seattle sex worker outreach organization Green Light Project, said sex work is inherently risky, but outdoor work is especially dangerous because of the difficulty in vetting clients. The closing of the motels to prostitution could make it even worse, he said, because workers might be more likely to resort to getting into clients' cars instead.

And without a consolidated community based around the motels, it would be harder for sex workers to look out for each other, Cocktail said.

"I unfortunately have been expecting something like this to happen," Cocktail said. "I hate saying that out loud, but the circumstances being what they are, predators are empowered to hurt people right now."

For Jenner, who volunteered through his church, University Presbyterian, for a late-night shift with the Union Gospel Mission's "Search and Rescue Program" on July 14, learning that an abduction had occurred just hours later reminded him of Gary Ridgway, the Green River serial killer, who terrorized the region in the 1980s. Ridgway picked up some of his victims, many of them sex workers, along the same stretch of Aurora.

One of Ridgway's victims, Mary Bridgett Meehan, 19, was a classmate of Jenner.

"My fervent hope is that this story can help someone to do something about all the prostitution that is on northern Aurora Avenue in Seattle," Jenner wrote in an email to elected officials Wednesday.

A feud between a patriarch and a militia leader adds to the woes of Iraqi Christians

By ABBY SEWELL and SALAR SALIM Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — Iraqi Christians have struggled since the Nineveh plains, their historic homeland of rolling hills dotted with wheat and barley fields, were wrested back from Islamic State extremists six years ago.

Although the threat from IS has receded, some towns are still mostly rubble. There are few inhabited homes or basic services, including water. Many Christians have given up and left for Europe, Australia or the United States. Others are trying to follow.

Now the shrinking religious minority that was also violently targeted by al-Qaida before the rise of IS has been rocked by yet another crisis in the form of a political showdown between two influential Christian figures — a Vatican-appointed cardinal and a militia leader, with land and influence at the core of the drama.

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with U.S. sanctions for his alleged involvement in human rights abuses, including cutting off a captive's ear. Al-Kildani denied the allegations and accused the international community of being ungrateful after his group's role in the fight against IS.

He accused the Kurdish Democratic Party — the ruling party in the Kurdish region and a rival of the Iraqi president's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Party — and the United States of engineering Sako's withdrawal from Baghdad for political reasons.

For some Christians, the drama is overshadowed by more pressing problems.

As Baghdad resident Anan al-Dawi left a sparsely attended Mass on Sunday, her main concern was a recent power outage in the scorching summer heat. She struck a diplomatic tone regarding the feud between Sako and al-Kildani.

Although physically absent, she said, Sako "lives in all of our hearts." As for al-Kildani's group, she said: "I serve the country in my way. You serve it in yours, and they are also serving their country."

Back in the Nineveh plains, in the town of Batnaya, patrolled by members of Kildani's militia, Lawrence Sabah owns a small factory where he makes mop handles out of wood imported from Russia. Sabah did not share his opinion on Sako or al-Kildani, but he had other complaints.

"There are no services, even the water sometimes doesn't come, and 70 or 80 percent of the houses were destroyed," he said. He is hoping to join his parents and siblings, who have resettled in California.

Some 8 kilometers (5 miles) to the north, in Kurdish-controlled territory, Raad Ekram owns an electrical supply store in the sparsely populated town of Telskof.

When his family was displaced from the village to the city of Dohuk, Ekram believes he got short shrift from both the Iraqi government and the church.

"We never saw the patriarch," he said. "Of course, I don't accept what happened to him ... and I don't accept for him to be harmed." But the patriarch "didn't do everything he should have done for us."

He is encouraging his children to seek their fortunes abroad.

"There's nothing left in Iraq," he said, "especially for the Christians."

Testimony from Hunter Biden associate provides new insight into their business dealings

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Focusing on the Bidens rather than Donald Trump's federal court appearance, House Republicans released a transcript Thursday of their interview with Hunter Biden's former business associate detailing overseas financial dealings by the president's son.

The more than five-hour closed-door interview with Devon Archer by the House Oversight Committee, released hours before Trump's appearance to face a third list of charges, provides fresh insight into how President Joe Biden's youngest son used his relationship with his father, who was then vice president, to court foreign investors. Archer said Hunter Biden was using the "illusion of access" in Washington.

Republicans on the panel hope to use their work to prod impeachment proceedings against the president. However, though pressed repeatedly, Archer offered no tangible evidence that Joe Biden's role in his son's work was more than saying hello during their daily family calls.

"You know, Hunter spoke to his dad every day, right?" Archer said to committee members and staff on Monday. "And so in certain circumstances, when you're in — you know, if his dad calls him at dinner and he picks up the phone, then there's a conversation."

He added, "And the, you know, the conversation is generally about the weather and, you know, what it's like in Norway or Paris or wherever he may be."

Release of the more than 140-page transcript is the start of what is expected to be a long and tangled Republican-led probe into Hunter Biden's business dealings as he hopscotched the globe using what critics call the illusion of proximity to power to fund a lavish lifestyle for himself and his associates. Three committees are looking at Hunter Biden so far, and Republicans are pushing ahead on several lines of inquiry.

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Archer testified that over the span of their decade-long business relationship, Hunter Biden put his father on the phone around 20 times while in the company of associates but “never once spoke about any business dealings.”

At one point, Archer was asked point blank: “Are you aware of any wrongdoing by Vice President Biden?” He responded, “No, I’m not aware of any.”

Overall, the transcript portrays the president’s son as capitalizing on his father’s name, but not necessarily promising or delivering any influence that would rise to a questionable level or approach wrongdoing.

Still, Republicans have long seen Archer, who served with Hunter Biden on the board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma, as a key witness in their search to directly connect the president to his son’s various international business transactions.

Rep. James Comer, Republican chair of Oversight Committee, issued a subpoena to Archer in June, saying he “played a significant role in the Biden family’s business deals abroad, including but not limited to China, Russia, and Ukraine.” He said Archer’s testimony would be critical to the committee’s investigation.

And while there was no evidence directly tying Hunter Biden’s financial dealings to his father, Archer’s testimony raised new questions about the ways in which the 53-year-old used the “Biden brand” to build his multimillion dollar international businesses.

“He was getting paid a lot of money, and I think, you know, he wanted to show value,” Archer testified, adding the younger Biden was not “overt” about his relationship with his father.

“But I think he would — you know, given the brand, I think he would look to, you know, to get the leverage from it,” Archer said, adding, “I think it’s more defensive, you know, defensive leverage that, that the value is there in his work.”

Asked what value he brought to Burisma, Archer replied, “The value that Hunter Biden brought to it was having — you know, there was — the theoretical was corporate governance, but obviously, given the brand, that was a large part of the value. I don’t think it was the sole value, but I do think that was a key component of the value.”

Rep. Andy Biggs, a Republican member of the Oversight Committee who attended the interview, portrayed the testimony about the “Biden brand” as implicating the the president directly. “I think we should do an impeachment inquiry,” the Arizona lawmaker told reporters as he exited the interview Monday.

Comer agreed, saying in a statement Thursday that Archer’s testimony confirmed, “Joe Biden was ‘the brand’ that his son sold around the world to enrich the Biden family.” When pushed on it later, Archer clarified that “the brand” that brought Hunter Biden value with international clients was the broader, Washington access, which included his previous lobbying work.

“D.C. was the brand,” he testified to a line of questioning by Biggs.

Nonetheless, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy recently said Republicans may need to launch an impeachment inquiry to dig deeper.

But the top Democrat on the Oversight panel, Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, said the transcript proves “once again” that Republicans cannot produce any evidence of wrongdoing by President Biden.

He called the effort a “desperate effort to distract from Donald Trump’s third indictment and the overwhelming evidence of his persistent efforts to undermine American democracy.”

In Niger, US seeks to hang on to its last, best counterterrorist outpost in West Africa

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ten days into a coup in Niger, life has become more challenging for U.S. forces at a counterterrorism base in a region of West Africa known as the world’s epicenter of terrorism.

Flights in and out of the country have been curtailed as coup leaders require Americans to seek permission for each flight. Fuel shortages mean the U.S. commander must sign off whenever an aircraft is refueled.

And yet, as several European countries evacuate Niger, the Biden administration is showing itself intent on staying. It sees Niger as the United States’ last, best counterterrorism outpost — and until the coup,

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a promising democracy — in an unstable region south of the Sahara Desert.

Abandoning it risks not only a surge in jihadist groups, but even greater influence by Russia's Wagner mercenary group.

While some European governments shut embassies and evacuated their citizens on military flights this week, as scattered anti-Western protests broke out following the coup, U.S. diplomats sent home nonessential staff and some family this week but stayed on.

"The U.S. Embassy is open. We intend for it to remain open," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters in Washington.

President Joe Biden, in a statement Thursday, called for the Nigerien presidential guards who are holding democratically elected President Mohammed Bazoum to release him and immediately restore Niger's "hard-earned democracy."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who praised Niger as a "model of resilience, a model of democracy, and a model of cooperation" when he visited in March, has been calling Niger's captive president almost daily, affirming U.S. support for his safety and return to power.

In an opinion piece published late Thursday in *The Washington Post*, Bazoum urged the U.S. and others to help Niger restore its constitutional order. He warned that otherwise the "entire central Sahel region could fall to Russian influence via the Wagner Group" and Islamic extremists would take advantage of Niger's instability.

"They will ramp up their efforts to target our youths with hateful anti-Western indoctrination, turning them against the very partners who are helping us build a more hopeful future," the president wrote.

As the military overthrow stretches into its second week, U.S. officials refuse to formally call it a coup, saying they retain hope of a return to civilian government.

The firm U.S. stance in Niger is in contrast to its response to other recent international crises and armed takeovers. That includes in nearby Sudan, when fighting erupted between two rival generals in April. Then, American diplomats and security forces were among the first foreigners to shut down operations in Sudan and fly out.

The 2021 U.S. retreat from Afghanistan, itself an important territory for U.S. counterterrorism operations, signaled an administration willing to cut deep in paring its security obligations to focus attention on a main challenge, from China.

U.S. officials declined to say Thursday how far they would go to restore Niger's government, including whether they would support any use of force by a regional security bloc known as ECOWAS.

"Right now, we're focused on diplomacy," said John Kirby, a spokesman for the National Security Council. "We still believe there's time and space for that. The window is not going to be open forever. We understand that. But we believe it's still open. Diplomacy should still be the first tool of choice."

Both France — Niger's colonial ruler and the object of much of the anti-West anger in Niger — and the United States have threatened to cut off millions of dollars in aid unless the new junta steps down.

But the usual U.S. response of sanctions and isolation when military figures seize power in West Africa is riskier now given the avidity of the jihadists and Kremlin-allied forces.

John Lechner, a West Africa analyst and author on the Wagner Group, sensed more analysts proposing some in-between solution, such as the U.S. retaining security ties in exchange for mere promises of a transition back toward democracy.

U.S. personnel, including members of the 409th Air Expeditionary Group, remain at U.S. counterterror outposts in Niger. That includes Air Base 201 in Agadez, a city of more than 100,000 people on the southern edge of the Sahara, and Air Base 101 in Niamey, Niger's capital.

Americans have made Niger their main regional outposts for wide-ranging patrols by armed drones and other counterterror operations against Islamic extremist movements that over the years have seized territory, massacred civilians and battled foreign armies.

Air Base 201 operates in a sandstorm-whipped, remote area of Niger that serves as a gateway to the Sahara Desert for migrants and traders. In sandstorms, U.S. military personnel wear goggles and face

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masks as the gritty sky turns red or black.

In heat that can reach well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius), U.S. military personnel in their free time have built classrooms for local schools, created weekly English-language discussion groups, helped villagers find a lost 2-year-old girl in a nighttime desert search, challenged a local soccer team to a match, offered residents "American snacks" for International Women's Day and delivered pencils, prayer mats, soap and other aid to communities in what one sergeant described as "the unforgiving environment of Africa."

A civilian aviation notice this week warned that refueling was being limited at Agadez since the coup, with every single gassing up requiring approval from the 409th's commander.

Niger's junta closed the country's airspace on July 27. Since then, the U.S. government has negotiated access for flights on a case-by-case basis, a U.S. official who was not authorized to speak publicly said on the condition of anonymity.

Pentagon spokesman Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said most U.S. forces in Niger are staying inside their military bases and are not conducting training exercises as they normally would.

Americans have invested years and hundreds of millions of dollars in training Nigerien forces.

In 2018, fighters loyal to the Islamic State group ambushed and killed four American service members, four Nigeriens and an interpreter.

West Africa recorded over 1,800 extremist attacks in the first six months of this year, which killed nearly 4,600 people, according to ECOWAS.

The Islamic extremist group Boko Haram operates in neighboring Nigeria and Chad. Along Niger's borders with Mali and Burkina Faso, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and al-Qaida affiliate Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin pose greater threats.

"Affiliates, franchises and branches of IS and AQ are probably most robust in that part of the world, outside of Afghanistan. So, you know, there's a lot at stake," said Colin Clarke, research director at The Soufan Group security and intelligence consultancy.

If the coup in Niger sticks, it will alter what has been U.S. security forces' best partnership in the region and create momentum for those forces to reduce their presence. Especially after any U.S. military drawdown, domestic turmoil from the coup could draw Niger's troops away from the country's borders, allowing jihadist groups to make further inroads into Niger.

Russia's Wagner Group mercenaries already are a force in neighboring Mali and the nearby Central African Republic, supporting and protecting anti-Western governments. Wagner forces usually take a share of countries' mineral resources in return. In Niger, the country's notable resource is high-grade uranium ore.

Wagner forces are notoriously bad at fighting Islamic extremists, with scorched-earth tactics that only draw civilians to the jihadists' side, Clarke said.

And when Wagner is done extracting gold and other resources from a country, "they're out, right? And the situation is then fourfold worse, and who's there to clean it up?" he said.

Congressional delegation to tour blood-stained halls where Parkland school massacre happened

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Nine members of Congress are expected to tour the blood-stained and bullet-pocked halls at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Friday, shortly before ballistics technicians reenact the massacre that left 14 students and three staff members dead.

Few have been inside the three-story building since the Valentine's Day 2018 shooting. The structure looms over the campus, locked behind a chain-link fence for use as evidence in last year's penalty trial for the shooter.

There is broken glass on the floor, along with wilted roses, deflated balloons and discarded gifts. Opened textbooks and laptop computers remain on students' desks — at least those that weren't toppled during

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the chaos.

In one classroom, there is an unfinished chess game one of the slain students had been playing, the pieces unmoved. The Associated Press was one of five media outlets allowed to tour the building after shooter Nikolas Cruz's jury went through.

The shooting, which sparked a nationwide movement for gun control, traumatized the South Florida community. Cruz, a 24-year-old former Stoneman Douglas student, pleaded guilty in 2021 and was sentenced to life in prison.

Florida Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz, who organized the tour with Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, said he expects the event to have "a profound impact" on the six Democrats and three Republicans who belong to the House School Safety and Security Caucus. They will be joined by Cruz's prosecutors and members of the victims' families.

This will be the first time a congressional delegation has toured the site of a mass shooting, Moskowitz said.

"When you watch something like this on TV, you're a thousand feet away — they show a picture of the building," said Moskowitz, who is a Stoneman Douglas graduate. "You don't see the impact that the shooting had on the families ... or the impact on a community when a school becomes a war zone."

After the tour ends, the caucus members and families will go to a nearby hotel to discuss school safety issues. Moskowitz said he thinks it will take time for the congressional members to take everything in emotionally and intellectually.

"You're not going to walk through this and then get out a pen and paper and start writing down your policy ideas," he said. "But we have got to figure out how no other families become part of this exclusive club no one wants to belong to."

After the members leave, ballistics experts will fire up to 139 shots of live ammunition during a reenactment. The experts will fire from the same spots as Cruz, with an identical AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle, and the bullets will be caught by a safety device. The test at the school, which is closed for summer break, is expected to take several hours.

Technicians outside the building will record the sound of the gunfire, seeking to capture what the Broward County deputy assigned to the school, Scot Peterson, heard during the six-minute attack.

The reenactment is part of a lawsuit by the victims' families and the wounded that accuses Peterson of failing in his duty to protect them and their loved ones.

Peterson, who worked for the Broward County Sheriff's Office and is named in the lawsuit, said he didn't hear all the shots and could not pinpoint their origin because of echoes. He got within feet of the building's door and drew his gun, but backed away and stood next to an adjoining building for 40 minutes, making radio calls. He has said he would have charged into the building if he knew the shooter's location.

Families of the victims who filed the lawsuit contend Peterson knew Cruz's location, but retreated out of cowardice and in violation of his duty to protect their loved ones.

Peterson, 60, was acquitted in June of felony child neglect and other criminal charges for failing to act, the first U.S. trial of a law enforcement officer for conduct during an on-campus shooting.

The burden of proof is lower in the civil lawsuit. Circuit Judge Carol-Lisa Phillips allowed the reenactment, but made clear she was not ruling on whether the recording will be played at trial. That will have to be argued later, she said. It is likely Peterson's attorneys will oppose the attempt.

No trial date has been set. The families and wounded are seeking unspecified damages.

After Friday, the Broward school district says it will begin demolishing the building.

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The dispute adds to the woes of Iraqi Christians, who have often felt sidelined in the political order. A 2021 visit by Pope Francis provided a glimmer of hope that quickly faded.

Meanwhile, the Christian population has plummeted. The number of Christians in Iraq today is estimated at 150,000, compared to 1.5 million in 2003. Iraq's total population is more than 40 million.

The political tension rose last month when Cardinal Louis Sako withdrew from his headquarters in Baghdad to northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region after Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid revoked a decree recognizing his position as patriarch of the Chaldeans, Iraq's largest Christian denomination and one of the Catholic Church's eastern rites.

Sako said he will not return to Baghdad until his recognition is reinstated. His departure added to the feeling of helplessness among many Christians.

"Of course, this affects us psychologically," said Sura Salem, a Christian social activist in Baghdad. "You feel like a family without a father."

Christians staged a small protest in Baghdad over Sako's departure, but Salem said "listening to the voice of the Christians is the last concern" of Iraqi leaders.

Sako blames a campaign against him by Rayan al-Kildani, a fellow Chaldean Christian who formed a militia called the Babylon Brigades that fought against IS and still patrols much of the Nineveh plains.

The group is affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces, a collection of primarily Shiite, Iran-backed militias. Its associated political party, the Babylon Movement, won four of five Christian-designated seats in Iraq's 2021 parliamentary elections.

Sako believes al-Kildani is angling to take over Christian endowments and properties. Al-Kildani has made similar allegations about Sako.

"I have stood up to this militia and others who wanted to take over what rightfully belongs to the Christians," Sako told The Associated Press, days after arriving in Irbil to a warm welcome from Kurdish officials. "Of course, no one defends Christians other than the church."

In Baghdad's upscale Mansour neighborhood, al-Kildani was busy building political alliances.

On a recent afternoon, several couches in the palatial lobby of his party headquarters were occupied by well-dressed women wearing hijabs, beneath a painting of the Last Supper and a portrait of al-Kildani.

One by one, the women entered the inner office, each one emerging with a gift bag. One of the visitors explained that they were political candidates interested in running on al-Kildani's list in Mosul in December's provincial elections.

After the visitors departed, a smiling and courtly al-Kildani made his entrance.

He insisted that he had no role in the withdrawal of the patriarch's decree and dismissed allegations that he was seeking to seize church lands.

"I am the son of this church, and it is my duty to respect it, but it is unfortunate when a clergyman accuses someone without proof," he said.

Al-Kildani has accused Sako of selling off church properties, allegations the patriarch denies, and he has filed a lawsuit against Sako alleging slander. But al-Kildani said he is ready to meet with Sako to reconcile.

Sako rejected the suggestion. Al-Kildani "has a militia, and his loyalty is not to the church," the patriarch said. "He is not a respectable person."

The Iraqi president has downplayed his revocation of Sako's recognition as bureaucratic housekeeping, claiming it did not diminish the patriarch's legal or religious status.

The Vatican has remained largely silent. Its embassy in Baghdad said in a statement that the Iraqi Constitution guarantees that the heads of churches can administer church properties.

A senior Vatican official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment to the media, said the decree was unnecessary given the constitutional guarantees. He said the Holy See did not want to get involved in the dispute but had invited Sako to tamp down tensions with the Iraqi authorities for the sake of Iraqi Christians.

The United States sided with Sako. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said last month that the U.S. is concerned that Sako's position "is under attack" by a militia leader who in 2019 was slapped

White ex-officers in Mississippi plead guilty to racist assault on 2 Black men during raid

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press
JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Six former Mississippi police officers, including some calling themselves “The Goon Squad,” pleaded guilty Thursday to a racist assault on two Black men that ended with an officer shooting one man in the mouth.

The officers, who are all white, entered a house without a warrant on Jan. 24, assaulting the men with a sex toy and using stun guns and other objects to abuse them over a roughly 90-minute period, court documents show. After one victim was shot and wounded in a “mock execution” that went awry, documents say the officers conspired to plant and tamper with evidence instead of providing medical aid.

The Justice Department launched its civil rights probe in February. The Mississippi attorney general’s office announced Thursday it had filed state charges against the six former officers, including assault, conspiracy and obstruction of justice.

Five former Rankin County Sheriff’s Department employees pleaded guilty, including Christian Dedmon, Hunter Elward, Brett McAlpin, Jeffrey Middleton and Daniel Opdyke. Joshua Hartfield, a former Richland police officer who was off duty when he participated in the raid, also pleaded guilty.

Dedmon, Elward and Opdyke also pleaded guilty to three federal felony offenses for a separate incident on Dec. 4. Prosecutors said Dedmon beat a white man, used a Taser on him and fired a gun near his head to coerce a confession, while Elward and Opdyke failed to intervene.

“The defendants in this case tortured and inflicted unspeakable harm on their victims,” U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said, adding they “egregiously violated the civil rights of citizens who they were supposed to protect.”

The civil rights charges come after an investigation by The Associated Press linked the deputies to at least four violent encounters with Black men since 2019 that left two dead and another with lasting injuries.

U.S. law enforcement brutality has come under increased scrutiny following the 2020 killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and the January beating death of Tyre Nichols after a traffic stop in Memphis, Tennessee.

Kristen Clarke, who heads the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, said the Mississippi officers “caused harm to the entire community who feel that they can’t trust the police officers who are supposed to serve them.”

Court documents say the officers took on the Goon Squad nickname “because of their willingness to use excessive force and not to report it.”

The victims, Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker, filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against Rankin County in June seeking \$400 million in damages. The victims are identified in documents only by their initials, but Jenkins and Parker have discussed the episode publicly.

The former officers, shackled at their wrists and feet, walked into the courthouse with family members and federal marshals took all six into custody. The defense attorneys did not comment on their clients’ behavior during the court appearance.

“They became the criminals they swore to protect us from,” U.S. Attorney Darren LaMarca said. “Now, they’ll be treated as the criminals as they are.”

U.S. District Judge Tom Lee said the men will be sentenced in mid-November. Dedmon and Elward each face a maximum sentence of 120 years plus life in prison and \$2.75 million in fines. Hartfield faces a possible sentence of 80 years and \$1.5 million, McAlpin faces 90 years and \$1.75 million, Middleton faces 80 years and \$1.5 million, and Opdyke could be sentenced to 100 years with a \$2 million fine.

The men are scheduled to plead guilty to the state charges on Aug. 14, said Mary-Helen Wall, a deputy state attorney general.

The officers initially went to the home in Braxton because a white neighbor complained Black people were staying with a white woman who owned the house. The documents say Parker was a longtime friend of the homeowner and was helping care for her.

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Officers used racist slurs against the two men during the raid and “warned them to stay out of Rankin County and go back to Jackson or ‘their side’ of the Pearl River — areas with higher concentrations of Black residents,” the documents say.

Elward shoved a gun into Jenkins’ mouth and fired, court documents say. The bullet lacerated Jenkins’ tongue and broke his jaw before exiting his neck.

Before the raid, the officers agreed to enter without a warrant if they could avoid being spotted by the home’s security cameras. They also planned to use excessive force but not to cause visible injuries to the men’s faces so there would be “no bad mugshots,” the documents say.

The deputies threw eggs on the handcuffed victims and forced them to lie on their backs while pouring milk, alcohol and chocolate syrup down their mouths. They forced the men to strip naked and shower to remove the evidence.

The officers also repeatedly electrocuted the victims with stun guns to compare whether the sheriff’s department or police department weapons were more powerful. One deputy, Middleton, offered to plant an unregistered firearm at the scene.

Court documents identified Opdyke and Dedmon as the suspects who assaulted the two men with the sex toy.

Despite recurring instances of police corruption and brutality, most officers are doing their jobs properly, said Keith Taylor, a criminal justice professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a former New York City police officer.

“In this situation, you have, of course, racism and just the inhumanity that exhibited itself in officers’ behavior,” Taylor said.

Rankin County Sheriff Bryan Bailey announced on June 27 that five deputies involved in the episode had been fired or resigned. Hartfield was later revealed to be the sixth officer and also was fired.

Bailey on Thursday said he first learned everything that happened to Jenkins and Parker when he read unsealed court documents.

“This is the most horrible incident of police brutality I’ve learned of over my whole career, and I’m ashamed it happened at this department,” Bailey said.

Malik Shabazz, an attorney representing Jenkins and Parker, thanked the Justice Department in a statement Thursday from Black Lawyers for Justice.

“These guilty pleas are historic for justice against rogue police torture in Rankin County and all over America,” Shabazz said. “Today is truly historic for Mississippi and for civil and human rights in America.”

A baby was found in the rubble of a US raid in Afghanistan. But who exactly was killed and why?

By RIAZAT BUTT, MARTHA MENDOZA, CLAIRE GALOFARO and JULIET LINDERMAN Associated Press
The Afghan villager was afraid the American soldiers might come. And one cool night in fall, as his children lay asleep, helicopters roared overhead.

At the first sound of gunshots, he yelled for his wife and 10 children to take cover. His young daughter grabbed her sleeping infant sister off the bed. Their mud compound exploded, and a blast sent a huge shock through the home.

“My small sister fell away from my arms,” the girl, now a teenager, whispered, so quietly she could barely be heard above the breeze. “The wind blew her out of my hands.”

Today, what exactly happened that night is at the center of a bitter international custody dispute over an orphaned baby found amid the rubble. The high-profile legal battle pits an Afghan family against an American one, and has drawn responses from the White House and the Taliban.

The Afghan government and the International Committee of the Red Cross determined that the baby belonged to this Afghan villager. Friends and family say he was a farmer, not a militant. The Red Cross found surviving relatives, and united her with them.

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However, a U.S. Marine attorney, Maj. Joshua Mast, believed he should get the girl instead. He insists that the child is the stateless orphan of foreign fighters who were living in an al-Qaida compound, and convinced a rural Virginia judge to grant him an adoption from 7,000 miles away.

Were it not for this little girl, now 4 years old, the events that began on the night of September 5, 2019, in this remote, impoverished region might have remained locked away among clandestine stories of the thousands of raids the American and Afghan militaries carried out during the long war. But once-secret documents, now filed in court records, reveal details that thrust this raid into an ongoing controversy over who the military killed when they blew down walls in the middle of the night in Afghanistan, if those people were fighters or civilians, and whether the military ever tried to find out.

The Mast family has submitted a summary of the raid in a federal court case, an account Joshua Mast helped create after he said he "personally read every page of the 150+ classified documents" on the operation. The summary describes how as many as six enemy fighters were killed and possibly one civilian. The only child the document mentions is the injured baby.

But survivors and villagers who pulled bodies from the rubble told The Associated Press that more than 20 people were killed that night. Among them were this local farmer, his wife and five of their children, ages 4 to 15. The villagers said that after the raid, they also found four more of the farmer's children — three girls and a boy — covered in dirt, crying amid flames and ruins.

Attorneys for the federal government said the summary the Mast family submitted in court was written on "purported" military letterhead and "does not appear to have been created or endorsed by the Department of Defense." Nonetheless, they asked the court to seal it because they claim it contains government information the public should not see.

"The 'mission summary' document was created by Major Mast in 2019 for use in his efforts to adopt the Afghan child, using his access to United States government information that he obtained through his Department of Defense employment, but does not necessarily reflect accurate or complete information," a Defense Department official told the AP.

The military refuses to talk about its own account of the raid, and asked the AP to instead use a redacted version that blacks out certain details, including any reference to civilian deaths. Several soldiers involved in the raid, who have testified in locked-door state court hearings about what happened there, declined to comment, and what they said on the witness stand remains sealed.

The total cost of the war in civilian lives is impossible to pin down. The Defense Department estimates 48,000 Afghan civilians were killed and at least 75,000 injured between 2001 and 2021, though the agency acknowledges the true toll is likely significantly higher.

Night raids have long been a particularly controversial tactic, said Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. Military investigations into who was killed in night raids were rare, and even more rarely made public. Gossman said a representative of the U.S. military told her American soldiers hardly ever returned to the scene of a raid to see if civilians were killed.

"They said to us, 'We can't, we can't go back there because we'd be a target,'" Gossman recalled. "But then how do you ever know?"

The AP spoke with 12 villagers who described what happened on the night of Sept. 5, 2019, including four who said they were the orphan's siblings and uncles. The AP has agreed not to name the village or the family out of fear of tribal conflict and retaliation from the Taliban, who now rule the country. But neighbors said they never saw anyone return to account for the dead and injured, including the children, or to verify if they were militants.

The farmer's brother-in-law wept as he walked around the site of the raid, pointing out where he had found his surviving nephews and nieces and the mutilated corpses of his loved ones. He showed the AP where they lived, where they made fires, where they sat, where they ate. The farmer was around 55 or 60, grew mung beans, corn and wheat, and was poor but generous enough to share any money he had, the brother-in-law said.

"Now that I come here and look at these places, they do not leave my eyes," he said. "My heart is very

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sad.”

THE FOREIGNERS NEXT DOOR

Here in this rugged desert, families live among the ruins of a 20-year war — rusted tanks, bombed-out houses, bullet-riddled buildings.

Dust kicks up from the wheels of motorcycles on dirt paths, where squat mud homes blend into mountains that stretch for miles in every direction. It is a hard life: There are no paved roads, no running water or electricity, no bathrooms or cell service.

While locals said their tiny village was not targeted by the American military before September 2019, they feared the air strikes, night raids and fierce fighting decimating communities around them. Many raids happened in places like this — hard-to-reach outposts, far from city-based media outlets and human rights organizations that might look into civilian deaths.

About 200 people scratch out a living raising animals and farming on the green fertile patch of land alongside the river. The farmer and his family tended to their goats and sheep in the courtyard of their home, villagers said.

The home was a windowless one-story compound of mud and straw. Like many in this conservative region, women stayed within the walls for most of their lives.

Years and ages can be difficult to calculate in Afghanistan, which uses different calendars than much of the world, but neighbors said the farmer and his family had lived there for a long time.

Neighbor Abdul Khaliq said he had known the farmer for more than 20 years, and described him as kind and amiable. “He was a very good person,” Khaliq said.

The farmer’s wife was younger, around 40, and they’d been married for about 25 years. She was the daughter of an imam at a local mosque, and remained close to her family. She had a sense of humor — her brother said she would laugh as she teased him for not visiting often enough.

There is no way the AP could independently verify who the baby’s parents were. Identification documents such as birth certificates aren’t issued in this remote region — especially for women and girls — and few have cell phones or cameras. The AP has located no records of the birth of the farmer’s baby or photographs of her with the family before the raid.

The Afghan government claimed the child, and the U.S. government agreed that the girl, who is referred to in court records as “Baby Doe,” belonged to an Afghan family: “Baby Doe is a citizen of Afghanistan with biological family in Afghanistan,” attorneys for the federal government wrote in court filings.

But the Masts strongly disagree. Several foreign families arrived in the village around 2017 and settled into a home next to the Afghan farmer and his family, neighbors said. These men, women and children shared a wall, but kept to themselves and spoke an unfamiliar language, villagers told the AP.

The light-skinned, bearded foreigners were a source of gossip. Some neighbors speculated they were from another, faraway Afghan province, or Turkey, or “the West.”

Local mechanic Abdul Rahim, 25, said the foreigners often brought their cars, trucks and motorcycles to be fixed at his shop. No matter where they came from, one thing was clear to Rahim: They liked their weapons. They’d clean their guns while he fixed their cars.

“I tried very hard to talk to them, but I couldn’t understand the language,” Rahim said. “There was never a fight or quarrel with them.”

In Afghanistan, hospitality is of foremost importance, and nobody confronted the visiting foreigners. The locals said they were friendly, but cautious.

The farmer told his brother-in-law he was considering moving his family to another relative’s house nearby. He was frightened that the military might come for the foreigners so close to his home.

“THERE WERE RED FIRES”

The day of the raid unfolded like any other; the family fed corn and grass to the animals in the morning and cooked potatoes for lunch. They had no idea that U.S. and Afghan forces were loading up in helicopters to head toward their village.

The soldiers were targeting three men in two compounds believed to be al-Qaida-affiliated fighters from neighboring Turkmenistan, according to the summary the Masts submitted in court. As soldiers ap-

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proached, they called out, offering the people inside a chance to surrender, according to the summary. One man was detained.

Rahim, the local mechanic, said he had just fallen asleep under a tree outside a friend's home when he heard someone shouting in Pashto, "stop, don't run." Awakening beside him, Mohammad Zaman remembers door-to-door knocks with orders "not to move" and "not to run." The friends lay still, even as wind from a helicopter shook the branches and leaves above them, Zaman said.

Then gunfire erupted. A barricaded shooter opened fire on the attacking troops, according to the summary. He was killed, but there were multiple shooters firing: a barrage of gunshots and grenades continued to pour out of the building. Attorneys representing Mast family members say the Americans suffered numerous injuries.

Joshua Mast was not at the raid. In emails filed in federal court, he said the baby was in the room with the fighters shooting at soldiers. He wrote that her biological father blew himself up with a suicide vest, just a few feet away from her.

U.S. troops blasted a hole in a wall and tossed in grenades, according to the summary. Next door to the foreigners' home, the farmer's family was woken up by the noise, the surviving children said. The son said his father shouted at the children to get to another room, but he didn't know where he should run. His sister grabbed the baby.

The blast that blew apart the walls of their home was so powerful that to this day, villagers believe the military dropped a bomb.

"Get out of this place," the sister heard her father shout. Then came gunshots, she said. His shouting stopped. She dropped the baby.

The mangled bodies of her father and siblings lay on the floor, the girl said. Their father's motorcycle exploded into flames that spread and engulfed them.

"There were soldiers, there were bombs....there were red fires," said the sister, her eyes darting, her voice shaking.

She burned her shoulder, hand and head. She ran and hid among the animals until the shooting stopped.

Neighbors said the assault lasted until early the next morning. Green smoke lingered in the air, along with the smell of gunpowder and burned bodies.

Soldiers found an injured woman and tried to save her life, but couldn't, Mast's summary says. They spotted a wounded baby nearby and assumed the dead woman was her mother.

The American soldiers took the baby.

A MISSING BABY GIRL

After the helicopters flew away and it grew quiet, neighbors say they ventured out of their homes and walked toward the flames. They called out, doubting anyone had survived.

That's when they said they heard the cries.

Four of the farmer's children had survived, so covered with dust and dirt they were almost unrecognizable, said neighbor Rahim. They staggered out of what once was their home, reduced to flames and ashes littered with charred corpses and limbs. It was difficult to tell who was alive and who was dead, Rahim said.

A little boy had been hit in his belly by a metal fragment, and wailed that his family was killed, his uncle remembers.

The stench from the bodies was overwhelming, so villagers scooped up the children and drove the injured to a government hospital. The boy would remain there for a month.

"It was a very bad scene. There was nothing left," Rahim said. "The houses were blown away, and every dead body was under the soil."

As neighbors wept and pulled bodies from the rubble, people poured in from neighboring towns to help, villagers recalled. Soon everyone from the home was accounted for, either living or dead — except for one. They could not find the baby girl.

They dug through the dirt floor of the home with shovels and their hands. They moved furniture and soil. They were worried that surely the baby — only 40 days old — was stuck under the earth or the debris and just too small to find.

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But she was gone.

A CHILD'S FATE IN LIMBO

The farmer, his wife and their five children were buried in a row in the family graveyard, where generations of kin had been laid to rest. Villagers said more than 100 people came to help dig their graves in the hard ground.

They buried the foreigners — more than a dozen men, women and children — in two other cemeteries.

The farmer's family says they were not fighters. If true, the American military might never have known that — during raids, they believed they were going in on hostile operations, and often assumed everyone there was a threat, said Erica Gaston, a human rights researcher who worked for years in Afghanistan with several advocacy groups.

"Often that creates a bias where there's just a presumption that the people that were hit were, you know, quote unquote, all bad guys," said Gaston. "And civilians very often tell a different story....that they hit the wrong house."

In the village, survivors continued to search for the farmer's missing baby, visiting a U.S. military base, going to government offices and talking to the International Committee of the Red Cross. They heard a baby had been taken by the Americans to a military hospital.

For months, as the girl was treated for a skull fracture, burns and a broken leg, the Afghan government and the Red Cross worked to confirm who she belonged to. In the end, they decided she was the farmer's daughter.

The U.S. State Department wrote in an email to AP earlier this month that it trusted the finding of the Red Cross— "through a family trace and verification process, that the child was Afghan, not 'stateless.'" So when the government of Afghanistan requested the child be transferred to its custody to be returned to her family, the U.S. complied.

"We understood at the time that all appropriate procedures had been followed under Afghan law, and that remains our understanding," the State Department wrote.

The Masts argue the Afghan government wrongly linked the child to the family without DNA testing, pictures of her with this family or any documentation connecting her to them.

Joshua Mast's brother, lawyer Richard Mast, is now named in a federal lawsuit filed by the Afghan family that alleges the Masts fraudulently claimed the child was "stateless" in their quest to adopt her. Richard Mast's lawyer, David Yerushalmi, questioned why an innocent farmer would be "living in the same compound as heavily armed foreign fighters." He said there is no proof the orphan belonged to the farmer in the first place.

But the Masts' efforts to stop the U.S. government from turning her over failed, and the child was taken to the farmer's brother. Since he couldn't afford to take care of her, he gave her to his son and daughter-in-law, who were better off, educated newlyweds living in the city. They gladly agreed to raise her as their own.

"They are her parents," the uncle told AP.

Over the next 18 months, as she grew to be a toddler in Afghanistan, Joshua Mast did not give up. He convinced a Virginia state court to grant him an adoption. All he needed was to get her on U.S. soil.

Less than two years after the raid, Mast helped the Afghan couple and the toddler flee as the country collapsed and the Taliban took over. Days after they arrived in the U.S., the Masts worked with federal employees at a refugee resettlement camp to take custody of the child. The Afghan couple are suing to get her back, but she remains in limbo.

Joshua Mast, his lawyer and attorneys representing the Afghan couple did not respond to requests for comment.

Meanwhile, in remote Afghanistan, the farmer's surviving family is haunted by all they saw, and all they lost. When his brother-in-law sees his nephew smile, he thinks of how his sister, now dead, would laugh when he teased her.

"God will make him grow," he said, "he will bring life to this house."

The boy continues to struggle and finds it hard to be around other families. When asked if he remem-

bered his parents, he began to cry. He bit his lip and looked away.

The girl who dropped her baby sister is tormented by ghosts. When she speaks to strangers covered in a shawl, she is so small and frail that it seems to swallow her. She fidgets nervously with the hem.

She could speak perfectly before the soldiers came that night, but now she stutters.

"My life is sad, my heart is sad, and I miss my parents," she said. "I see this attack every night...it comes to me in my dreams."

After helping prevent extinctions for 50 years, the Endangered Species Act itself may be in peril

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

SHARON TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — Biologist Ashley Wilson carefully disentangled a bat from netting above a tree-lined river and examined the wriggling, furry mammal in her headlamp's glow. "Another big brown," she said with a sigh.

It was a common type, one of many Wilson and colleagues had snagged on summer nights in the southern Michigan countryside. They were looking for increasingly scarce Indiana and northern long-eared bats, which historically migrated there for birthing season, sheltering behind peeling bark of dead trees.

The scientists had yet to spot either species this year as they embarked on a netting mission.

"It's a bad suggestion if we do not catch one. It doesn't look good," said Allen Kurta, an Eastern Michigan University professor who has studied bats for more than 40 years.

The two bat varieties are designated as imperiled under the Endangered Species Act, the bedrock U.S. law intended to keep animal and plant types from dying out. Enacted in 1973 amid fear for iconic creatures such as the bald eagle, grizzly bear and gray wolf, it extends legal protection to 1,683 domestic species.

More than 99% of those listed as "endangered" — on the verge of extinction — or the less severe "threatened" have survived.

"The Endangered Species Act has been very successful," Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said in an Associated Press interview. "And I believe very strongly that we're in a better place for it."

Fifty years after the law took effect, environmental advocates and scientists say it's as essential as ever. Habitat loss, pollution, climate change and disease are putting an estimated 1 million species worldwide at risk.

Yet the law has become so controversial that Congress hasn't updated it since 1992 — and some worry it won't last another half-century.

Conservative administrations and lawmakers have stepped up efforts to weaken it, backed by landowner and industry groups that contend the act stifles property rights and economic growth. Members of Congress try increasingly to overrule government experts on protecting individual species.

The act is "well-intentioned but entirely outdated ... twisted and morphed by radical litigants into a political firefight rather than an important piece of conservation law," said Bruce Westerman, an Arkansas Republican and chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, who in July announced a group of GOP lawmakers would propose changes.

Environmentalists accuse regulators of slow-walking new listings to appease critics and say Congress provides too little funding to fulfill the act's mission.

"Its biggest challenge is it's starving," said Jamie Rappaport Clark, president of the advocacy group Defenders of Wildlife.

Some experts say the law's survival depends on rebuilding bipartisan support, no easy task in polarized times.

"The Endangered Species Act is our best tool to address biodiversity loss in the United States," Senate Environment and Public Works chairman Tom Carper said during a May floor debate over whether the northern long-eared bat should keep its protection status granted in 2022.

"And we know that biodiversity is worth preserving for many reasons, whether it be to protect human health or because of a moral imperative to be good stewards of our one and only planet."

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Despite the Delaware Democrat's plea, the Senate voted to nullify the bat's endangered designation after opponents said disease, not economic development, was primarily responsible for the population decline.

That's an ominous sign, said Kurta the Michigan scientist, donning waders to slosh across the mucky river bottom for the bat netting project in mid-June.

"Its population has dropped 90% in a very short period of time," he said. "If that doesn't make you go on the endangered species list, what's going to?"

TURBULENT HISTORY

It's "nothing short of astounding" how attitudes toward the law have changed, largely because few realized at first how far it would reach, said Holly Doremus, a University of California, Berkeley law professor.

Attention 50 years ago was riveted on iconic animals like the American alligator, Florida panther and California condor. Some had been pushed to the brink by habitat destruction or pollutants such as the pesticide DDT. People over-harvested other species or targeted them as nuisances.

The 1973 measure made it illegal to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect" listed animals and plants or ruin their habitats.

It ordered federal agencies not to authorize or fund actions likely to jeopardize their existence, although amendments later allowed permits for limited "take" — incidental killing — resulting from otherwise legal projects.

The act cleared Congress with what in hindsight appears stunning ease: unanimous Senate approval and a 390-12 House vote. President Richard Nixon, a Republican, signed it into law.

"It was not created by a bunch of hippies," said Rebecca Hardin, a University of Michigan environmental anthropologist. "We had a sense as a country that we had done damage and we needed to heal."

But backlash emerged as the statute spurred regulation of oil and gas development, logging, ranching and other industries. The endangered list grew to include little-known creatures — from the frosted flatwoods salamander to the tooth cave spider — and nearly 1,000 plants.

"It's easy to get everybody to sign on with protecting whales and grizzly bears," Doremus said. "But people didn't anticipate that things they wouldn't notice, or wouldn't think beautiful, would need protection in ways that would block some economic activity."

An early battle involved the snail darter, a tiny Southeastern fish that delayed construction of a Tennessee dam on a river then considered its only remaining home.

The northern spotted owl's listing as threatened in 1990 sparked years of feuding between conservationists and the timber industry over management of Pacific Northwest forestland.

Rappaport Clark, who headed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under President Bill Clinton, said there were still enough GOP moderates to help Democrats fend off sweeping changes sought by hardline congressional Republicans.

"Fast-forward to today, and support has declined pretty dramatically," she said. "The atmosphere is incredibly partisan. A slim Democratic majority in the Senate is the difference between keeping the law on life support and blowing it up."

The Trump administration ended blanket protection for animals newly deemed threatened. It let federal authorities consider economic costs of protecting species and disregard habitat impacts from climate change.

A federal judge blocked some of Trump's moves. The Biden administration repealed or announced plans to rewrite others.

But with a couple of Democratic defections, the Senate voted narrowly this spring to undo protections for a rare grouse known as the lesser prairie chicken as well as the northern long-eared bat. The House did likewise in July.

President Joe Biden threatened vetoes. But to wildlife advocates, the votes illustrate the act's vulnerability — if not to repeal, then to sapping its strength through legislative, agency or court actions.

One pending bill would prohibit additional listings expected to cause "significant" economic harm. Another would remove most gray wolves and grizzly bears — subjects of decades-old legal and political struggles — from the protected list and bar courts from returning them.

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"Science is supposed to be the fundamental principle of managing endangered species," said Mike Leahy, a senior director of the National Wildlife Federation. "It's getting increasingly overruled by politics. This is every wildlife conservationist's worst nightmare."

ELUSIVE MIDDLE GROUND

Federal regulators are caught in a crossfire over how many species the act should protect and for how long — and how to balance that with interests of property owners and industry.

Since the law took effect, 64 of roughly 1,780 listed U.S. species have rebounded enough to be removed, while 64 have improved from endangered to threatened. Eleven have been declared extinct, a label proposed for 23 others, including the ivory-billed woodpecker.

That's a poor showing, said Jonathan Wood, vice president of law and policy with the Property and Environment Research Center, which represents landowners.

The act was supposed to function like a hospital emergency room, providing lifesaving but short-term treatment, Wood said. Instead, it resembles perpetual hospice care for too many species.

But species typically need at least a half-century to recover and most haven't been listed that long, said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director with the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group.

And they often languish a decade or more awaiting listing decisions, worsening their condition and prolonging their recovery, he said. The Fish and Wildlife Service has more than 300 under consideration.

The service "is not getting the job done," Greenwald said. "Part is lack of funding but it's mixed with timidity, fear of the backlash."

Agency officials acknowledge struggling to keep up with listing proposals and strategies for restoring species. The work is complex; budgets are tight. Petitions and lawsuits abound. Congress provides millions to rescue popular animals such as Pacific salmon and steelhead trout while many species get a few thousand dollars annually.

To address the problem and mollify federal government critics, supporters of the act propose steering more conservation money to state and tribal programs. A bill to provide \$1.4 billion annually cleared the House with bipartisan backing in 2022 but fell short in the Senate. Sponsors are trying again.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is using funds from Biden's Inflation Reduction Act to improve strategies for getting species off the list sooner, Director Martha Williams told a House subcommittee in July.

It's also seeking accommodation on another thorny issue: providing enough space where imperiled species can feed, shelter and reproduce.

The act empowers the government to identify "critical habitat" where economic development can be limited. Many early supporters believed public lands and waters — state and national parks and wildlife refuges — would meet the need, said Doremus, the California-Berkeley professor.

But now about two-thirds of listed species occupy private property. And many require permanent care. For example, removing the Kirtland's warbler from the endangered list in 2019 was contingent on continued harvesting and replanting of Michigan jack pines where the tiny songbird nests.

Meeting the rising demand will require more deals with property owners instead of critical habitat designations, which lower property values and breed resentment, said Wood of the landowners group. Incentives could include paying owners or easing restrictions on timber cutting and other development as troubled species improve.

"You can't police your way" to cooperation, he said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service proposed regulatory changes this year to encourage voluntary efforts, hoping they'll keep more species healthy enough to reduce listings. But environmentalists insist voluntary action is no substitute for legally enforceable protections.

"Did the makers of DDT voluntarily stop making it? No," said Greenwald, arguing few landowners or businesses will sacrifice profits to help the environment. "We have to have strong laws and regulations if we want to address the climate and extinction crises and leave a livable planet for future generations."

GRIM PROSPECTS

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Stars and fireflies provided the only natural light on the June night after Michigan biologists Kurta and Wilson extended fine nylon mesh over smoothly flowing River Raisin, 90 minutes west of Detroit. Frogs croaked; crickets chirped. Mayflies — tasty morsels for bats — swarmed in the humid air.

Long feared by people, bats increasingly are valued for gobbling crop-destroying insects and pollinating fruit, giving U.S. agriculture a yearly \$3 billion boost.

"The next time you have some tequila, thank the bat that pollinated the agave plant from which that tequila was made," Kurta said, tinkering with an electronic device that detects bats as they swoop overhead.

Hour after hour crept by. Eight bats fluttered into the nets. The scientists took measurements, then freed them. None were the endangered species they sought.

A month later, Kurta reported that 16 nights of netting at eight sites had yielded 177 bats — but just one Indiana and no northern long-eared specimens.

"Disappointing," he said, "but expected."

Play It Again, Joe. Biden bets that repeating himself is smart politics

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has his zingers ("This is not your father's Republican Party"). He's got patriotism ("This is the United States of America, dammit"). He's got a geometry-based explanation on how to grow the economy ("from the middle out and the bottom up").

Move over, Beyoncé and Taylor Swift. Biden has his own greatest hits and he's keeping them on repeat.

If you've heard one of the president's recent speeches, you've basically heard them all — and you're sure to keep hearing the same refrains in the year-plus leading up to Election Day 2024. People in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah will get to sample the playlist starting Tuesday, when Biden makes a three-day swing through the Southwest.

Biden knows where the country is in the arc of history ("at an inflection point"). He knows what the middle class needs ("a little bit of breathing room"). Did you know his wife, Jill, is from Philadelphia? Yep, he "married a Philly girl" and will be "sleeping alone" if he fails to root for Philadelphia sports teams.

The repetition is a strategic choice — one with a scientific basis in a society that is loaded with distractions. People need to see his TV ads and speeches dozens of times before they truly absorb them, his campaign believes. The president has built a multi-decade political career on repeating the same stories in order to explain the principles behind his policies.

"That's communications 101 — developing a compelling message and repeating it again and again," said White House communications director Ben LaBolt, who noted that marketing has a "rule of seven" in which a customer generally needs to see a message at least seven times before making a purchase.

LaBolt noted that most voters are busy taking their kids to soccer, making breakfast or commuting to their jobs. "They're not consuming news like they're sitting in the White House briefing room — you have to repeat a message over time so that people remember it," he said, noting that this has become increasingly the case in a fractured media environment.

The president has staked his reelection on convincing a wary public that the economy is rock solid because of his policies.

That means Biden is putting his economic pitch on repeat, hoping to break through the daily clutter by delivering his message often enough that voters will recall it and accept it as truth. The White House thinking is that voters will turn out for him if they know that their new bridge, new factory or tax break for an electric vehicle came from his legislative accomplishments.

He's even repeated in speeches the importance of repetition.

"We got to let people know what we've done and how we've done it and why we did it," he recently told donors in Chicago after delivering a speech about "Bidenomics" — a term he has used at least 39 times during the past month in public remarks.

Philly girl Jill Biden has her own estimates for how often her husband deploys one of his other favorite

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phrases about the economy.

"It's the future of our workforce, how we strengthen the economy from the bottom up and the middle out," she said at a recent childcare event. "Joe has said that, I think, a million times."

Close readers of the president's speeches will note that sometimes "middle out" and "bottom up" switch places. The first lady led with "bottom up," while her husband has lately been more of a "middle out" guy.

Repetition has been a time-tested strategy for politicians of all stripes and throughout the ages.

Donald Trump, the former president and current Republican frontrunner for 2024, promised over and over to "build the wall" at the Mexican border. He dubbed his 2016 opponent "Crooked Hillary" and pledged to "drain the swamp" like a mantra. He likes to recite the lyrics to the Al Wilson song "The Snake" like an encore at a concert.

Bill Clinton signaled that he was a young Democrat with an eye to the future by frequently talking about building a "bridge to the 21st Century." Republicans defined Democrats in the 1980s as "tax-and-spend liberals." In his famed "I have a dream" speech, Martin Luther King Jr. used the word "dream" 11 times.

Speaking in the Roman Senate more than 2,100 years ago, Cato the Elder famously ended his speeches with the well-worn line "Carthage must be destroyed." (Roman forces did just that a few years later.)

"Repetition increases retention," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania. "There is no hard and fast rule on number of reiterations needed to produce retention. Concise, vividly phrased messages that employ parallelism and alliteration are more readily remembered."

What Biden is trying to do is a bit more challenging: He's using repetition to try to change voters' decidedly negative views of the economy because cold hard data has not been enough. The low 3.6% unemployment rate and a decline in inflation over the past year to 3% annually has done little to boost his ratings.

Only 24% of U.S. adults described the economy as good in a June survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs. Nearly two-thirds disapprove of how Biden has handled the economy.

"It's hard to get awareness levels up for policy accomplishments," said John Anzalone, Biden's 2020 pollster. Holding out repetition as part of the solution. "At the end of the day, people are going to know a heck of a lot about the roads and water systems and broadband that are being put around America."

Officials at the White House and campaign know Biden's standard stump speech isn't likely to make national news, particularly as his domestic travels pick up along with the campaign. They're more interested in getting local coverage that drives home the idea that his economic policies are having a tangible effect with voters on the ground.

There are early signs that people are starting to feel better about the economy. The Conference Board said Tuesday that consumer confidence has leapt to a two-year high and a key indicator is no longer signaling a recession.

But even with the best lines, repetition is not foolproof — and it can even tip over into annoyance if overdone.

"The liking of the message tends to follow a bell curve," said Juliana Fernandes, a communications professor at the University of Florida. "It's tiredness and boredom actually. If I'm not learning anything new from the message, I'm going to at some point dislike it."

For members of the news media — who can recite many of the president's lines verbatim — overexposure inevitably leads them to play down the very lines that Biden most wants to highlight.

The president acknowledged as much at a June fundraiser in Chevy Chase, Maryland, when he prefaced one of his boilerplate stories by allowing, "I apologize to the press for hearing me say this so many times."

That apology? He's repeated it many times over.

Haitians express skepticism over Kenya's offer to UN to send police to confront gangs

By EVENS SANON and MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI (AP) — Haitians are expressing skepticism over an offer by Kenya to lead an international police force aimed at combatting the gang violence that has wracked the Caribbean nation.

They say the sexual abuse and a devastating cholera outbreak that have accompanied foreign forces in past decades don't inspire much trust. But Haitians also say uncontrolled bloodshed in their country leaves them with few other options.

Florence Casimir, an elementary school teacher, said that while past international interventions have damaged Haiti, their abuses don't compare to the brutality of gangs, which kidnap her students and force parents to pay hefty ransoms.

"It will never be better (than past interventions), but the Haitian people don't have a choice at this point," Casimir said. "The Haitian people can't fight it on their own."

After Premier Minister Ariel Henry urged the world in October to deploy an armed force to fight the gangs, the United Nations has struggled to convince a nation to lead efforts to restore the order in the Caribbean country, in part due to past controversy over peacekeeping missions. There's been little appetite for a U.S.- or U.N.-led force, and the United States unsuccessfully tried to persuade Canada to lead a force.

As the search continued, gang warfare continued to worsen, leading to a wave of hundreds of kidnappings and the emergence of vigilante forces taking justice into their own hands. Today, armed groups control an estimated 80% of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

Kenya has offered to send 1,000 police officers to help train and assist an overwhelmed Haitian police force, saying it hopes to "restore normalcy in the country." This week, the United States said it will put forward a resolution to the U.N. Security Council to authorize the force.

"This is not a traditional peacekeeping force," the U.S. ambassador at the U.N., Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said at a news conference.

Kenya's proposal has sparked debate among Haitians, many of whom distrust international interventions after the failures and abuses of U.N. peacekeeping missions over the decades.

Haitians saw rounds of foreign interventions throughout the 1900s, often a response by nations like the U.S. to political instability in Haiti. In some cases, such missions helped ease chaos and in the 1990s led to the creation of the Haitian National Police.

But successes are often overshadowed by scars that Haitians carry with them from abuses that came with those missions.

A U.N. peacekeeping mission from 2004 to 2017 was plagued with allegations of mass sexual abuse, including claims that peacekeepers raped and impregnated girls as young as 11. Investigations by The Associated Press found evidence of high levels of impunity.

In 2010, sewage runoff from a U.N. peacekeeper camp into the country's biggest river started a cholera epidemic that killed nearly 10,000 people.

"They left a bitter taste in the mouths of the Haitian people," said Valdo Cenè, who sells cooking gas. "Bringing in international forces could mean repeating our history."

This international police force would not be a U.N. force. So if deployed, Kenyan police would be in charge rather than answer to a U.N. force commander as they would be required to do in a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

Haiti's prime minister said Tuesday that he spoke with Kenyan President William Ruto to thank Kenya for the "demonstration of fraternal solidarity." Henry said Kenya plans to send a task force in the coming weeks to assess the mission's operational requirements.

Haitians aren't the only ones questioning the plan. Watch dog groups are raising alarms about the human rights track record of police in Kenya, saying the force may export their abuse.

Police in the East African nation have been long accused of killings and torture, including gunning down civilians during Kenya's COVID-19 curfew. One local group said officers fatally shot more than 30 people

during protests in July, all of them in Kenya's poorest neighborhoods.

Louis-Henri Mars, head of the Haitian grassroots peacekeeping organization Lakou Lapè, echoed those concerns.

"People are puzzled about this," Mars said. "It may just become just another big mess."

While Mars is among many who say a Kenyan force would be an important step to stabilizing Haiti, he expressed hope its deployment will be a temporary effort that paves the way to a longer process of untangling rampant violence in Haiti, such as the kidnapping of an American nurse and her daughter.

Haiti needs to build a stable and trustworthy police force and provide a pathway to restorative justice for victims and former gang members, often young men pulled into the violence around them, Mars said.

Others, like Jerthro Antoine, say Kenya's police can't come soon enough.

The cellphone repairman said he dreams of once again setting foot on one of Haiti's beaches, but violence in his country has gotten so bad that even walking on the street is a risk.

"I feel trapped in my home. Any foreign force in support of Haitian police is more than welcome," Antoine said. "The Haitian people need it, we need a break and to have a life again."

South Korean police pursue suspect in 2nd stabbing attack in 2 days

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A man rammed a car onto a sidewalk Thursday in the South Korean city of Seongnam, then stepped out of the vehicle and began stabbing people at a shopping mall, leaving at least 14 people wounded.

Just hours after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Friday called for "ultra-strong" law enforcement measures in response to that attack, police found themselves chasing the suspect in another stabbing incident at a high school in Daejeon city.

Cho Byeong-tae, an official at the Daejeon metropolitan police department, said the attack at Songchon High School left at least one teacher hurt. He did not identify the victim or provide details about the victim's health.

At least five people were hurt by the car and nine others were stabbed during Thursday's attack in Seongnam that occurred in a crowded leisure district near a subway, according to Yoon Sung-hyun, an official from the southern Gyeonggi provincial police department.

Authorities arrested a 22-year-old suspect at the scene and were questioning him. Police did not identify the man or offer any immediate information about a potential motive.

According to Park Gyeong-won, an official at Gyeonggi's Bundang district police station, the suspect during police interviews talked incoherently and said he was being stalked by an unspecified source. The suspect's family told police he had a history of mental illness.

While the suspect had purchased the two knives he used in the stabbings from a different shopping mall on Wednesday, there isn't clear evidence he planned the attacks in advance, Park said. The attack was South Korea's second mass stabbing attack in a month. Last month, a knife-wielding man stabbed at least four pedestrians on a street in the capital, Seoul, killing one person.

Yoon called for closer monitoring of social media to detect threats, deploying more law enforcement officers for prevention and equipping them with better suppression gear, according to Seoul's presidential office.

An official at Gyeonggi's provincial fire department, Ha Dong-geun, said at least two of those who were wounded after the suspect drove the car onto the sidewalk were hospitalized in critical condition. Among the nine who were stabbed, eight were being treated for injuries seen as serious.

Photos from the scene showed forensic units examining the halls of the AK Plaza, where the stabbings took place. A white Kia hatchback with a broken front window and ruptured front tire could be seen on a sidewalk near the subway station.

South Korea's Kyunghyang Shinmun newspaper published a video on its website that it said was sent

by a witness. The footage showed a man wearing sunglasses and a black hoodie walking up the mall's escalator with an object in his hand.

A witness named Hwang Hee-woon told YTN television that he "heard a sound from the first floor that seemed like a scream, so customers and shop workers were gathering on the rails of the second-floor near the escalator to see what was happening below."

"Suddenly, someone told us the person who committed the crime was coming up to the second floor, so we ran away in panic," he said. He ended up hiding inside a refrigerated storage room with some mall employees.

The National Police Agency held an online meeting Thursday with regional police chiefs to discuss ways to deal with stabbings and other attacks against random targets. Officials discussed increasing nighttime patrols in leisure districts and other crowded areas and strengthening security camera surveillance, according to the agency.

Appeals court allows Biden asylum restrictions to temporarily stay in place as case plays out

REBECCA SANTANA undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — An appeals court Thursday allowed a rule restricting asylum at the southern border to temporarily stay in place. The decision is a major win for the Biden administration, which had argued that the rule was integral to its efforts to maintain order along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The new rule makes it extremely difficult for people to be granted asylum unless they first seek protection in a country they're traveling through on their way to the U.S. or apply online. It includes room for exceptions and does not apply to children traveling alone.

The decision by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals grants a temporary reprieve from a lower court decision that had found the policy illegal and ordered the government to end its use by this coming Monday. The government had gone quickly to the appeals court asking for the rule to be allowed to remain in use while the larger court battles surrounding its legality play out.

The three-judge panel ruled 2-1 in favor of the government's request. They also said they would expedite the hearing for the appeal with both sides expected to send in their arguments to the court by mid-September and a hearing to be held at an unspecified date, meaning a relatively fast timeline to review the case.

Judges William Fletcher and Richard Paez, who were both appointed by President Bill Clinton, ruled in favor of the stay but gave no reason for their decision. Judge Lawrence VanDyke, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, dissented. In his dissent VanDyke seemed to agree with the legality of the rule in theory but said it was little different than previous rules put forward by the Trump administration that were shot down by the same appeals court when Trump was in office. He suggested that the judges had been moved to grant the stay because they feared that if the case went all the way to Supreme Court, that body would have done it instead.

"I wish I could join the majority in granting a stay. It is the right result. But that result, right as it may be, isn't permitted by the outcome-oriented mess we've made of our immigration precedent," VanDyke wrote.

The new asylum rule was put in place back in May. At the time, the U.S. was ending use of a different policy called Title 42, which had allowed the government to swiftly expel migrants without letting them seek asylum. The stated purpose was to protect Americans from the coronavirus.

The administration was concerned about a surge of migrants coming to the U.S. post-Title 42 because the migrants would finally be able to apply for asylum. The government said the new asylum rule was an important tool to control migration.

Rights groups sued, saying the new rule endangered migrants by leaving them in northern Mexico as they waited to score an appointment on the CBP One app the government is using to grant migrants the opportunity to come to the border and seek asylum. The groups argued that people are allowed to seek asylum regardless of where or how they cross the border and that the government app is faulty. They

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also argue that the new asylum rule is essentially a reboot of two previous rules put forward by President Donald Trump that sought to limit asylum — the same point Judge VanDyke alluded to in his dissent.

One of the groups, the American Civil Liberties Union, noted in a news release Thursday that the ruling didn't weigh the legality of the asylum rule and that they were confident they'd ultimately prevail.

"We are pleased the court placed the appeal on an expedited schedule so that it can be decided quickly, because each day the Biden administration prolongs its efforts to preserve its illegal ban, people fleeing grave danger are put in harm's way," said the ACLU's Katrina Eiland, who argued the case.

The groups also have argued that the government is overestimating the importance of the new rule in controlling migration. They say that when the U.S. ended the use of Title 42, it went back to what's called Title 8 processing of migrants. That type of processing has much stronger repercussions for migrants who are deported, such as a five-year bar on reentering the U.S. Those consequences — not the asylum rule — were more important in stemming migration after May 11, the groups argue.

"The government has no evidence that the Rule itself is responsible for the decrease in crossings between ports after Title 42 expired," the groups wrote in court briefs.

But the government has argued that the rule is a fundamental part of its immigration policy of encouraging people to use lawful pathways to come to the U.S. and imposing strong consequences on those who don't. The government stressed the "enormous harms" that would come if it could no longer use the rule.

"The Rule is of paramount importance to the orderly management of the Nation's immigration system at the southwest border," the government wrote.

The government also argued that it was better to keep the rule in place while the lawsuit plays out in the coming months to prevent a "policy whipsaw" whereby Homeland Security staff process asylum seekers without the rule for a while only to revert to using it again should the government ultimately prevail on the merits of the case.

In a statement Thursday, the Department of Homeland Security credited the rule with significantly reducing irregular migration.

"To be clear, we will continue to apply the rule and immigration consequences for those who do not have a lawful basis to remain in the United States," the agency said. "We encourage migrants to ignore the lies of smugglers and use lawful, safe, and orderly pathways."

Both expelled members of 'Tennessee Three' win back their state House seats

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee Reps. Justin Pearson and Justin Jones, who became Democratic heroes as members of the "Tennessee Three," reclaimed their legislative seats Thursday after they were expelled for involvement in a gun control protest on the House floor.

The young Black lawmakers were reinstated by local officials after being booted from the GOP-dominated Statehouse, but only on an interim basis. They advanced Thursday through a special election to fully reclaim their positions. Both faced opponents in districts that heavily favor Democrats and easily defeated them according to unofficial results from the Tennessee's Secretary of State's office.

Jones, who lives in Nashville, was up against Republican candidate Laura Nelson. Meanwhile, Pearson, from Memphis, faced independent candidate Jeff Johnston.

"I think if we keep running this race, there will be victory after victory after victory," Pearson said to supporters on Thursday. He stressed that his victory was largely possible due to Black women and the organizing work they had done to make him and other politicians successful.

Thursday's election came as lawmakers are preparing to return to Nashville later this month for a special session to address possibly changing the state's gun control laws. While Jones and Pearson's reelection to their old posts won't make a significant dent to the Republican supermajority inside the Legislature, they are expected to push back heavily against some of their GOP colleagues' policies.

Jones and Pearson were elected to the Statehouse last year. Both lawmakers flew relatively under the

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radar, even as they criticized their Republican colleagues' policies. It wasn't until this spring that their political careers received a boost when they joined fellow Democrat Rep. Gloria Johnson in a protest for more gun control on the House floor.

The demonstration took place just days after a fatal shooting in Nashville at a private Christian school where a shooter killed three children and three adults. As thousands of protesters flooded the Capitol building to demand that the Republican supermajority enact some sort of restrictions on firearms, the three lawmakers approached the front of the House chamber with a bullhorn, and joined the protesters' chants and cries for action.

Republican lawmakers quickly declared that their actions violated House rules and moved to expel their three colleagues — an extraordinary move that's been taken only a handful of times since the Civil War.

The move briefly left about 140,000 voters in primarily Black districts in Nashville and Memphis with no representation in the Tennessee House.

Ultimately, Johnson, who is white, narrowly avoided expulsion while Pearson and Jones were booted by the predominantly white GOP caucus.

House Republican leaders have repeatedly denied that race was a factor in the expulsion hearings. Democrats have disagreed, with Johnson countering that the only reason that she wasn't expelled was due to her being white.

The expulsions drew national support for the newly dubbed "Tennessee Three," especially for Pearson and Jones' campaign fundraising. The two raised more than \$2 million combined through about 70,400 campaign donations from across the country. The amount is well beyond the norm for Tennessee's Republican legislative leaders and virtually unheard of for two freshman Democrats in a superminority.

Meanwhile, more than 15 Republican lawmakers had funneled cash to fund campaign efforts of Jones' Republican opponent, Nelson. Nelson has raised more than \$34,000 for the race. Pearson's opponent, Johnston, raised less than \$400 for the contest.

Thursday's election will also influence two other legislative seats.

In Nashville, community organizer Aftyn Behn and former Metro Councilmember Anthony Davis were vying to advance to the general election for a House seat in a district in the city's northeastern region that opened after Democratic Rep. Bill Beck died in June.

Meanwhile in eastern Tennessee, Republican Timothy Hill faced Democrat Lori Love in a general election for Republican-leaning District 3. The seat was left empty when former Republican Rep. Scotty Campbell resigned following a finding that he had violated the Legislature's workplace discrimination and harassment policy.

Hill served in the state House from 2012 until 2020 and rose to the position of majority whip. He later left his seat to run for an open U.S. House seat in 2020, but lost in a crowded primary to current Republican U.S. Rep. Diana Harshbarger.

US military may put armed troops on commercial ships in Strait of Hormuz to stop Iran seizures

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. military is considering putting armed personnel on commercial ships traveling through the Strait of Hormuz, in what would be an unheard of action aimed at stopping Iran from seizing and harassing civilian vessels, American officials told The Associated Press on Thursday.

Since 2019, Iran has seized a series of ships in the strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, as part of its efforts to pressure the West over negotiations regarding its collapsed nuclear deal with world powers. Putting U.S. troops on commercial ships could further deter Iran from seizing vessels — or escalate tensions further.

The contemplated move also would represent an extraordinary commitment in the Mideast by U.S. forces as the Pentagon tries to focus on Russia and China. America didn't even take the step during the so-called "Tanker War," which culminated with the U.S. Navy and Iran fighting a one-day naval battle in 1988 that

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was the Navy's largest since World War II.

While officials offered few details of the plan, it comes as thousands of Marines and sailors on both the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan and the USS Carter Hall, a landing ship, are on their way to the Persian Gulf. Those Marines and sailors could provide the backbone for any armed guard mission in the strait, through which 20% of the world's crude oil passes.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment from AP about the U.S. proposal. Hours later, however, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged the proposal, citing this AP report.

Five U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the proposal, acknowledged its broad details. The officials stressed no final decision had been made and that discussions continue between U.S. military officials and America's Gulf Arab allies in the region.

Officials said the Marines and Navy sailors would provide the security only at the request of the ships involved. One official described the process as complex, saying any deployment likely also would require approval of the country under which the ship is flagged and the country under which the owner is registered. So far, that has yet to happen and it might not for some time, the official said.

At the Pentagon, Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder was asked about the plans and would only say that he has no announcements to make on the matter. More broadly, however, he noted that additional ships, aircraft and Marines have been deployed to the Gulf region, making it easier to respond more quickly to any Iranian provocations.

That effort by U.S. and partners, he said, is aimed at ensuring "the Strait of Hormuz remains open, there's freedom of navigation, and that we're deterring any type of malign activity."

And White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, speaking to reporters, underscored the importance of the strait and U.S. concerns about Iranian harassment of vessels there.

"The Strait of Hormuz is a vital seaway that has a huge impact on seaborne trade around the world," Kirby said. "It's a critical chokepoint in the maritime world. And we have seen threats by Iran to affect that chokepoint."

Earlier Thursday, Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of the Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet, met with the head of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The six-nation bloc includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

While a statement from the GCC about the meeting did not hint at the proposal, it did say that Cooper and officials discussed "strengthening GCC-U.S. cooperation and working with international and regional partners."

The Bataan and Carter Hall left Norfolk, Virginia, on July 10 on a mission the Pentagon described as being "in response to recent attempts by Iran to threaten the free flow of commerce in the Strait of Hormuz and its surrounding waters." The ships made a port visit earlier this week at Souda Bay, Greece, drawing closer to the Mideast, according to photographs released by the Navy.

Already, the U.S. has sent A-10 Thunderbolt II warplanes, F-16 and F-35 fighters, as well as the destroyer USS Thomas Hudner, and other warships to the region over Iran's actions at sea.

The deployment has captured Iran's attention, with its chief diplomat telling neighboring nations that the region doesn't need "foreigners" providing security. On Wednesday, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard launched a surprise military drill on disputed islands in the Persian Gulf, with swarms of small fast boats, paratroopers and missile units taking part.

The renewed hostilities come as Iran now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels after the collapse of its 2015 nuclear deal. International inspectors also believe it has enough enriched uranium for "several" nuclear bombs if it chose to build them. Iran maintains its program is for peaceful purposes, and U.S. intelligence agencies assess Tehran is not pursuing an atomic bomb.

The U.S. also has pursued ships across the world believed to be carrying sanctioned Iranian oil. Oil industry worries over another seizure by Iran likely has left a ship allegedly carrying Iranian oil stranded off Texas as no company has yet to unload it.

Babies should get recently approved drug for RSV, CDC says

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Infants should get a recently approved drug to protect them against a respiratory virus that sends tens of thousands of American children to the hospital each year, U.S. health officials said Thursday.

An infection with RSV is a coldlike nuisance for most healthy people, but it can be life-threatening for the very young and the elderly. There are no vaccines for babies yet so the new drug, a lab-made antibody that helps the immune system fight off the virus, is expected to fill a critical need.

The drug, developed by AstraZeneca and Sanofi, is expected to be ready in the fall before the RSV season, typically November through March. In the U.S., about 58,000 children younger than 5 are hospitalized for RSV each year and several hundred die.

A panel of outside advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the one-time shot for infants born just before or during the RSV season and for those less than 8 months old before the season starts. They also recommended a dose for some 8- to 19-months-olds at higher risk of a serious illness from RSV.

The CDC director signed off on the panel's recommendations later Thursday.

"We had a terribly bad RSV season last year and I'm thrilled that we have a new tool to protect our infants," Dr. Mandy Cohen told The Associated Press earlier this week.

The drug, to be sold under the brand name Beyfortus, is expected to cost \$495 per dose, and to be covered by insurance. Panelists acknowledged that it will be a challenge at first to give the shot and for providers to be reimbursed by insurers.

In May, the Food and Drug Administration approved two RSV vaccines for older adults from GlaxoSmithKline and Pfizer. In August, the FDA is expected to make a decision on approving Pfizer's vaccine for pregnant women, with the aim of passing along protection to their newborns.

Although the new drug is not a vaccine, the expert panel also supported including it in Vaccines for Children, a government program providing free immunizations. The American Academy of Pediatrics is urging hospitals to stock Beyfortus so that newborns can get it during RSV season before they go home.

2 US Navy sailors charged with providing sensitive military information to China

By JULIE WATSON and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Two U.S. Navy sailors were charged Thursday with providing sensitive military information to China — including details on wartime exercises, naval operations and critical technical material.

The two sailors, both based in California, were charged with similar moves to provide sensitive intelligence to the Chinese. But they were separate cases, and it wasn't clear if the two were courted or paid by the same Chinese intelligence officer as part of a larger scheme. Federal officials at a news conference in San Diego declined to specify whether the sailors were aware of each other's actions.

Both men pleaded not guilty in federal courts in San Diego and Los Angeles. They were ordered to be held until their detention hearings, which will take place Aug. 8 in those same cities.

U.S. officials have for years expressed concern about the espionage threat they say the Chinese government poses, bringing criminal cases in recent years against Beijing intelligence operatives who have stolen sensitive government and commercial information, including through illegal hacking.

The pair of cases also comes on the heels of another insider-threat prosecution tied to the U.S. military, with the Justice Department in April arresting a Massachusetts Air National Guardsman on charges of leaking classified military documents about Russia's war in Ukraine and other sensitive national security topics on Discord, a social media platform popular with people playing online games.

U.S. officials said the cases exemplify China's brazenness in trying to obtain insight into U.S. military operations.

"Through the alleged crimes committed by these defendants, sensitive military information ended up in

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the hands of the People's Republic of China," said U.S. Attorney Randy Grossman for the Southern District of California. He added that the charges demonstrate the Chinese government's "determination to obtain information that is critical to our national defense by any means, so it could be used to their advantage."

Jinchao Wei, a 22-year-old sailor assigned to the San Diego-based USS Essex, was arrested Wednesday while boarding the ship. He is accused of passing detailed information on the weapons systems and aircraft aboard the Essex and other amphibious assault ships that act as small aircraft carriers.

Prosecutors said Wei, who was born in China, was approached by a Chinese intelligence officer in February 2022 while he was applying to become a naturalized U.S. citizen, and admitted to the officer that he knew the arrangement could affect his application. Even so, at the officer's request, Wei provided photographs and videos of Navy ships, including the USS Essex, which can carry an array of helicopters, including the MV-22 Ospreys, according to an indictment unsealed Thursday.

The indictment alleges Wei included as many as 50 manuals containing technical and mechanical data about Navy ships as well as details about the number and training of Marines during an upcoming exercise.

Wei continued to send sensitive U.S. military information multiple times over the course of a year and even was congratulated by the Chinese officer once Wei became a U.S. citizen, Grossman said. He added that Wei "chose to turn his back on his newly adopted country" for greed.

The Justice Department charged Wei under a rarely-used Espionage Act statute that makes it a crime to gather or deliver information to aid a foreign government.

After pleading not guilty in San Diego, Wei was assigned a new public defender who declined to comment following the hearing. Wei did not visibly react when read the charges.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Fred Sheppard told the judge that Wei had passed information to Chinese intelligence as recently as two days ago. He said Wei, who also went by the name Patrick Wei, told a fellow sailor in February 2022 that he was "being recruited for what quite obviously is (expletive) espionage."

Sheppard said Wei has made \$10,000 to \$15,000 in the past year from the arrangement with the unnamed Chinese intelligence officer. If convicted, he could face up to life in prison.

The officer instructed Wei not to discuss their relationship, to share sensitive information and to destroy evidence to help them cover their tracks, officials said.

The Justice Department also charged sailor Wenheng Zhao, 26, based at Naval Base Ventura County, north of San Diego, with conspiring to collect nearly \$15,000 in bribes from a Chinese intelligence officer in exchange for U.S. naval exercise plans, operational orders and photos and videos of electrical systems at Navy facilities between August 2021 through at least this May.

The information included operational plans for a large-scale U.S. military exercise in the Indo-Pacific region, which detailed the location and timing of naval force movements.

The Associated Press was unable to reach the federal public defender assigned to Zhao, who pleaded not guilty in Los Angeles.

The indictment further alleges that Zhao photographed electrical diagrams and blueprints for a radar system stationed on a U.S. military base in Okinawa, Japan.

Prosecutors say Zhao, who also went by the name Thomas Zhao, also surreptitiously recorded information that he handed over. If convicted, Zhao could face a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison.

It was unclear if federal officials were looking at other U.S. sailors and if the investigation was ongoing.

At the Pentagon, Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder told reporters that, "I think we have clear policies and procedures in place when it comes to safeguarding and protecting sensitive information. And so if those rules are violated, appropriate action will be taken." He declined to discuss any specifics of the cases.

U.S. Attorney Grossman said the charges reflect that China "stands apart in terms of the threat that its government poses to the United States. China is unrivaled in its audacity and the range of its maligned efforts to subvert our laws."

He added that the U.S. will use "every tool in our arsenal to counter the threat and to deter China and those who have violated the rule of law and threaten our national security."

Trump pleads not guilty to federal charges that he tried to overturn the 2020 election

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, ERIC TUCKER, NOMAAN MERCHANT and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump pleaded not guilty Thursday to trying to overturn the results of his 2020 election loss, answering for the first time to federal charges that accuse him of orchestrating a brazen and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to block the peaceful transfer of presidential power.

The former president appeared before a magistrate judge in Washington's federal courthouse two days after being indicted by Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith. Of the three criminal cases he's facing, the most recent charges are especially historic since they focus on Trump's efforts as president to subvert the will of voters and obstruct the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's victory. His refusal to accept defeat and his lies about widespread election fraud helped fuel the violent riot on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

Trump, who is now the early front-runner in the 2024 Republican presidential primary, sat stern-faced with his hands folded, shaking his head at times as he conferred with an attorney and occasionally glancing around the courtroom as his court appearance began. He stood up to enter his "not guilty" plea, answered perfunctory questions from the judge and thanked her at the conclusion of the arraignment.

His appearance Thursday unfolded — as will the rest of the case — in a downtown courthouse between the Capitol and the White House and in a building where more than 1,000 of the Capitol rioters have been charged by the Justice Department, which last November appointed Smith to lead a probe into the role of Trump and his allies in the events of that day.

The indictment charges Trump with four felony counts related to his efforts to undo his presidential election loss, including conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government and conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding. The charges could lead to a lengthy prison sentence in the event of a conviction, with the most serious counts calling for up to 20 years.

Smith himself attended the arraignment, sitting in the courtroom's front row behind the prosecutors handling the case and about 20 feet away from Trump. He looked at times in Trump's direction, though neither appeared to gesture at or talk to each other.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Moxila Upadhyaya set the next court date for Aug. 28, when a tentative trial date will be set, and directed Trump not to communicate directly about the facts of case with any individual known to be a witness.

Three police officers who defended the Capitol that day were also seen entering the courthouse. One of them, Aquilino Gonell, who retired from the Capitol Police after suffering injuries, took stock of the location's symbolism, noting that it was "the same court in which hundreds of rioters have been sentenced. It's the same court former President Trump is being arraigned in today for his alleged involvement before, during, and after the siege."

Trump has said he is innocent. His legal team has characterized the latest case as an attack on his right to free speech and his right to challenge an election that he believed had been stolen.

He addressed the proceedings in a brief statement on a drizzly tarmac at Washington's Reagan National Airport before he boarded his plane back to New Jersey.

"This is the persecution of the person that's leading by very, very substantial numbers in the Republican primary and leading Biden by a lot," he said. "So if you can't beat 'em, you persecute 'em or you prosecute 'em. We can't let this happen in America."

One early point of contention emerged Thursday when defense lawyers bristled at the idea that a trial could be rapidly scheduled. Prosecutors said they would move quickly to provide Trump's lawyers with the information they'd need to prepare a defense, but defense attorney John Lauro said it was "somewhat absurd" that the case could be ready for trial anytime soon.

"These are weighty issues. Obviously, the U.S. has had three years to investigate this matter," Lauro said.

The election theft case is part of escalating legal troubles for the ex-president, coming nearly two months after Trump pleaded not guilty to dozens of federal felony counts accusing him of hoarding classified

documents at his Florida estate and thwarting government efforts to retrieve them. That case is set for trial next May.

He also was charged in New York with falsifying business records in connection with a hush money payment to a porn actor during the 2016 presidential campaign, a case scheduled for trial next March. And prosecutors in Fulton County, Georgia, are expected in the coming weeks to announce charging decisions in an investigation into efforts to subvert election results in that state.

Thursday's arraignment was part of a now-familiar but nonetheless stunning ritual for Trump, requiring him to hit pause on his presidential campaign and play the role of criminal defendant. He was flown by private plane from New Jersey to Washington, where his motorcade with lights and sirens made its way through the nation's capital — a journey documented in wall-to-wall cable coverage once again.

His appearance represented a relatively rare return to Washington since he left the White House. After a trip that took him through a highway tunnel and District streets, Trump lamented what he called the "filth and the decay" of the city, which he claimed was worse than when he ended his term. But that overlooks the fact that when he left office, some businesses were boarded up and military presence in the city was ramped up in the aftermath of the insurrection sparked by his own election lies.

Federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said there is no credible evidence the election was tainted. The former president's allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

The courtroom Thursday filled with spectators who included several federal judges, including Chief District Court Judge James Boasberg — presumably there to observe the momentous event.

The indictment chronicles how Trump and his Republican allies, in what Smith described as an attack on a "bedrock function of the U.S. government," repeatedly lied about the results in the two months after he lost the election and pressured his vice president, Mike Pence, and state election officials to take action to help him cling to power.

The former president was the only person charged in the case, though prosecutors referenced six unnamed co-conspirators, mostly lawyers, they say he plotted with, including in a scheme to enlist fake electors in seven battleground states won by Biden to submit false certificates to the federal government.

The indictment also relies on testimony from a broad cross-section of Trump's aides and state election officials, and cites contemporaneous notes that prosecutors say were taken by Pence.

The legal proceedings going forward will be presided over by U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, an appointee of President Barack Obama who has stood out as one of the toughest punishers of rioters.

Pittsburgh synagogue gunman has been sentenced to die in the nation's deadliest antisemitic attack

By PETER SMITH and MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The man who killed 11 congregants at a Pittsburgh synagogue was formally sentenced to death Thursday, one day after a jury determined that capital punishment was appropriate for the perpetrator of the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history.

U.S. District Judge Robert Colville ordered death by lethal injection for Robert Bowers, a 50-year-old truck driver whose vicious antisemitism led him to shoot his way into a place of worship and target people for practicing their faith.

"I have nothing specific that I care to say to Mr. Bowers," Colville said from the bench. "I am however convinced there is nothing I could say to him that might be meaningful."

Grieving families confronted Bowers in court before Colville pronounced the sentence, describing the pain and suffering he had inflicted, and calling him evil and cowardly. Bowers, who chose not to speak, spent the entire hearing shuffling through papers and writing, and refused to look those he victimized in the eye, even when invited to do so.

Several survivors spoke of lingering traumas — sleeplessness, fear of crowds and loud noises, and physical

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and cognitive struggles triggered by the 2018 massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue. But survivors and family members, several wearing yarmulkes signifying Jewish observance, also emphasized their resilience in practicing the Judaism that the defendant hated.

Alan Mallinger, son of 97-year-old Rose Mallinger, the attack's oldest victim, told Bowers the synagogue would be rebuilt, the scene of future bar and bat mitzvahs and other rituals of Jewish worship.

"We continue to thrive as Jewish people ... stronger than ever," he declared.

Bowers, from suburban Baldwin, ranted about Jews online before carrying out the attack at Tree of Life, in the heart of Pittsburgh's Jewish community, on Oct. 27, 2018. He killed members of the Dor Hadash, New Light and Tree of Life congregations, which shared the synagogue building. Bowers told police at the scene that "all these Jews must die" and has since expressed pride in the killings.

Jurors were unanimous in finding that Bowers' attack was motivated by his hatred of Jews, and that he chose Tree of Life for its location in one of the largest and most historic Jewish communities in the nation so he could "maximize the devastation, amplify the harm of his crimes, and instill fear within the local, national, and international Jewish communities." They also found that Bowers lacked remorse.

The jury rejected defense claims that Bowers has schizophrenia and that his delusions about Jewish people spurred the attack.

"Mr. Bowers, you met my beloved husband in the kitchen. Your callous disregard for the person he was repulses me," testified Peg Durachko, wife of 65-year-old Dr. Richard Gottfried, a dentist who was shot and killed. "Your hateful act took my soulmate from me."

Mark Simon, whose parents, Bernice and Sylvan Simon, were killed in the attack, testified he still has their bloodied prayer shawl. He said he remains haunted by the 911 call placed by his mother, whom Bowers shot while she was on the line.

"My parents died alone, without any living soul to comfort them or to hold their hand in their last moments," said Simon, condemning "that defendant" and urging the judge to show him no mercy.

"You will never be forgiven. Never," Simon told Bowers.

It was the first federal death sentence imposed during the presidency of Joe Biden, who pledged during his 2020 campaign to end capital punishment. Biden's Justice Department has placed a moratorium on federal executions and has declined to authorize the death penalty in hundreds of new cases where it could apply. But federal prosecutors said death was the appropriate punishment for Bowers, citing the vulnerability of his mainly elderly victims and his hate-based targeting of a religious community.

An appeal is expected, meaning that Bowers will likely spend years on federal death row even if the Justice Department lifts the moratorium on executions.

Bowers, who was armed with an AR-15 rifle and other weapons, also shot and wounded seven, including five responding police officers. Sgt. Jonathan Craig, who responded to the attack as a member of the Pittsburgh police SWAT team, recalled on the witness stand Thursday that Bowers "begged for mercy" after being wounded in a shootout with police — after he had shown no mercy to those he murdered.

The gunman was convicted in June of 63 federal counts, including hate crimes resulting in death and obstruction of the free exercise of religion resulting in death.

In addition to Mallinger, Gottfried and the Simons, the deceased victims were Joyce Fienberg, 75; Dr. Jerry Rabinowitz, 66; brothers David Rosenthal, 54, and Cecil Rosenthal, 59; Dan Stein, 71; Melvin Wax, 87; and Irving Younger, 69.

The synagogue has been closed since the shootings. The Tree of Life congregation plans to overhaul the synagogue complex to house a sanctuary, museum, memorial and center for fighting antisemitism.

Tree of Life Rabbi Jeffrey Myers — speaking as a survivor and the "pastor of a wounded congregation" — said in court that many members remain hesitant to return to worship because of trauma or fear. "My beloved synagogue is the 12th victim," he said.

The judge said he couldn't begin to understand the pain of the survivors and loved ones of those killed in the attack.

"May their memory be a blessing," said Colville, invoking the traditional Jewish expression in honor of

the deceased.

Texas A&M reaches \$1 million settlement with Black journalism professor

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas A&M University reached a \$1 million settlement Thursday with a Black journalism professor whose hiring was sabotaged by backlash over her past work promoting diversity.

The nation's largest public school agreed to pay Kathleen McElroy and apologized to her while admitting "mistakes were made during the hiring process."

Texas A&M, which is located in College Station, about 90 miles (144 kilometers) northwest of Houston, initially welcomed McElroy with great fanfare to revive its journalism department in June. A former New York Times editor and Texas A&M alum, McElroy had overseen the journalism school at A&M's rival — the more liberal University of Texas at Austin.

But McElroy told the Texas Tribune last month that soon after her hiring, she learned of emerging internal pushback from then-unidentified individuals over her past work to improve diversity and inclusion in newsrooms.

According to investigation documents released Thursday, those individuals included at least six board of regents members who began "asking questions and raising concerns about McElroy's hiring" after Texas Scorecard, a right-leaning website, highlighted her past diversity, equity and inclusion work.

The website's article "generated numerous calls and emails to the President's Office at TAMU" from current and former students "raising questions about why a DEI proponent would be hired to serve as director of the new journalism program," a summary of the school investigation said.

Shortly afterward, the university's president Katherine Banks and a school dean began discussing changes and reductions in the job offer to McElroy.

McElroy told the Tribune that the initial offer of a tenure-track position was reduced to a five-year post and then reduced again to a one-year position from which she could be fired at any time. She ultimately rejected the offer and withdrew her resignation from UT-Austin as a journalism professor.

Banks later told university faculty she had not been involved in making any changes to McElroy's contract offer.

Shortly after events around her hiring became public, Banks resigned and the university began an investigation into the matter. The school's board of regents later approved negotiating a settlement with McElroy.

The Texas A&M episode came as Republican lawmakers across the U.S. are targeting DEI programs on college campuses and as the U.S. Supreme Court struck down affirmative action, ruling that race cannot factor into college admissions processes.

It also drew fierce criticism from some corners of academia and questions whether external political influences could have a chilling effect on campus free speech.

American Association of University Professors President Irene Mulvey, a mathematics professor at Fairfield University, had criticized the handling of McElroy's hiring and called efforts against DEI in higher education a "misguided culture war."

In a joint statement with McElroy announcing the settlement, the university said the school "has learned from its mistakes and will strive to ensure similar mistakes are not repeated in the future."

McElroy called the matter "resolved."

"I hope the resolution of my matter will reinforce A&M's allegiance to excellence in higher education and its commitment to academic freedom and journalism," she said.

Home on Long Island Sound in Greenwich, Connecticut sells for almost \$139 million

GREENWICH, Conn. (AP) — Copper Beech Farm, with 50 acres (20 hectares) of waterfront property in the tony New York suburb of Greenwich, has sold for just under \$139 million, believed to be a record home sale in Connecticut, Sotheby's International Realty said Thursday.

The estate, once owned by a family that helped start what is now U.S. Steel, dates back to the late 19th century. The main house is a 13,500-square-foot mansion with eight bedrooms and eight bathrooms. There also is a three-bedroom gatehouse and a two-bedroom carriage house with a clock tower.

The estate includes a swimming pool, a grass tennis court, an apple orchard and two private beaches along Long Island Sound.

"We always have significant demand for Greenwich waterfront," listing agent Leslie McElwreath of Sotheby's International Realty said. "This is the ultimate in Greenwich waterfront in terms of the overall acreage size and the unprecedented amount of shoreline associated with it."

McElwreath said the property, which last sold in 2014 for about \$120 million, was listed in February at \$150 million and ultimately sold for \$138,830,000. She would not disclose the buyer or seller.

The Wall Street Journal reported the seller is a limited liability company tied to Bridgewater Associates, the hedge fund founded by billionaire Ray Dalio.

It is the most expensive home ever sold in Connecticut, McElwreath said.

"It was when it was last sold and I can tell you we have not had a sale to exceed it since then," she said. "I cannot tell you where it stands in terms of sales in the United States. ... I'd say it's in the top 20, but it's almost impossible to verify that particular number."

A federal appeals court just made medication abortions harder to get in Guam

By REBECCA BOONE and ED KOMENDA Associated Press

People seeking medication abortions on the U.S. Territory of Guam must first have an in-person consultation with a doctor, a federal appeals court says, even though the nearest physician willing to prescribe the medication is 3,800 miles (6,100 kilometers) — an 8-hour flight — away.

The ruling handed down Tuesday by a unanimous three-judge panel on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals could make it even more difficult for pregnant people to access abortions on the remote island where 85% of residents are Catholic and about 1 in 5 live below the poverty line. The last doctor to provide abortions in Guam retired in 2018, leaving people seeking the procedure without local options.

That changed in 2021 when a lower court partially lifted the territory's in-person consultation requirement and said two Guam-licensed physicians in Hawaii could provide medication abortions via telemedicine to people in Guam.

The appellate court panel reversed that ruling Tuesday, saying Guam can enact the laws it thinks are best, even if others find them unwise.

"Guam has legitimate interests in requiring an in-person consultation: the consultation can underscore the medical and moral gravity of an abortion and encourage a robust exchange of information," wrote Judge Kenneth K. Lee.

Lee was appointed by former President Donald Trump in 2018 along with fellow panel member Judge Daniel P. Collins. The third member of the panel, Judge Carlos T. Bea, was appointed by former President George W. Bush in 2003.

Abortion rights advocates contend having no doctors able to provide abortions on the island creates a significant challenge to people seeking care. The court ruled other doctors there could conduct the in-person consultations even if they do not want to personally perform abortions themselves. It's not clear if any physicians in Guam are willing to take on that role.

"We are deeply disappointed that the court is permitting medically unnecessary government mandates

to once again be enforced," said Alexa Kolbi-Molinas, the deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union Reproductive Freedom Project. "Today's decision imposes unnecessary obstacles on people seeking abortion in Guam, but make no mistake, abortion remains legal in Guam and we will continue to do everything in our power to make sure it stays both legal and accessible."

Guam currently allows abortions in the first 13 weeks of pregnancy — or in the first 26 weeks in the case of rape or incest, grave fetal defects or serious risks to the pregnant person's life or health.

A 2012 Guam law required an in-person consultation 24 hours before an abortion. Two years ago, Hawaii-based Drs. Shandhini Raidoo and Bliss Kaneshiro sued over the law, saying they wanted to provide medication abortions to Guam residents via telemedicine. They argued that there was no rational government interest for the law and that it placed an undue burden on abortion-seeking patients. The lower court ruled in their favor in 2021, waiving the requirement and making it easier for abortion-seeking residents to find care.

In Tuesday's ruling, the appellate court said Guam can require an in-person consultation requirement because it has a "legitimate governmental interest of safeguarding fetal life."

The appellate panel also suggested people might be more likely to be talked out of abortions during in-person consultations.

"In the more solemn context of a face-to-face meeting—unlike a Zoom call—a pregnant woman may decide against an abortion after having a candid conversation at the clinic about the gestational age of her fetus and concluding that the fetus represents human life," Lee wrote for the panel.

Vanessa L. Williams, a Guam attorney who represents the doctors, said there is no health benefit to preventing telemedicine visits for abortions.

"A person's health should guide important medical decisions throughout pregnancy," Williams said, "not politics."

Another abortion-related lawsuit is still making its way through the courts: Attorney General Douglas Moylan is fighting in court to reinstate a 1990 law that made it a felony for a doctor to perform abortions except to save a woman's life or prevent grave danger to her health. The U.S. District Court on Guam blocked it from being enforced in 1992, citing *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark case that legalized abortion nationwide. It was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2022.

A federal court in Guam denied Moylan's reinstatement request in March of this year, but Moylan has appealed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Lizzo says she's 'not the villain' after her former dancers claim sex harassment

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Lizzo said Thursday that she's "not the villain" that three of her former backup dancers falsely accuse her of being in a sexual harassment lawsuit.

The civil lawsuit filed Tuesday in Los Angeles Superior Court claims Lizzo pressured the dancers to engage with nude performers at a club in Amsterdam and shamed one of them for her weight gain before firing her.

"I am not here to be looked at as a victim, but I also know that I am not the villain that people and the media have portrayed me to be these last few days," Lizzo said in a statement posted on social media. "I am very open with my sexuality and expressing myself but I cannot accept or allow people to use that openness to make me out to be something I am not."

Plaintiffs Arianna Davis, Crystal Williams and Noelle Rodriguez made numerous allegations including sexual, religious and racial harassment, disability discrimination, assault and false imprisonment. They accuse the Grammy winner and her production company of creating a hostile work environment.

The legal complaint seeks unspecified damages from Melissa Viviane Jefferson, known professionally as Lizzo, her production company Big Grrrl Big Touring, Inc., and Shirlene Quigley, captain of the performer's dance team.

"These last few days have been gut wrenchingly difficult and overwhelmingly disappointing. My work ethic, morals and respectfulness have been questioned. My character has been criticized," Lizzo said in

the statement. "Usually I choose not to respond to false allegations but these are as unbelievable as they sound and too outrageous to not be addressed."

She said the "sensationalized stories" were coming from former employees "who have already publicly admitted that they were told their behavior on tour was inappropriate and unprofessional."

The court filing claims that after performing a concert in Amsterdam, Lizzo and her crew attended a sexually themed show at a club in the city's notorious Red Light District where "Lizzo began inviting cast members to take turns touching the nude performers" and led a chant pressuring Davis to touch the breasts of one of the nude women performing at the club.

"Finally, the chorus became overwhelming, and a mortified Ms. Davis acquiesced in an attempt to bring an end to the chants," the complaint states. "Plaintiffs were aghast with how little regard Lizzo showed for the bodily autonomy of her employees and those around her, especially in the presence of many people whom she employed."

Lizzo, who routinely champions body positivity, is also accused of calling out Davis for her weight gain after accusing the dancer of not being committed to her role. Davis was fired in May for recording a meeting during which Lizzo had given out notes to dancers about their performances, according to the complaint.

"Sometimes I have to make hard decisions but it's never my intention to make anyone feel uncomfortable or like they aren't valued as an important part of the team," Lizzo said. "I'm hurt but I will not let the good work I've done in the world be overshadowed by this."

Quigley, who served as a judge on the singer's reality show "Lizzo's Watch Out for the Big Grrrls," is accused in the lawsuit of pushing her Christian beliefs onto dancers. The court filing claims Quigley referred to Davis as a "non-believer" and told co-workers that "No job and no one will stop me from talking about the Lord."

Earlier this year, Lizzo won the Grammy for record of the year for her hit single "About Damn Time." A global tour supporting her fourth studio album, 2022's "Special," wrapped up last month.

Russian shelling hits a landmark church in the Ukrainian city of Kherson

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian shelling damaged a landmark church Thursday in the Ukrainian city of Kherson that until last year held the remains of Prince Grigory Potemkin, an 18th-century Russian military commander who encouraged Catherine the Great to expand the Russian Empire into what is now southern Ukraine.

Ukraine's emergency service said four of its workers were wounded in a second round of shelling as they fought a fire at St. Catherine's Cathedral. Four other people were wounded in the first shelling attack, which also hit a trolleybus, the prosecutor general's office said.

A missile strike severely damaged a beloved Orthodox cathedral in Odesa, another city in southern Ukraine, and Thursday's attack further underlined the war's risk to the country's cultural monuments. Fighting has intensified in multiple regions as Ukraine's military steps up a counteroffensive to reclaim Russian-occupied territory.

The Kherson church, dating from 1781, is one of the city's most notable buildings. It once was the burial spot for Potemkin, a favorite of Catherine the Great's who exerted Russian control through the southeast parts of modern Ukraine and engineered the 1784 annexation of Crimea from the Crimean Khanate.

Potemkin became the governor general of what was called "New Russia." His name entered popular speech because of stories, now widely doubted, that he erected fake settlements called "Potemkin villages" to impress Catherine during her long journey through Crimea and the southern territories.

In September, at a Kremlin ceremony marking Russian's illegal annexation of four occupied or partially occupied Ukraine provinces, President Vladimir Putin referenced the concept of New Russia and noted that both Catherine and Potemkin had founded cities there.

Moscow-backed authorities had Potemkin's remains removed during the city's eight-month occupation.

Russian forces withdrew from Kherson in November as Ukrainian soldiers gained ground in their attempt to take back the regions Putin annexed.

The Russian retreat instantly made the city a target of daily Russian attacks, most of them involving artillery and drones sent from Russian-held territory across the Dnieper River. The relentless strikes often result in reports of civilian casualties.

The Ukrainian president's office said two people were killed over the past day in Russian attacks — one in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province and one in Zaporizhzhia province.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia launched a wave of 15 Shahed exploding drones against the Kyiv region but all were shot down. The governor of the capital region, Ruslan Kravchenko, said there were no injuries or damage.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia so far has launched at least 1,961 Shahed drones, adding that "a significant number of them have been shot down."

"Unfortunately, not all of them," he said in a nightly video address to the nation, noting that Ukraine has been talking to its Western allies to provide more air defense weapons. "We are working to shoot down more - to shoot down as many as possible. We are working to have more air defense systems."

Ukraine's military also continued to launch attack drones deep into Russia. The Russian Defense Ministry said seven Ukrainian drones were downed in the Kaluga region, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) south of Moscow, the latest incident following attacks that twice hit buildings in the Russian capital that house some government ministries.

Kaluga Gov. Vladislav Shapsha reported another drone was shot down later Thursday.

The deputy chair of Russia's Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, said Thursday that 231,000 men have enlisted in the Russian army as contract soldiers since Jan. 1. Medvedev made the remarks at a meeting on expanding the army just months after Russian authorities launched a massive campaign to entice more men to sign military contracts.

Moscow is seeking to boost its forces in Ukraine and to bring the size of its army to 1.5 million troops. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu declared in December that the country needs that many soldiers "to fulfill tasks to ensure Russia's security."

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's securities fraud trial to wait until end of impeachment trial

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Embattled Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's years-delayed trial on securities fraud charges will have to wait until his separate impeachment trial is concluded, lawyers and the judge in the case said Thursday.

During the brief court hearing in Houston that was attended by Paxton, his lawyers asked state District Judge Andrea Beall to delay any decision on setting a trial date until the attorney general's impeachment trial, set to begin Sept. 5, is finished. Dan Cogdell, one of Paxton's attorneys, said he expects the impeachment trial to last a couple of weeks.

"What I would request is we come back after that case is resolved," Cogdell said during the hearing. The request was supported by Brian Wice and Kent Schaffer, the special prosecutors appointed to the case.

The Republican attorney general, who has been suspended from office since his May impeachment, sat by himself on a bench as his lawyers and the prosecutors stood in front of Beall. Paxton did not say anything during the hearing, which lasted about 10 minutes. Paxton both came into and left the courtroom through a separate entrance not used by the public. Paxton has rarely appeared in court for hearings in the securities fraud case.

Beall, a Democrat, agreed to wait to discuss a possible trial date until an Oct 6 court hearing.

Wice said he shares the public's frustration that the case has yet to go to trial. Paxton was indicted in 2015 on felony charges of defrauding investors in a tech startup.

"I know that everybody is concerned about how the wheels of justice have seemed to move at a glacial

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pace over the course of the last eight years," Wice said. "I think today is the first step on the journey of a thousand miles to pick up the pace."

The case is back in a Houston courtroom after the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals upheld a decision last month by a judge who originally oversaw the case to move the proceedings out of Paxton's hometown near Dallas. Paxton has spent years fighting to keep the trial in Collin County, where he maintains wide support among GOP activists and his wife, Angela Paxton, is a state senator.

The indictments accuse Paxton of defrauding investors in a Dallas-area tech startup by not disclosing he was being paid by the company, called Servergy, to recruit them. The indictments were handed up just months after Paxton was sworn in as Texas' top law enforcement officer.

A multitude of reasons have delayed the trial, including legal debate over whether the case should be tried in the Dallas area or Houston, changes in which judge would handle the case and a protracted battle over how much the special prosecutors should get paid.

If convicted of the securities fraud charges, Paxton faces up to 99 years in prison. He would also lose his law license.

Thursday's hearing took place as Paxton faces removal from office following his historic impeachment by the Republican-led state House in May. That trial will take place in the Texas Senate.

Cogdell said what happens with the impeachment trial will affect whether the securities fraud case goes forward or is possibly resolved through a plea bargain or other kind of settlement.

"If Ken prevails (in the impeachment trial), we will go forward. If Ken loses, that's a kill shot to his political career. So it opens the door for resolution that's not open right now," Cogdell said.

Schaffer said when he and Wice began prosecuting the case eight years ago, they were "demonized" by right wing fundamentalist organizations that supported Paxton and claimed the case was political.

"Well, now so many things have come out about Mr. Paxton in the last year or two that people all over the state, including the House of Representatives, are starting to see who he is and what he does," Schaffer said.

The case is among the 20 articles of impeachment the Texas House of Representatives brought against Paxton. Other impeachment charges surround Paxton's relationship with Nate Paul, an Austin real estate developer who has been indicted on charges of making false statements to banks to obtain more than \$170 million in loans.

Cogdell said federal authorities are still interviewing witnesses in a corruption probe of Paxton that's tied to the Paul case, but he said that "case will go nowhere at the end of the day."

Saudi Arabia extends cut of 1 million barrels of oil a day, potentially boosting prices at the pump

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia said Thursday it will extend its unilateral production cut of 1 million barrels of oil a day through the end of September in its effort to boost flagging energy prices, a move that could push U.S. gas prices higher.

The Saudi reduction, which began in July, comes as the other OPEC+ producers have agreed to extend earlier production cuts through next year.

The national average for U.S. gas prices stood at about \$3.82 a gallon on Tuesday — about 30 cents higher than a month ago, according to motor club AAA. While today's prices at the pump remain far lower than they were last year, when energy costs soared worldwide in the months following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, experts say such a jump is unusual.

This year's record-breaking summer heat has also had an impact, driving up demand for air conditioning and forcing refineries to operate at reduced capacity.

The kingdom announced the extension in a statement on the state-run Saudi Press Agency, quoting an anonymous official in the Energy Ministry. The official added that the cut "can be extended or deepened" if the need arises.

"This additional voluntary cut comes to reinforce the precautionary efforts made by OPEC+ countries

with the aim of supporting the stability and balance of oil markets," the official said.

The move was widely expected by analysts.

Benchmark Brent crude traded Thursday at over \$80 a barrel.

A series of production cuts over the past year has failed to substantially boost prices amid weakened demand from China and tighter monetary policy aimed at combatting inflation. Brent has largely hovered between \$75 and \$85 a barrel since last October.

The Saudis are particularly keen to boost oil prices in order to fund Vision 2030, an ambitious plan to overhaul the kingdom's economy, reduce its dependence on oil and create jobs for a young population. The plans include several massive infrastructure projects, including the construction of a futuristic \$500 billion city called Neom.

Higher prices would also help Russian President Vladimir Putin fund his war on Ukraine, as Western countries have used a price cap to try to cut into Moscow's revenues.

Western sanctions mean Moscow is forced to sell its oil at a discount to countries like China and India. Its estimated export revenue fell by \$1.4 billion to \$13.3 billion in May, down 36% from a year ago, the International Energy Agency said in a report in June.

Clothes for kids with disabilities get better, but teens see a lack of fashionable options

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Mindy Scheier was working in fashion before her son, Oliver, was born with muscular dystrophy. As he grew, and she watched him struggle to get dressed, her eyes were opened to her industry's limitations for people with disabilities.

At 8, Oliver wanted to ditch his daily sweatpants for jeans, favored by his peers. His mom couldn't find any to accommodate his leg braces and difficulty working zippers and buttons, so she began making adaptations herself.

She put strips of fabric fastener on the inseams of the jeans, and she replaced the button and zipper on the front with the same. The difference to Oliver was immense.

Now, Scheier dedicates herself to raising awareness about the need for designers and retailers to embrace adaptive clothing through her Runway of Dreams Foundation and Gamut Management talent and consulting agency.

Scheier has brought on board some of the largest U.S. brands and retailers. While adaptive clothes, shoes and other gear have made strides in the last few years, more in the industry need to get involved, she said.

"What we learned was brands were so afraid to get into the space for fear of doing it wrong, saying something wrong, not knowing where to start," she said. "We work with brands to guide them through the process."

Oliver, now 18, is pleased with the progress, but he said melding fashion with functionality for his age group has lagged behind offerings for younger kids and adults.

"It's all about opportunity and the chance for people like me and people my age to express themselves through fashion like any able-bodied person," he said. "It says a lot about who I am on the inside, and adaptive clothing allows me to do that."

It's also about including people with disabilities in the design process, taking care to offer such things as hidden openings for medical ports, tubing and bags, or less bulk in the front and a higher rise in the back of pants for wheelchair users. Dressing without help is made easier with things like pull-on loops at the sides of skirts and pants, and wider necks on pullover shirts.

Shoes must be wide and sturdy enough on the inside to accommodate braces or prosthetics. Zippers or other fasteners make them easier to put on for people without full use of their hands.

Adidas was among the giants to work with Scheier. The company consulted Oliver and others with a wide range of disabilities on an adaptive backpack that has a flat bottom, wider loops on zippers, and

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straps that can easily attach to wheelchairs and scooters.

From Tommy Hilfiger to Target, brands and niche online sellers such as No Limbits and Billy Footwear are serving people with disabilities. JC Penney, Walmart, Kohl's, Amazon, Uggs and Zappos also offer adaptive fare.

Walmart is among the newest entrants, partnering with brands that specialize in adaptive. The company is working to get prices down and including more styles for older kids.

"Tweens are, in my opinion, an underserved customer holistically today," said Brandy Lackey, a Walmart senior director of product development who worked on the recent rollout.

The adaptations required are as diverse as the people in need, including those with sensory processing issues who require softer fabrics, no tags and no-itch flat seams.

Niche sellers are also seeing the need. A company called French Toast, for example, sells a crisp white Oxford shirt with magnets hidden behind a line of buttons for young people required to wear school uniforms.

Billy Footwear was co-founded by Billy Price, a wheelchair user who broke his back at age 18 and had trouble putting on shoes by himself. His company offers a slew of trendy footwear with a zipper that goes down one side and around the toe, opening the entire top.

"Our goal was to be able to come out into the market with an easy shoe that could work for anybody," he said.

Working for everybody is important to Price, Scheier and others who support a universal approach that means adaptations are built into garments and other gear that also appeal to the able-bodied.

In its eighth year, Billy Footwear did about \$10 million in sales last year, with customers split evenly between those who require accommodations and those who don't.

With more than 60 million adults and more than 3 million children living with disabilities in the U.S. alone, Oliver sees a win-win for companies.

"We want to wear this stuff but we can't," he said. "There's a financial opportunity there."

Open Style Lab, a nonprofit committed to making style accessible for everyone, is also engaged. It offers a 10-week program bringing together occupational therapists, people with disabilities, engineers and designers to co-create functional and stylish clothing and accessories, said Yasmin Keats, the executive director.

"We want to educate the next generation of designers on how to do inclusive design better," she said.

Erica Cole, 27, lost a leg in a 2018 car crash when she was 22. She found that offerings for pants to accommodate her prosthetic fell far short of fashion.

"The socket was so large on my first prosthetic. My calf was more of the size of my thigh. So I was wearing sweat pants that were three sizes too large and shorts in the middle of winter because I couldn't get anything to fit over the top of it," she said. "So I started altering clothes for myself."

She turned her solution into No Limbits. It offers hipster jeans and other pants with side zippers, less bulk at the front and stretchy waist bands for wheelchair and prosthetics users. She included front thigh pockets for easy access while seated.

Older kids, she agreed, remain underserved. No Limbits hopes to rectify that in future drops.

"We've been talking to a lot of parents and there's a lot of anxiety around kids aging out of the kids sizes in adaptive clothing. Suddenly they're in the junior section and there's nothing. That's still where the gap is," Cole said.

JC Penney entered the adaptive market in 2021. It consulted Alex Harold, founder and CEO of the online adaptive fashion marketplace Patti and Ricky.

"We've been in the apparel business for over 100 years, but this was a new step for us and we wanted to make sure that we were doing this with respect and with purpose," said Chris Phillips, a senior vice president and general merchandise manager for JC Penney.

Adaptations for caregivers of totally dependent people pose unique challenges.

Kimberly Peterson in Knoxville, Tennessee, does everything for her 14-year-old daughter, Tilly, who was born with a rare genetic condition, Joubert Syndrome. The teen is non-verbal, in a wheelchair and severely

developmentally delayed.

Before openings for gastrostomy bags went on the market, Peterson cut her own. Today, she still struggles with long-sleeve tops, outerwear and sweaters for her 4-foot-8, 85-pound daughter.

A full zip or fabric fastener in the back of winter jackets and long-sleeve tops would help, especially at an affordable price. But Peterson applauds the progress that has been made in adaptive wear.

"It's nice to see more being inclusive," she said. "It's nice to have that element of just normalizing children with challenges."

As the climate changes, how doctors treat patients, and medical program curricula, are evolving

By ZOYA TEIRSTEIN, Grist undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — In the 1990s, two hurricanes devastated Samoa in the South Pacific Ocean, wiping entire communities off the map and killing dozens of people. "Everything was just decimated," Malama Tafuna'i, a primary care physician in Apia, the territory's capital, said. "It looked like a bomb had gone off."

A young girl at the time, Tafuna'i watched as her father, a doctor, would go out to treat patients while her household navigated the aftermath of the storms.

"He still had to go to work and the rest of us had to figure out, you know, how do we make sure that we've got a shelter for tonight or where are we going to get food from?" she said.

Tafuna'i's early experiences help her navigate the impacts of climate change, both as a physician and as a citizen of Samoa, where extreme weather events frequently upend daily life. She uses the knowledge she has accumulated to help other doctors consider climate impacts when treating patients.

Tafuna'i, who has practiced medicine in Samoa for the better part of two decades, knows that once the hurricane-force winds die down and the flood waters recede, public health disasters — vector-borne disease outbreaks, bacterial infections, malnutrition due to crop loss — soon follow. People lose their homes in these storms and spend days exposed to mosquitoes and other pathogen-carrying insects. Decaying sanitation systems overflow and spread E. coli and other dangerous bacteria through communities. Entire fields of crops are wiped out by flooding, and families already struggling with food insecurity go hungry.

Tafuna'i can spot these links between extreme weather events and disease, but actually treating the effects of rising temperatures on the Samoan population can be tricky. It's exceedingly difficult to assess a sick patient and determine that climate change itself is the main driver of that patient's illness, Tafuna'i said. What she does see, however, is that climate change compounds and exacerbates existing health inequities in Samoa.

"Once a disaster hits, it sets back the whole system big time," said Tafuna'i, adding that then "we have to figure out a way back up to wherever the starting point was at the time."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story is part of a collaboration between The Associated Press and Grist exploring the intersection of climate change and infectious diseases.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

As the planet warms, Samoans and millions of other people around the globe will increasingly see their health affected by warming. Climate change, the World Health Organization says, is the "single biggest health threat facing humanity."

Climate-driven malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress are projected to kill an additional 250,000 people worldwide every year, which will come with an annual cost of between \$2 and \$4 billion. And those are just a few of the leading causes of climate-related mortality. There are countless other ways in which our changing planet affects human health, some of them still beyond our understanding.

Samoa only has two hospitals, one of which is a 20-bed facility staffed by junior doctors. Ten health clinics staffed primarily by nurses serve Samoa's rural population. The Samoan medical system, severely underfunded and understaffed, is far less prepared to shoulder the burden of rising temperatures than

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developed countries in the West. Nevertheless, doctors like Tafuna'i, who have long worked on the front lines of the crisis, have been among the first in the world to recognize the importance of arming doctors with the tools they need to both recognize how climate change will affect human health and to properly treat patients experiencing the health ramifications of a rapidly changing environment.

For many years, Tafuna'i was the only clinical lecturer at the National University of Samoa, a tiny medical school on the island of Upolu. She noticed that the school wasn't teaching students about climate change — an omnipresent issue on an island that is experiencing some of the most severe sea-level rise on the planet.

"You can definitely see that climate change has a huge impact on health, but it wasn't in our curriculum at the time, and it wasn't something we spoke about," Tafuna'i said. So she invited colleagues from other universities, along with climate and related experts, to come speak to her students about the crisis. She also developed a climate-and-health curriculum that sent fourth-year students into remote parts of the island to analyze how climate change affects the well-being of rural communities.

In recent years, as rising temperatures have triggered public health emergencies of growing magnitude all over the globe, medical professionals and research institutions in the West have begun to catch on.

MEDICAL TREATMENT

Renee Salas, a doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, remembers the first time climate change walked into her emergency room. It was 2019, and Boston was in the throes of a record-breaking heat wave. A team of emergency medical technicians arrived in an ambulance carrying an elderly gentleman suffering from heatstroke, the deadliest form of heat-related illness. The patient's rectal temperature was 106 degrees Fahrenheit, which meant death was imminent. The emergency workers told Salas that when they climbed up the stairs and opened the door to the man's apartment, it felt like they were being "hit with heat from the Sahara desert." The patient and his wife, who both lived in the apartment, didn't have air conditioning. Just one window was cracked open.

Salas and her team managed to save the man's life, but the incident still weighs on her. "I often think about that patient's wife who still remained in that same apartment," she said. "We know from data that more than one-third of heat-related deaths are due to climate change, and that is making that disease more likely."

A year after that incident, in 2020, the Lancet, a premier medical journal, published a frightening assessment of the latest research and data on the intersection of warming and health — its "most worrying" outlook since the journal began publishing the assessments in 2016. Almost every indicator of health tracked by the dozens of interdisciplinary researchers who compiled the report, such as excess morbidity and mortality, showed evidence of climate stress (extreme weather events, vector-borne disease, wildfire smoke, the list of stressors goes on). Two-thirds of the cities surveyed by the report said they "expected climate change to seriously compromise their public health assets and infrastructure."

After reading the report, Salas saw that climate change was threatening "the very mission" of why she went into medicine in the first place. She decided to dedicate her career to the climate-and-health overlap. But at the time, no one in her circles was thinking about how climate change was going to affect medicine. In the United States, lawmakers were still arguing over whether climate change was even happening.

In the years since, however, Salas has seen a marked shift in the way the public, especially the medical community, thinks about climate change. "This has become mainstream medicine," she said. Climate change has infiltrated the zeitgeist at hospitals across the U.S. for one key reason: "Fundamentally," Salas said, "climate change makes our job harder as doctors."

PREPARING DOCTORS

In the U.S., networks and groups such as ClimateRx, the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, and Climate MD have cropped up with the aim to bring "climate solutions to the bedside." Those efforts — which include teaching doctors how to recognize climate-related illnesses, such as tick-borne diseases and heatstroke, in patients and communicating about climate change with patients in a hospital setting — haven't been immune to typical growing pains. The disparate initiatives within the larger climate-and-health movement are disorganized, and there's no easy way for the various sects to share data and

know-how. But that's starting to change.

In May, the National Institutes of Health funded a first-of-its-kind national Research Coordination Center on Climate and Health, based jointly at Harvard and Boston University. The research center, described as a "clearinghouse to facilitate data exchange and share best practices," provides a blueprint for what needs to happen on a global scale.

Meanwhile, doctors like Tafuna'i are sitting on years of knowledge about global warming's unbound potential to erode public health and stress health systems. Tafuna'i's experiences teaching students and treating patients in Samoa could serve to inform and educate countries that are just beginning to confront these challenges. But, thus far, there's been no indication that the West is looking to Samoa and other nations on the front lines of climate change for guidance.

"You can't share your wisdom if you're not at the table," said Sheila Davis, chief executive officer at Partners In Health, an international public health nonprofit that helped devise a COVID-19 response in the U.S. based on prior efforts to eradicate HIV in Haiti and Ebola in Sierra Leone and Liberia. "Raising the voices of those who have the true expertise, it's going to take all of us to push for that to happen."

COVID-19 taught the world a valuable lesson: Pandemics can't be defeated piecemeal. Studies indicate that the next pandemic may be fueled by climate change. The logical next step is to prepare — not individually, as siloed nations, but as a network of human beings around the world.

"How do you put a program in play that can be sustainable and then be something that's shared?" Tafuna'i asked. "We have to decide what the priorities are for adapting to climate change."

Adidas brings in \$437 million from the first Yeezy sale. Part of that will go to anti-hate groups

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Adidas brought in 400 million euros (\$437 million) from the first release of Yeezy sneakers left over after breaking ties with Ye, the rapper formerly known as Kanye West, as the German sportswear maker tries to offload the unsold shoes and donate part of the proceeds to groups fighting antisemitism and other forms of hate.

The first batch of shoes released in June, which sold out, helped the company reach an operating profit of 176 million euros in the second quarter, better than it originally planned, Adidas said Thursday. A second sale started Wednesday.

After Ye's antisemitic and other offensive comments led the company to end its partnership with the rapper in October, Adidas said it had sought a way to dispose of 1.2 billion euros worth of the high-end shoes in a responsible way.

"We will continue to carefully sell off more of the existing Yeezy inventory," said CEO Bjørn Gulden, who took over in January.

"This is much better than destroying and writing off the inventory and allows us to make substantial donations to organizations like the Anti-Defamation League, the Philonise & Keeta Floyd Institute for Social Change and Robert Kraft's Foundation to Combat Antisemitism," Gulden said.

Adidas has already handed over 10 million euros to the groups and expected to give an additional 100 million euros, with further donations possible depending on how future sales go, Chief Financial Officer Harm Ohlmeyer said.

Several Jewish civic leaders contacted by The Associated Press said they weren't planning to buy a pair of Yeezys themselves but generally welcomed the plan to support anti-hate organizations, saying the company is trying to make the best of a bad situation.

The Adidas CEO said the Yeezy sales are "of course also helping both our cash flow and general financial strength."

The first sale unloaded roughly 20% to 25% of the Yeezy sneakers that were left stacked up in warehouses, contributing 150 million euros of Adidas' 176 million euros in operating earnings in the April-to-June quarter.

Ohlmeyer, however, cautioned that the Yeezy contribution was smaller than the number made it seem because it did not include many of the company's costs.

Adidas also warned that the first sale included the highest-priced shoes and sold out completely but that it wasn't clear whether the remaining releases would see similar price levels and demand.

The blow-up of the Ye partnership put Adidas in a precarious position because of the popularity of the Yeezy line, and it faced growing pressure to end ties last year as other companies cut off the rapper.

The torn-up contract was now in arbitration, "a process that is being taken care of by legal people" for both sides and was surrounded "by a lot of uncertainty," said Gulden, the Adidas CEO.

Asked whether it must pay Ye royalties on the shoes, the company has said only that it will observe all its contractual obligations.

Yeezy revenue from June was "largely in line" with sales seen in the second quarter of last year, Adidas said. The boost has allowed the company to cut its expectations for this year's operating loss to 450 million euros from 700 million euros predicted previously.

On the amount of money given to anti-hate groups, Adidas said the donations were not a fixed percentage of sales but that it had discussed with the recipients what an appropriate amount would be.

Greenpeace demonstrators drape UK prime minister's house in black to protest oil expansion

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Five Greenpeace demonstrators were arrested Thursday after they draped the country estate of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in black fabric to protest his plan to expand oil and gas drilling in the North Sea.

Video posted by the group showed a crew dressed in bright red jumpsuits, helmets and safety harnesses carrying ladders and climbing onto the roof of the house in Yorkshire, in the north of England. They slowly unfurled long black sheets of fabric over the front of the home and held a yellow sign on the roof that read "No New Oil."

The prime minister was not home because he is vacationing with his family in California. Greenpeace said the group chose to stage the peaceful protest at a time when no one was home at the mansion, and that the activists were trained to ensure no damage was caused to the property.

Sunak announced Monday that Britain will grant hundreds of new oil and gas licenses in the North Sea to gain energy independence. The move was widely criticized by environmental groups that have accused the government of backsliding on its pledge to eliminate net carbon emissions by 2050.

As four Greenpeace members were on the roof of the British leader's country house, two others stood on the front lawn holding a banner with the words "Rishi Sunak — Oil Profits or Our Future?"

"We desperately need our prime minister to be a climate leader, not a climate arsonist," said Philip Evans of Greenpeace. "Just as wildfires and floods wreck homes and lives around the world, Sunak is committing to a massive expansion of oil and gas drilling."

U.N. scientists and environmental groups have called on global leaders to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels after a summer of record high temperatures, drought and floods linked to man-made climate change. Burning oil and gas to power vehicles, factories and electricity generating stations releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide, the main driver of global warming.

A statement from Sunak's office defended the prime minister's climate policies.

"We make no apology for taking the right approach to ensure our energy security, using the resources we have here at home so we are never reliant on aggressors like (Russian President Vladimir) Putin for our energy," the statement said.

The protest is one of dozens of high-profile demonstrations in the U.K. and across Europe by groups that have disrupted sporting events, caused massive traffic jams and performed shocking stunts to draw attention to the climate crisis and try to stop production of fossil fuels.

Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden said protesters should "stop the stupid stunts."

Two men and two women were arrested on suspicion of causing criminal damage and a public nuisance after they climbed down from the roof. A man involved in the incident was arrested on suspicion of causing public nuisance.

Assistant Chief Constable Elliot Foskett said there was never a threat to the public and the protest ended safely.

A former deputy chief constable in North Yorkshire called for an investigation into how the group was able to get to the prime minister's house.

Peter Walker, who retired from the force in 2003, told LBC radio that he was "absolutely astonished" by the "major breach of security."

"If free access is being granted to that property, people who wanted to do much more serious things would be able to leave devices or booby traps or something like that," he said. "This is a major failing, and it grieves me to say it because it's my old police force that has failed."

The Parkland school massacre will be reenacted, with gunfire, in lawsuit against sheriff's deputy

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. (AP) — Ballistics experts will fire up to 139 shots at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Friday during a reenactment of the 2018 Parkland massacre organized as part of a lawsuit that accuses a sheriff's deputy of failing in his duty to protect the victims.

As the reenactment takes place, technicians outside a three-story classroom building will record the sound of the gunfire, seeking to capture what the deputy assigned to the school, Scot Peterson, heard during the six-minute attack.

The shooting, which sparked a nationwide movement for gun control, left 17 dead, 17 wounded and hundreds traumatized in the South Florida community. Former Stoneman Douglas student Nikolas Cruz, 24, pleaded guilty in 2021 and was sentenced to life in prison.

Peterson — who worked for the Broward Sheriff's Office, also targeted in the lawsuit — says he didn't hear all the shots and couldn't pinpoint where they were coming from because of echoes. He got within feet of the building's door and drew his gun, but then backed away and stood next to an adjoining building for 40 minutes, making radio calls. He has said he would have charged into the building if he knew that's where the shooter was.

Families of the victims bringing the lawsuit contend Peterson knew Cruz's location, but retreated out of cowardice and in violation of his duty to protect their loved ones.

Peterson, 60, was acquitted in June of felony child neglect and other criminal charges for failing to act, the first U.S. trial in history of a law enforcement officer for conduct during an on-campus shooting.

But the burden of proof is lower in a civil lawsuit. Circuit Judge Carol-Lisa Phillips allowed the test, but made clear she was not ruling on whether the recording will be played at trial. That, she said, will have to be argued later — it is likely Peterson's attorneys will oppose the attempt. No trial date has been set. The families and wounded are seeking unspecified damages.

The experts will fire live ammunition from the same spots as Cruz, with an identical AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle. The bullets will be caught by a safety device. The school is closed for summer break and students and teachers are not on campus.

David Brill, the families' attorney leading the reenactment, did not return calls and emails seeking comment. Peterson's attorney, Michael Piper, declined comment.

Tony Montalto, president of Stand with Parkland, which represents most of the families, said while Peterson was acquitted of criminal charges "that doesn't mean he's not guilty of failing to do the right things."

"He failed to properly react to the tragedy, he failed to enter the building and he failed to render aid. The reenactment is designed to disprove some of the statements that were made during the criminal trial,"

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Montalto said. His 14-year-old daughter, Gina, died in the shooting.

Peterson, who didn't testify at his criminal trial, insisted he would have acted differently if he knew where the shooter was.

"Those were my kids in there," Peterson said in a 2018 interview with NBC's Today Show. "I never would have sat there and let my kids get slaughtered. Never."

Robert Maher, a Montana State University professor who has studied the accuracy of gunfire recordings, said gunshots are much sharper in person.

"Speakers are not able to reproduce this high-intensity, short-duration pop sound," Maher said.

Still, he said, there are techniques that might pick up the direction the shots were coming from and the reenactment should demonstrate how loud they were where Peterson was standing. That's a significant question as the classroom building's doors and window were mostly shut during the shooting.

"Are they really loud like you would expect a gunshot to be or, because the building is sealed up, not loud?" Maher said. "That's probably what they are going to be able to get out of the reconstruction."

Tamara Lave, a University of Miami law professor, said when Judge Phillips decides whether to allow the jury to view and hear the reenactment, she will consider whether it "fairly and accurately" depicts what Peterson heard — but it doesn't have to be perfect.

"It has got to be close enough to be fair and help the jury determine whether he actually heard the shots," Lave said.

Parkland sent warnings to residents so they won't panic if they hear the gunshots and to help them prepare mentally. Eagles' Haven, a community wellness center opened after the shooting, is planning several programs Friday including yoga, tai chi, a drum circle and meditation along with food so people can talk.

"When you are feeling triggered, it is good to be with other people who understand what you are going through," said Sarah Franco, the center's director.

University of California, Santa Barbara Professor Erika Felix, who studies community trauma after mass shootings, agreed. She said the reenactment "will bring up thoughts, feelings, emotions. It'll bring up memories."

Before Friday's reenactment, two South Florida congressmen, Democrat Jared Moskowitz and Republican Mario Diaz-Balart, will lead several colleagues from the School Safety and Security Caucus on a tour of the building, which has remained mostly untouched since shortly after the shooting. Floors are still covered with dried blood, books and computers remain on desks and classrooms contain wilted Valentine's Day flowers and deflated balloons.

They will then meet with family members and survivors. Moskowitz is a Stoneman Douglas graduate.

After Friday, the Broward school district says it will begin demolishing the building. It had remained standing as evidence in the Cruz and Peterson criminal trials, looming over the campus behind a chain-link fence.

Typhoon Khanun forecast to turn back to Japanese islands where it already caused damage and injuries

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The typhoon that damaged homes and knocked out power on Okinawa and other southern Japanese islands this week was slowly moving west Thursday but is forecast to make a U-turn and dump even more rain on the archipelago.

Typhoon Khanun, now in the waters between China and Japan's southwestern islands, is expected to slow to nearly stationary movement before a weakening high pressure system nearby allows it to turn east Friday, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

That forecast would largely spare China, where rain from an earlier typhoon caused deadly flooding and damage this week around the capital, Beijing.

Khanun, which means jackfruit in Thai, had sustained surface winds of 162 kph (100 mph) with higher gusts Thursday evening. Up to 20 centimeters (7.8 inches) of rainfall were expected in the Okinawa region

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by midday Friday, JMA said.

In Okinawa, the typhoon injured 41 people, three of them seriously, according to the prefectural government. A 90-year-old man was found under a collapsed garage in Ogimi village, and his death is being investigated as possibly caused by the typhoon's high winds.

The storm at one point left nearly 220,000 homes, or about 30%, of those in Okinawa, without power, according to the Okinawa Electric Power Company. Also, some 7,000 homes on Amami, an island northeast of the Okinawan islands, were without power, according to the Economy and Industry Ministry.

Most remained without power Thursday as the storm hampered recovery work. Hospitals that lost power were only receiving emergency cases.

Wind warnings for the main Okinawa Island were lifted Thursday, though moderate winds and rain were continuing to affect the island. Public transit systems that closed during the storm resumed operations, and some flights in and out of Naha Airport resumed later Thursday.

The airport was packed with passengers who had been stranded since earlier this week. About 80 Hong Kong travelers had been stuck in a hotel where they suffered a power outage for about half a day on Wednesday, said Steve Huen, executive director of Hong Kong-based travel agency EGL Tours.

Twenty-six were able to fly back on Thursday, while the rest, whose original flights over the past two days were canceled due to the typhoon, will fly home Friday, Huen said.

China and Taiwan were also making preparations for the storm. Though the eye is forecast to stay offshore as the typhoon turns east, winds exceeding 90 kph (56 mph) extended an average radius of 100 kilometers (60 miles), Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau said Thursday afternoon.

China's National Meteorological Center said the typhoon was in the East China Sea about 335 kilometers (208 miles) southeast of Yuhuan City on Thursday afternoon and was expected to bring strong wind and rain to the region's coast within hours. The typhoon's intensity would gradually weaken as it is expected to turn east toward Japan overnight, the meteorological center said.

China's weather authorities earlier issued rainstorm alerts for the eastern coast, from Jilin province, near the border with North Korea, to Zhejiang province, south of Shanghai. Ships were called into port and passenger ferry services halted in Zhejiang province.

Light rain was falling in the Taiwanese port city of Keelung, near Taipei, and coast guard personnel were warning people to stay off the beaches. The island shut its financial markets Thursday, some of its northern cities shut offices and schools, and offices closed in anticipation of worsening weather on the northeastern coast.

Today in History: Aug. 4, Anne Frank and family arrested

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Aug. 4, the 216th day of 2023. There are 149 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History

On Aug. 4, 1944, 15-year-old diarist Anne Frank was arrested with her sister, parents and four others by the Gestapo after hiding for two years inside a building in Amsterdam. (Anne and her sister, Margot, died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.)

On this date:

In 1790, the U.S. Coast Guard had its beginnings as President George Washington signed a measure authorizing a group of revenue cutters to enforce tariff and trade laws and prevent smuggling.

In 1830, plans for the city of Chicago were laid out.

In 1916, the United States reached agreement with Denmark to purchase the Danish Virgin Islands for \$25 million.

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the second of his four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics as he prevailed in the long jump over German Luz Long, who was the first to congratulate him.

In 1964, the bodies of missing civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James

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Chaney were found buried in an earthen dam in Mississippi.

In 1972, Arthur Bremer was convicted and sentenced in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, to 63 years in prison for his attempt on the life of Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace (the sentence was later reduced to 53 years; Bremer was released from prison in 2007).

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed a measure establishing the Department of Energy.

In 1987, the Federal Communications Commission voted 4-0 to abolish the Fairness Doctrine, which required radio and television stations to present balanced coverage of controversial issues.

In 1993, a federal judge sentenced Los Angeles police officers Stacey Koon and Laurence Powell to 2 1/2 years in prison for violating Rodney King's civil rights.

In 2009, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il pardoned American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee for entering the country illegally and ordered their release during a surprise visit by former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

In 2019, a masked gunman fired on revelers enjoying summer nightlife in a popular entertainment district of Dayton, Ohio, leaving nine people dead and 27 wounded; police said officers shot and killed the shooter within 30 seconds of the start of his rampage.

In 2020, nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been improperly stored for years in the port of Beirut, Lebanon, exploded, killing more than 200 people, injuring more than 6,000 and devastating nearby neighborhoods; it was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded.

Ten years ago: Security forces closed roads, put up extra blast walls and increased patrols near some of the more than 20 U.S. diplomatic missions in the Muslim world that Washington had ordered closed for the weekend following warnings of a possible al-Qaida attack. Missy Franklin claimed her record sixth gold medal on the final day of the world championships in Barcelona, becoming the most successful female swimmer ever at a world meet. American Stacy Lewis won the Women's British Open, finishing with a pair of birdies and closing with an even-par 72. Pro Football Hall of Famer Art Donovan, 89, died in Baltimore.

Five years ago: A utility worker was killed in a vehicle-related accident near a Northern California wildfire, becoming the seventh person to die amid the immense blaze that had been burning for two weeks near Redding. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro dodged what officials described as an assassination attempt when drones armed with explosives detonated as he delivered a speech to hundreds of soldiers.

One year ago: A Texas jury ordered conspiracy theorist Alex Jones to pay more than \$4 million in compensatory damages to the parents of a 6-year-old boy who was killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre over the Jones' repeated public claims that the attack was a hoax. The jury's decision marked the first time the Infowars host had been held financially liable for falsely claiming that the attack that killed 20 children and six educators in Newtown, Connecticut, was staged. U.S. basketball star Brittney Griner was convicted in Russia of drug possession and smuggling, and was sentenced to nine years in prison in a politically charged case. (Griner would be released in a prisoner exchange four months later.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor-singer Tina Cole is 80. Football Hall of Famer John Riggins is 74. Former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales is 68. Actor-screenwriter Billy Bob Thornton is 68. Actor Kym Karath (Film: "The Sound of Music") is 65. Hall of Fame track star Mary Decker Slaney is 65. Actor Lauren Tom is 64. Former President Barack Obama is 62. Retired MLB All-Star pitcher Roger Clemens is 61. Actor Crystal Chappell is 58. Author Dennis Lehane is 58. Actor Daniel Dae Kim is 55. Actor Michael DeLuise is 54. Former race car driver Jeff Gordon is 52. Rapper-actor Yo-Yo is 52. R&B singer-actor Marques Houston is 42. Britain's Duchess of Sussex, the former actor Meghan Markle, is 42. Actor Abigail Spencer is 42. Actor/director Greta Gerwig is 40. Country singer Crystal Bowersox (TV: "American Idol") is 38. Actors Dylan and Cole Sprouse are 31. Singer Jessica Sanchez (TV: "American Idol") is 28.