

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 1 of 58

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- View Groton Area School Staff](#)
 - [3- Shelby Edwards](#)
- [4- SD SearchLight: At ag forum, Johnson, Thune and Rounds reject 'loud' approach to politics](#)
- [5- SD SearchLight: South Dakota political parties battle themselves more than each other](#)
- [6- SD SearchLight: Public defender recommendation won't provide relief to cash-strapped counties, legislator says](#)
- [7- SD SearchLight: Abortion pill to stay on the market until U.S. Supreme Court ruling after appeals court order](#)
- [10- Weather Pages](#)
- [14- Daily Devotional](#)
- [15- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [16- Subscription Form](#)
- [17- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [18- News from the Associated Press](#)

Thursday, Aug. 17

Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin potatoes, broccoli/cauliflower blend, fruit, cookie, whole wheat bread.
Boys Golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA "Do Day", 1:30 p.m.

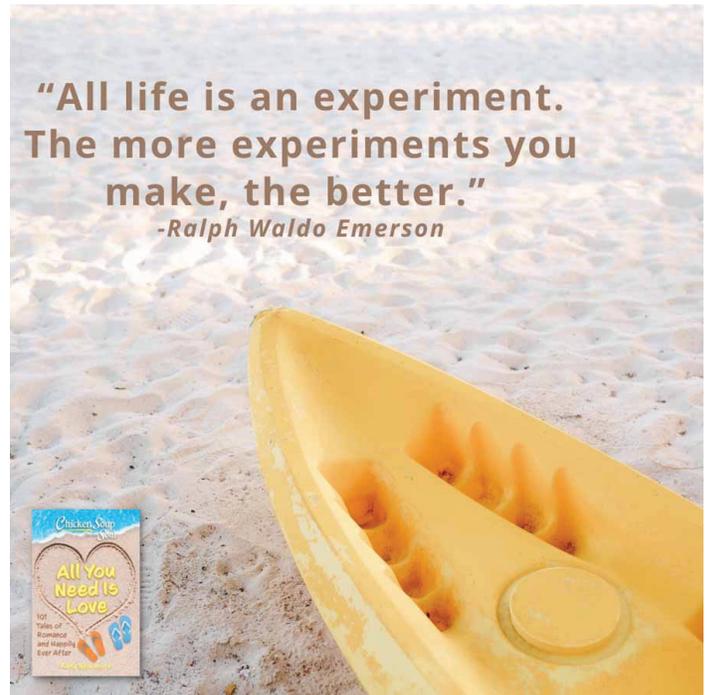
Friday, Aug. 18

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tators, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.
Girls Soccer hosts Belle Fourche, 4 p.m.
Boys Soccer hosts Belle Fourche, 6 p.m.
Football hosts Aberdeen Roncalli, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 19

Girls Soccer hosts St. Thomas More, 11 a.m.
Boys Soccer hosts St. Thomas More, 1 p.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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



"All life is an experiment.
The more experiments you
make, the better."
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sunday, Aug. 20

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Worship at Avantara, 3 p.m.
United Methodist: 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.
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.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Monday, Aug. 21

Senior menu: Lasagna rotini, spinach salad with dressing, ambrosia fruit salad, cookie, whole wheat bread.
Faculty In-Service
The Pantry at Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 2 of 58

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

More than 60 people are feared dead, while search and rescue operations are ongoing after a boat carrying about 100 migrants capsized off Cape Verde, West Africa. The boat left Senegal in July.

New forensics on the gun that discharged on the set of the film *Rust* in 2021, killing cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, alleges that Alec Baldwin pulled the trigger.

Thousands of Muslims attacked churches and set homes on fire in the Pakistani city of Jaranwala after accusing two members of the Christian community of desecrating the Quran, police say.

An appeals court ruled to keep FDA approval of the abortion medication mifepristone but ordered a ban on telemedicine prescriptions and mail-delivery of the drug. The Biden Administration is considering appealing to the Supreme Court.

Evacuation orders have been issued in several rural areas of northern California as the wind-driven Head Fire burns through Siskiyou County. The blaze is one of about 19 small fires sparked by thunderstorms in the Klamath National Forest.

NBA star James Harden sold 10,000 bottles of his personal brand of wine in just 10 seconds after it went on sale in China during a livestream, highlighting the power of streaming in a country where basketball is one of the most-watched sports.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv had "liberated" the village from Russian control after several days of intense battles as Kyiv continues forward with its counteroffensive, Ukraine Deputy Defense Ministry Hanna Maliar said..

TALKING POINTS

"These people are truly devastated. I mean, this was their son. This was somebody they treated as a son who has made public these allegations that are just ludicrous. So, I can't stand in their shoes, but I can only imagine the devastation they must feel," attorney Randall Fishman said of the Tuohy family's reported intent to end their conservatorship with former NFL player Michael Oher.

"No one is above the law. The president and all those implicated are entitled to the presumption of innocence that every American enjoys. But secondly, despite what the former president and his allies have said for now more than two-and-a-half years, and continue to insist at this very hour. The Georgia election was not stolen, and I had no right to overturn the election on January 6," former Vice President Mike Pence said in his first comments about former President Donald Trump's fourth indictment.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

President Joe Biden will be traveling to Pennsylvania to pay his respects to the state's former first lady, Ellen Casey, who died last week at 91. Later, Biden will travel to Camp David ahead of his Friday trilateral meeting with South Korea's president and Japan's prime minister.

The United Nations Security Council will be holding an open meeting on human rights in North Korea, the council's first on the subject since 2017.

Conservative talk radio host Erick Erickson's annual The Gathering conference kicks off today with a welcome reception in Atlanta. The three-day event is expected to draw several GOP presidential candidates, including former Vice President Mike Pence, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott.

India's Chandrayaan-3, the country's third lunar mission, gets closer to the moon's south pole. The lander is set to separate from the propulsion module today.

Edwards is junior/senior high principal



Shelby Edwards is the new junior high/senior high school principal for the Groton Area School District. She is originally from Rapid City, graduating from Rapid City Central High School. Her parents and brother still live in Rapid City.

"I received my Bachelor's Degree from SDSU," Edwards said. "After completing my Bachelor's Degree in 2014, I moved to Fremont, Nebraska, where I started the first ever women's hockey team at Midland University. While coaching at Midland, I also completed my Master's Degree in Educational Leadership."

"In 2016 I moved to Aberdeen where I taught at Simmons Middle School," Edwards stated. "During the seven years I was at Simmons, I taught Physical Education and Health as well as coached football, middle school track, softball, hockey, and Special Olympics."

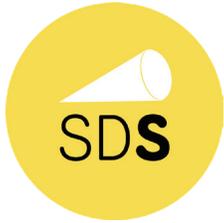
"In 2021 I started working on an advanced degree to become a principal," she said. "I received a Specialist Degree in K-12 Principal Education through online classes from the University of South Dakota."

"I have always wanted to be a principal," Edwards admitted, "where I could help and have an influence on both the staff and the students."

"This job opening in Groton was the perfect opportunity for me," she claims. "Groton is the perfect size school for me to be the principal as well as a school that has a high academic reputation."

"I live in Aberdeen with my partner Lisa and our two children Reagan and Avery," Edwards said. "We might consider moving to Groton if a nice affordable home became available."

- Dorene Nelson



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

At ag forum, Johnson, Thune and Rounds reject 'loud' approach to politics

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 16, 2023 6:23 PM

MITCHELL — U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, received applause Wednesday at an agricultural trade show when he countered a call for more aggressive confrontation in politics.

An audience member at a Dakotafest forum on the farm bill asked why Johnson doesn't attack his colleagues across the aisle with greater vehemence.

Johnson said being loud does not always produce results.

"Have we gotten everything done? No," Johnson said. "But I gotta tell you, the loud guys, your Cory Bookers, your AOCs, your Rashida Tlaibs, your Ilhan Omars, they get nothing done."

Afterward, he told South Dakota Searchlight he'd also include Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders on that list.

"I can tell you what," he continued during the forum. "When it comes to South Dakotans choosing show horses or workhorses, I think they made the right pick."

Johnson was with the rest of the state's all-Republican congressional delegation discussing their work to pass a new farm bill.

Sen. John Thune also responded to the audience member's question, saying, "If you have to tell people how tough you are, you maybe aren't that tough."

Sen. Mike Rounds told South Dakota Searchlight afterward that he often meets South Dakotans who are fed up with not feeling heard by their federal government.

"And they want someone to yell at the top of their lungs, 'You have to stop it,'" Rounds said. "What we find, as people working in Washington who want to get results, is that sometimes those results require you to work with other people."

"But when you scream at them, you don't necessarily get them to come to your way of thinking. In fact, they simply harden themselves."

One of the South Dakota delegation's next opportunities to put their non-combative approach to work is on the farm bill. Talks are underway to replace the existing multi-year bill.

That 2018 law expires Sept. 30, just as other priorities will be competing for floor time in Congress — namely the government funding bills that, if not passed by Oct. 1, could mean a partial government shutdown.

The farm bill covers farmer safety net programs, conservation and sustainability incentives, international trade, rural development, and food and nutrition programs for low-income earners — the last of which by far accounts for the largest portion of the bill. The legislation is one of Congress' omnibus packages, meaning it's made of numerous provisions from many lawmakers.

Staff working on the respective House and Senate agriculture committees expect a roughly \$1.5 trillion farm bill price tag over the next decade.

The Senate returns to work in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 5. The House returns Sept. 12.

— States Newsroom's D.C. Bureau contributed to this report.

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 5 of 58

COMMENTARY

South Dakota political parties battle themselves more than each other

DANA HESS

AUGUST 16, 2023 6:20 PM

It used to be that the toughest thing about politics was getting elected to office. Lately in South Dakota, the toughest thing about politics has been keeping the parties in line.

That was apparent this month when Dan Ahlers, the executive director of the South Dakota Democratic Party, resigned. Ahlers, who was hired in May and still had that new executive director smell, said he couldn't work with the party's chairwoman, Jennifer Slight-Hansen.

Ahlers was a an oddity in South Dakota Democratic politics in that he had actually been elected to public office, serving in the state Legislature. With only 11 Democrats in the Legislature, the party needs a top recruiter in a position of leadership as the party has a bad habit of forgetting to find enough candidates to fill out the ballot whenever an election comes around.

Ahlers' departure was fueled by his charges of Slight-Hansen's foul language, her inability to play well with others and her dicey ideas for a possibly illegal fundraiser. In a Black Hills Pioneer story, Slight-Hansen summed up the dispute by saying that she and Ahlers didn't "develop a good working relationship." She also said she would not resign from her party post, even though Democratic legislators and some of the party's largest county organizations are calling for her head.

This is not the best time for the party's leadership to be in disarray. Candidates have to be found for the fast approaching 2024 election as do more people who identify as Democrats. According to the math in a recent Dakota Free Press article, given recent voter registration trends, by October the number of voters registered as independents or without party affiliation should overtake the number of people in the state who are registered as Democrats.

Accustomed to being in second place in voter registrations behind Republicans, Democrats now face the prospect of having even fewer registered voters than independents. Their third place standing will be all the more disheartening because they will have been overtaken by a group that is unorganized — a group that made the leap into second place without the benefit of anyone actively trying to register more independents.

It's safe to say that the state's Republicans may be chuckling over the latest challenges faced by their Democratic counterparts. However, the GOP is not without some upheaval of its own.

A number of Republicans were upset over the sudden cancellation of a July fundraiser and committee meeting that left some party members paying for nonrefundable hotel rooms. Now it seems that former President Donald Trump, leading in Republican presidential primary polls and in the number of indictments, will be the speaker Sept. 8 at a rescheduled GOP gathering in Rapid City.

The Dakota Scout characterized Trump's visit as a way to unify the state's Republican Party. For a party that holds super majorities in the Legislature as well as every statewide elected office, Republicans sure look like they could use some unity. Often in the last legislative session, Republican seemed to be at war with themselves.

They turned their backs on most of the major bills backed by Gov. Kristi Noem, supposedly the leader of their party. There was little peace to be found internally as ultra-conservative members of the party — labeled "wackadoodles" by the senate majority leader — pressed their far-right agenda at every opportunity. This led to animosity from those Republican who are more interested in steering the ship of state than they are in running it aground.

A party that turns to Donald Trump for unity is likely to be looking for it in the wrong place. But, given the chaos of his tenure in the White House, the former president should feel right at home among South Dakota's political parties.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

Public defender recommendation won't provide relief to cash-strapped counties, legislator says

Lawmakers discuss county sales tax, administration fees as more immediate ideas

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 16, 2023 5:45 PM

A task force studying costly legal services recommended a state public defender's office last month to ease the burden on counties when defendants can't afford a lawyer.

But Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre, a member of the task force, told legislators during a separate study committee meeting on county funding issues Wednesday in Pierre that the recommendation, while a step forward, "does not provide a lot of relief to counties."

That's because the state office would only handle appeals and abuse and neglect cases. The projected budget to set up the statewide office would be \$1.4 million and would save counties roughly \$1.5 million, but the proposal doesn't address other aspects of indigent legal service costs. South Dakota is one of a few states across the country that leaves indigent defense responsibilities to counties.

Mehlhaff is also a member of the county funding committee, which is studying ways to relieve counties of expensive services and find new sources of revenue. He added that it would take "a long time" to set up an office to handle all indigent legal work in the state.

"I think the larger counties would benefit more than the smaller and intermediate counties from such an office," Mehlhaff added.

The cost of indigent legal services is top of mind for county commissioners across the state, representatives of the state county commissioners association told legislators earlier this summer.

"In a nutshell, unfortunately, I don't think the work that committee is doing is going to resolve or provide any short term relief for the counties," Mehlhaff said.

Another suggestion discussed by the legal services task force is a request for one-time money for cash-strapped counties and an extensive study in seven counties where little data is available on public defense costs and outcomes in court. Representatives from the county commissioners association also suggested capping a criminal indigent case expense at \$10,000 for a county, with the state covering the rest.

The summer study on county funding and services is casting a wider net, including a discussion on opening other revenue streams for counties, such as sales taxes, administrative fees or diverting some alcohol tax funds to counties.

While cities can implement a sales tax up to 2% and the state's sales tax is 4.2%, counties cannot implement a sales tax. Legislators on the committee discussed allowing counties to set their own sales tax rates, like cities, or adding a statewide sales tax with funds distributed among city and county governments.

The suggestion of a tax increase was controversial among legislators on the committee, in part because a majority of legislators passed a law last winter temporarily reducing the state sales tax from 4.5% to 4.2%.

Sen. Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish and vice chairman of the committee, told legislators that in a recent estimate his home county generated about \$787 million in taxable sales in fiscal year 2022. If the county implemented a 2% sales tax on that amount, it would receive \$15.8 million in revenue. If it implemented a 0.2% sales tax, it would receive \$1.57 million.

Rep. Neil Pinnow, R-Lemmon, told legislators that a sales tax for counties is not "the golden goose," but he's willing to explore how it could work for all of South Dakota's 66 counties.

"If we looked at a sales tax for counties, we'd have to look at a formula so rural counties like Ziebach could get a base fee, where every county got a minimum," he said. "That's a long term fix. In my view we have to stabilize the counties right now to give us time to do long-term legislation to solve the long-term problem."

Pinnow admitted that the political challenge of adding a sales tax for counties could be comparable to climbing Mount Everest.

The chairman of the summer study committee, Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, told legislators that "little approaches" ranging from small county sales taxes to administrative fees could be successful.

"We don't have a grandiose plan that we're going to raise sales tax by 2% across the state of South Dakota and that it's all going to the counties," Chase said. "We know it's not going to work and know that it can't work."

Legislators brainstormed a list of possible legislation that could be introduced at the 2024 legislative session beginning in January. The commission will officially recommend legislation at a later meeting this year.

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

Abortion pill to stay on the market until U.S. Supreme Court ruling after appeals court order

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - AUGUST 16, 2023 2:49 PM

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court ruled Wednesday the abortion pill can stay on the market, but it agreed with a lower court that ultimately use should revert to prescribing and dosage instructions that were in place before 2016.

That appeals court ruling will immediately be put on hold until the U.S. Supreme Court decides whether to take the case, under a decision the high court released in April. The ruling from the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals is expected to quickly be appealed to the high court.

The ruling means mifepristone remains legal and on the market in states that haven't banned it, and, due to the Supreme Court's earlier order, can be used under modifications approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Mifepristone was originally approved in 2000 and is the first of two drugs used in medication abortion. It is approved for use up to 10 weeks gestation and is also frequently used to treat miscarriage.

The Kaiser Family Foundation released a survey in June showing that 62% of the nearly 600 OB-GYNs surveyed said they use mifepristone with a second drug called misoprostol to treat a miscarriage.

"Miscarriages are very common and an important aspect of many OBGYNs' scope of practice, and sometimes involve the same procedures and medications that are used for abortions," KFF wrote. "In early pregnancy, medical management for miscarriage with misoprostol and mifepristone allows a shorter time course than waiting for nonviable pregnancy tissue to pass on its own (expectant management) in patients without complications."

Many questions in oral arguments

The three-judge panel from the New Orleans-based appeals court that issued the ruling Wednesday heard oral arguments in the case in May after the federal government appealed a district judge's ruling.

The judges had dozens of questions for the federal government's attorney, the lawyer representing a manufacturer and the attorney for Alliance Defending Freedom, the anti-abortion legal organization that originally filed the case.

Wednesday's ruling comes from that same panel, made up of Jennifer Walker Elrod, who was nominated by former President George W. Bush, as well as James C. Ho and Cory T. Wilson, who were both nominated by former President Donald Trump.

The appeals court on Wednesday disagreed with the district court judge's ruling that the 2000 approval of mifepristone should be overturned and that the generic version of the pharmaceutical should no longer be available.

The appeals judges agreed with the lower court's opinion that several changes the FDA made in 2016 and 2021 regarding dosing and use of the prescription should no longer be in effect.

"In loosening mifepristone's safety restrictions, FDA failed to address several important concerns about whether the drug would be safe for the women who use it," the appeals court's ruling states.

"It failed to consider the cumulative effect of removing several important safeguards at the same time. It failed to consider whether those 'major' and 'interrelated' changes might alter the risk profile, such that the agency should continue to mandate reporting of non-fatal adverse events," the appeals judges wrote.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 8 of 58

"And it failed to gather evidence that affirmatively showed that mifepristone could be used safely without being prescribed and dispensed in person."

The appeals court acknowledged in its ruling that several medical organizations filed briefs expressing concern that eliminating access to mifepristone for miscarriage management "even temporarily, may pose health risks to certain women."

"These concerns are not insignificant," the appeals court wrote. "But they apply primarily (if not wholly) to the challenge to the 2000 Approval — a claim that we have concluded is not likely to succeed."

Arguments about reducing access to mifepristone by reverting to the more limited use instructions in place before 2016 "are lessened by the fact that mifepristone would remain available... as would options for surgical abortion," the appeals court wrote.

Ho wrote his own opinion, saying that unlike his colleagues on the appeals court, he believed the anti-abortion organizations that filed the lawsuit likely would succeed with their challenge to the 2000 approval of mifepristone.

Limits prior to 2016

Reverting to the pre-2016 instructions would lower when the medication can be prescribed from 10 weeks gestation to seven weeks and change dosage and timing.

It would mean only doctors, not qualified health care providers, could prescribe mifepristone. Patients would need to attend three in-person doctor's office visits, eliminating the ability for the medication to be prescribed via telehealth and shipped through the mail.

The generic version of mifepristone could be at risk of no longer being approved, though the appeals court rejected that option in its Wednesday ruling.

The manufacturer of the brand name version, Mifeprex, would need to relabel the product to comply with the court's ruling, if the Supreme Court ultimately agrees with the appeals court's ruling. Lawyers for the company that manufactures the brand-name version have said this could take months.

The case began in mid-November when Alliance Defending Freedom filed the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas.

ADF, on behalf of four anti-abortion medical organizations and four anti-abortion physicians, argued the U.S. Food and Drug Administration incorrectly approved mifepristone to terminate pregnancies in 2000.

The lawsuit asked the district court to overturn that approval, but in the event the judge didn't agree to do that, ADF requested the court revert prescribing and use of the medication to instructions that were in place before 2016.

Judge Matthew Joseph Kacsmaryk ruled to end access to mifepristone in April when he issued a stay of the FDA's original 2000 approval.

The U.S. Supreme Court placed that ruling on hold while the case works through the appeals process. That decision, which has kept mifepristone legal, would lift after the nine justices issue a ruling, or refuse to hear the case.

Reactions to ruling

Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, said in a written statement the "appeals court decision sets up a showdown at the Supreme Court over baseless attacks on medication abortion, which has been a lifeline since the high court reversed Roe last year."

"This order, if allowed to take effect, could jeopardize the FDA's entire scientific system of drug approvals and would leave patients panicked and confused about their health and safety," Northup said.

Christopher M. Zahn, interim CEO of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said in a statement the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals decision "is another example of judicial activism that reflects ideology, not science."

"Mifepristone is demonstrably safe and effective for its FDA-approved use up to 10 weeks of gestation, it is demonstrably safe and effective when used as directed by telemedicine, and it is demonstrably safe and effective when prescribed by qualified advanced practice clinicians," Zahn said. "The FDA made these changes to mifepristone's regulation for medication abortion and miscarriage management based on robust

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 9 of 58

scientific data and with the support of the medical community, including ACOG.”

The medical organization, Zahn said, looks “forward to sharing with the Supreme Court the overwhelming evidence and consensus of the medical community in support of mifepristone for medication abortion and miscarriage management.”

Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Erin Hawley said in a written statement that the 5th Circuit’s ruling was a “significant victory for the doctors and medical associations we represent and, more importantly, the health and safety of women.”

“The 5th Circuit rightly required the FDA to do its job and restore crucial safeguards for women and girls, including ending illegal mail-order abortions,” Hawley added. “The FDA will finally be made to account for the damage it has caused to the health of countless women and girls and the rule of law by unlawfully removing every meaningful safeguard from the chemical abortion drug regimen.”

Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray said in a statement that it’s “absolutely infuriating that we have judges overruling medical experts and patient and doctor experience to impose outdated restrictions on mifepristone that fly in the face of medical science.”

“This has nothing to do with facts or science — it’s about ideology and controlling women’s bodies, plain and simple,” Murray added. “This case has enormous implications for other safe and effective, FDA-approved medications Americans rely on — and while patients should know that current access to mifepristone will, for now, remain the same, it’s critical this decision is quickly appealed and that we win this case.”

Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden said in a written statement that any “effort to restrict access to safe and effective abortion medication is nothing more than a political ploy to control women’s bodies.”

“The science is clear and a wealth of evidence demonstrates the drug’s safety and efficacy, which is why the FDA approved it more than 20 years ago,” Wyden said. “In fact, mifepristone has fewer complications than Tylenol.”

New Jersey Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez said in a written statement that the 5th Circuit’s ruling “is yet another affront to basic reproductive rights in our country.”

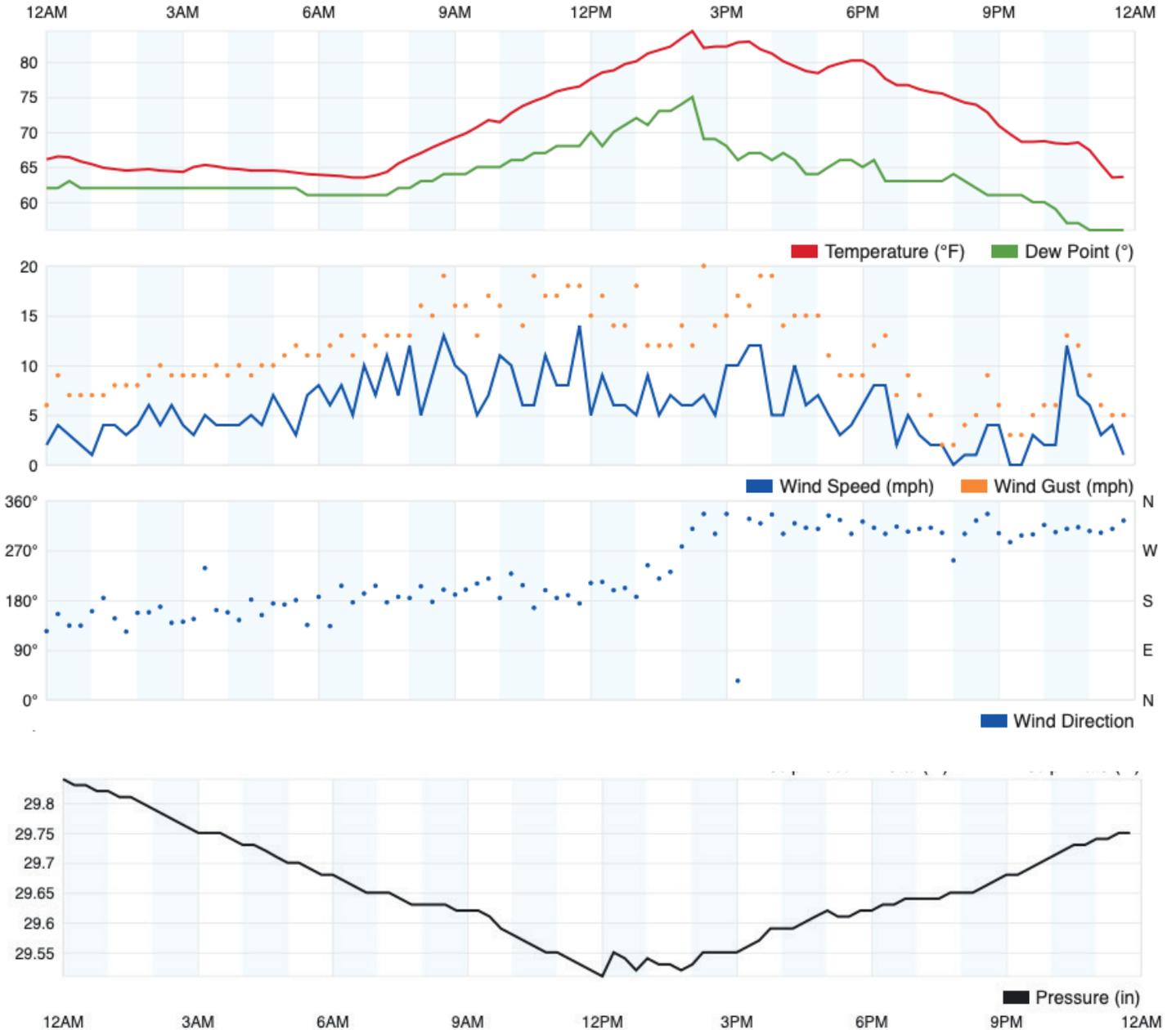
“While access to mifepristone remains the law of the land for now, this misguided decision is setting up this case for the right-wing Supreme Court majority to further erode the freedom to choose for millions of women across the nation,” Menendez said. “This all-out assault on women’s reproductive health care is shameful and only proves one thing: Republican officials at virtually every level of government will stop at nothing to abolish the right to choose nationwide.”

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 10 of 58

Yesterday's Groton Weather



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 11 of 58

Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Clear then Mostly Clear and Breezy	Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy	Hot	Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Partly Sunny and Breezy then Partly Sunny
High: 76 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 89 °F	Low: 70 °F	High: 93 °F	Low: 65 °F	High: 79 °F

Today

August 17th, 2023



74-83°

Much cooler today, clear skies

Friday

August 18th, 2023



84-105°

Warmer, breezy, clear skies

weather.gov/aberdeem August 17, 2023 2:29 AM ⁶

Today will be a little cooler before things heat up starting Friday. Expect clear skies and dry weather.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 12 of 58

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84 °F at 2:14 PM

Low Temp: 63 °F at 6:48 AM

Wind: 22 mph at 3:50 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 04 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1976

Record Low: 39 in 2012

Average High: 83

Average Low: 57

Average Precip in Aug.: 1.22

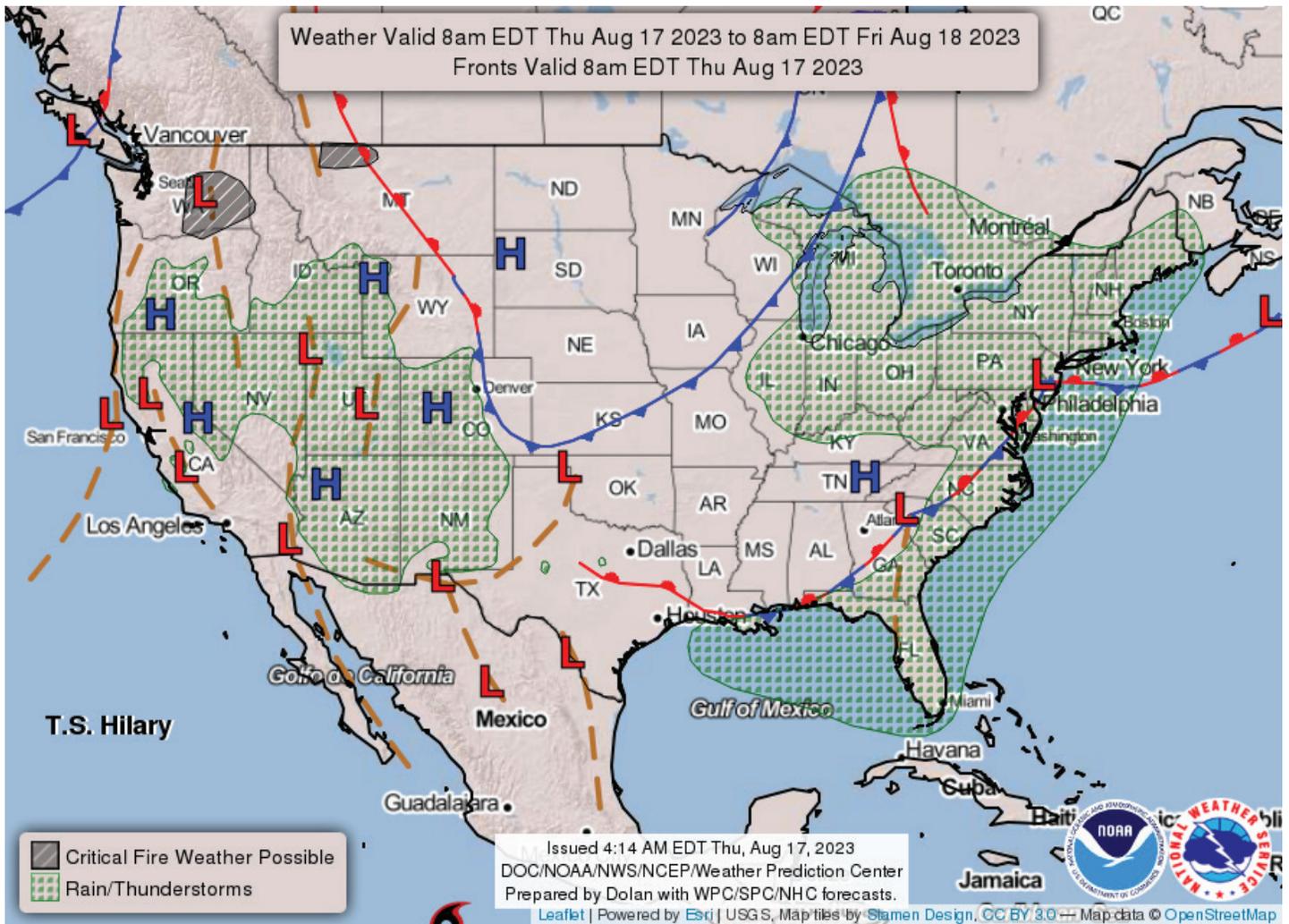
Precip to date in Aug.: 5.92

Average Precip to date: 15.32

Precip Year to Date: 18.59

Sunset Tonight: 8:38:45 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:35:24 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 13 of 58

Today in Weather History

August 17, 1961: Intensive rainfall occurred during the overnight hours on the 17th through the early morning hours on the 18th. Some rainfall amounts include 4.13 inches in Clark, 2.52 inches 1 W of Summit, 2.50 in Andover, 2.20 in Waubay, 2.15 in Wilmot, 2.12 in Wheaton, and 2.10 in Clear Lake.

August 17, 2007: An estimated four to six inches of rain and hail to the size of baseballs caused localized flooding between Piedmont and Tilford in Meade County, especially near poor drainage areas and at a barricade along a frontage road. The water washed over several roads and was several inches deep on Interstate 90, forcing law enforcement officials to close it for a couple of hours. Torrential rains estimated at four to six inches fell west of Hermosa in Custer County between 6 pm and 8 pm MST. Battle and Grace Coolidge Creeks overflowed their banks and several dry canyons filled with water and drained into the creeks. State highways 40 and 36 were flooded in numerous spots. A river gauge on Battle Creek just east of Hermosa crested at 14.91 feet at 9 pm, rising from 2.63 ft at 7:30 pm and above the flood stage of 8.0 feet. About six inches of water covered Highway 79 at the Battle Creek bridge. A railroad bridge about 3/4 mile downstream became clogged with debris and water rose behind the embankment and flooded six homes. At about 8:30 pm MST, a section of the embankment failed, flooding a new subdivision on the other side. All of the approximately 20 houses were damaged; three homes were washed off their foundations, and one of those houses was carried a half a mile east of the subdivision by the flowing water. There were no injuries.

1899: Hurricane San Ciriaco set many records on its path. Killing nearly 3,500 people in Puerto Rico, it was the deadliest hurricane to hit the island and the strongest at the time, until 30 years later when the island was affected by the Hurricane San Felipe Segundo, a Category 5 hurricane, in 1928. It was also the tenth deadliest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded. San Ciriaco is also the longest lasting Atlantic hurricane in recorded history, continuing for 28 days. On August 17, the hurricane turned back to the northwest and made landfall near Hatteras, North Carolina on the following day. San Ciriaco remains the strongest hurricane to make landfall on the Outer Banks since 1899.

1915 - A hurricane hit Galveston, TX, with wind gusts to 120 mph and a twelve foot storm surge. The storm claimed 275 lives, including forty-two on Galveston Island, with most deaths due to drowning. Of 250 homes built outside the seawall (which was constructed after the catastrophic hurricane of 1900), just ten percent were left standing. (The Weather Channel)

1946: An estimated F-4 tornado killed 11 people and injured 100 others in the Mankato, Minnesota area around 6:52 PM. The deaths and most of the injuries occurred in the complete destruction of the 26 cabins at the Green Gables tourist camp, 3 miles southwest of Mankato. A 27-ton road grader was reportedly hurled about 100 feet. Another tornado an hour later destroys downtown Wells, Minnesota.

1969 - Camille, the second worst hurricane in U.S. history, smashed into the Mississippi coast. Winds gusted to 172 mph at Main Pass Block LA, and to 190 mph near Bay Saint Louis MS. The hurricane claimed 256 lives, and caused 1.3 billion dollars damage. Several ocean going ships were carried over seven miles inland by the hurricane. The hurricane produced winds to 200 mph, and a storm surge of 24.6 feet. Complete destruction occurred in some coastal areas near the eye of the hurricane. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Northern and Central Plains Region. One thunderstorm spawned a tornado near Fairbury NE, along with baseball size hail and wind gusts to 100 mph, causing severe crop damage west of town. Ten cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Syracuse NY hit 97 degrees for the first time in twenty-two years. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Fifty-five cities, from the Middle Mississippi Valley to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley WV reported an all-time record high of 96 degrees, and Baltimore MD hit 104 degrees, marking their thirteenth day of the year with 100 degree heat. Chicago IL equalled a record with 46 days of 90 degree weather for the year. Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Wisconsin to New Jersey. Thunderstorms in New Jersey produced high winds which gusted to 92 mph at Wrightstown, and blew down a circus tent at Lavallette injuring fourteen persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 14 of 58

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

YOU BE JESUS

It was a Saturday morning and many activities were scheduled for the day. To make it special, the mother of Albert and George was preparing pancakes for them. Suddenly, they began to argue over which of them would get the first one.

Dismayed over their arguing, the mother said, "If Jesus were sitting here, He'd say "Let my brother have the first pancake."

"Great idea, Mom! George, you be Jesus and I'll take the first pancake," said Albert.

Paul, writing about how to "live love," said that "love does not demand its own way." In other words, the love that we as Christians are to demonstrate in our lives is not a self-centered love. It is a love that focuses on the needs of others - the way God loves us.

God loves us relentlessly, completely, unreservedly, and uncompromisingly with no limitations or conditions. In spite of our shortcomings or failures, He is there in us, for us, with us - loving us.

And, what does He ask of us? First, that we love Him in return for His love. Then, He asks us to love others as He loves us. When we love others as He loves us, we show others what Christian love is all about - something this world desperately needs. Live God's love!

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to love as You loved, to give as You gave, to care as You cared, and to do as You did. May others see Jesus in us! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5



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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 15 of 58

2023 Community Events

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 16 of 58

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 17 of 58



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.15.23

18 39 42 57 63 7

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 54
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.16.23

14 18 31 37 43 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$8,200,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 9
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.16.23

13 19 25 33 48 15

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 24 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.16.23

3 5 19 24 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 24
DRAW: Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.16.23

15 22 44 49 63 26

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 53
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.16.23

9 11 17 19 55 1

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$264,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 53
DRAW: Mins 4 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Hawaii governor vows to block land grabs as fire-ravaged Maui rebuilds

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN, JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Hawaii's governor vowed to protect local landowners from being "victimized" by opportunistic buyers when Maui rebuilds from a deadly wildfire that incinerated a historic island community and killed more than 100 people.

Gov. Josh Green said Wednesday that he had instructed the state attorney general to work toward a moratorium on land transactions in Lahaina. He acknowledged the move will likely face legal challenges.

"My intention from start to finish is to make sure that no one is victimized from a land grab," Green said at a news conference. "People are right now traumatized. Please do not approach them with an offer to buy their land. Do not approach their families saying they'll be much better off if they make a deal. Because we're not going to allow it."

As the death roll rose to 111 on Wednesday, the head of the Maui Emergency Management Agency defended not sounding sirens during the fire. Hawaii has what it touts as the largest system of outdoor alert sirens in the world, created after a 1946 tsunami that killed more than 150 on the Big Island.

"We were afraid that people would have gone mauka," said agency administrator Herman Andaya, using a navigational term that can mean toward the mountains or inland in Hawaiian. "If that was the case, then they would have gone into the fire."

Avery Dagupion, whose family's home was destroyed, said he's angry that residents weren't given earlier warning to get out and that officials prematurely suggested danger had passed.

He pointed to an announcement by Maui Mayor Richard Bissen on Aug. 8 saying the fire had been contained, that he said lulled people into a sense of safety and left him distrusting officials.

At the news conference, Green and Bissen bristled when asked about such criticism.

"I can't answer why people don't trust people," Bissen said. "The people who were trying to put out these fires lived in those homes — 25 of our firefighters lost their homes. You think they were doing a halfway job?"

The cause of the wildfires, the deadliest in the U.S. in more than a century, is under investigation. Hawaii is increasingly at risk from disasters, with wildfire rising fastest, according to an Associated Press analysis of FEMA records.

Since flames consumed much of Lahaina about a week ago, locals have feared that a rebuilt town could be even more oriented toward wealthy visitors, Lahaina native Richy Palalay said Saturday at a shelter for evacuees.

Hotels and condos "that we can't afford to live in — that's what we're afraid of," he said.

Many in Lahaina were struggling to afford life in Hawaii before the fire. Statewide, a typical starter home costs over \$1 million, while the average renter pays 42% of their income for housing, according to a Forbes Housing analysis, the highest ratio in the country by a wide margin.

The 2020 census found more native Hawaiians living on the mainland than the islands for the first time in history, driven in part by a search for cheaper housing.

Green pledged to announce details of the moratorium by Friday. He added that he also wants to see a long-term moratorium on sales of land that won't "benefit local people."

Green made affordable housing a priority when he entered office in January, appointing a czar for the issue and seeking \$1 billion for housing programs. Since the fires, he's also suggested acquiring land in Lahaina for the state to build workforce housing as well as a memorial.

Meanwhile, signs of recovery emerged as public schools across Maui reopened, welcoming displaced students from Lahaina, and traffic resumed on a major road.

Sacred Hearts School in Lahaina was destroyed, and Principal Tonata Lolesio said lessons would resume in the coming weeks at another Catholic school. She said it was important for students to be with their

friends, teachers and books, and not constantly thinking about the tragedy.

"I'm hoping to at least try to get some normalcy or get them in a room where they can continue to learn or just be in another environment where they can take their minds off of that," she said.

Tim Scott will share the spotlight at massive South Carolina campaign event headlined by DeSantis

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Just a few days after the first GOP presidential debate of the 2024 cycle, two of the contenders will be hitting the same stage in front of the largest annual gathering of Republicans in early-voting South Carolina.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis had already been set as the headliner at the Faith & Freedom BBQ, hosted by Rep. Jeff Duncan on Aug. 28. On Thursday, Duncan told The Associated Press that Sen. Tim Scott — invited in his capacity as a South Carolina senator, not presidential hopeful — had also accepted an opportunity to speak, as he has done in years past.

The event, which takes place in a massive civic center and attracts more than 2,000 attendees, comes five days after Scott, DeSantis and others in the broad GOP field are set to participate in the first debate of the 2024 cycle in Milwaukee.

Former President Donald Trump, the current Republican frontrunner, has indicated he's unlikely to attend and may hold a competing event of his own. The debate also comes during a week in which Trump and the 18 co-defendants charged alongside him earlier this week in a Georgia case are required to surrender themselves to authorities on allegations of meddling in the 2020 election results.

Duncan's event, a fundraiser benefiting his reelection campaign, has long been a showcase for possible White House contenders, including former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, then-Vice President Mike Pence, Sens. Ted Cruz, Joni Ernst and Marco Rubio, and former U.N. Ambassador and South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who's now part of the 2024 field.

In a state where success has historically been a catalyst for GOP presidential nominees, the South Carolina venue provides DeSantis an opportunity to make his case in front of a large number of party activists, with whom Trump — who earlier this month headlined the state Republican Party's annual fundraiser — remains popular.

But it's not just the headliner who draws attention. Last year, before Pompeo's keynote, Scott gave a rousing speech that drew thunderous applause from the barbecue crowd.

The opportunity to address a crowd of thousands in his home state — which holds the first GOP presidential primary in the South — comes as Scott's presidential campaign prepares to kick in to high gear in the closing months before the first votes are cast next year.

On Thursday, Scott's campaign told the AP that it had purchased \$8 million in ad space in the critical early-voting states of Iowa and New Hampshire, planning a television, radio and digital campaign that would run through the end of November. That purchase comes on the heels of a \$6 million ad buy the campaign launched as Scott kicked off his campaign in May.

It also follows major spending by a super political action committee backing Scott, which began a \$7.25 million television and digital ad buy when he entered the race. When that ends on Labor Day, the group's \$40 million reservation in early-state air time will begin.

Scott's campaign has long stressed that his strong ability to fundraise, coupled with the more than \$20 million he transferred to his presidential coffers from his Senate campaign account, would mean their candidate could stay on the air in key states in ways others might not be able to.

As DeSantis and Scott prepare to both take the stage at the event hosted by Duncan — one of only two Republicans in South Carolina's delegations not already aligned with a presidential candidate — voters in the state are still mulling their options.

At a DeSantis event in Greenville, South Carolina, earlier this summer, businessman Dean Estep said he's currently backing the Florida governor, and already has a running mate for him in mind.

"Tim Scott's a first class guy," Estep said, before the question about who he'd like to see on a ticket with

DeSantis was even finished. "He's just a picture of America."

Iran's foreign minister visits Saudi Arabia on first such trip in years as tensions ease

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's foreign minister traveled to Saudi Arabia on Thursday, marking the first trip to the kingdom by Tehran's top diplomat in years after the two nations reached a détente with Chinese mediation.

The visit by Hossein Amirabdollahian comes as both Saudi Arabia and Iran try to ease tensions between their nations, which long have viewed each other as archrivals for influence across the wider Middle East. Challenges remain, however, particularly over Iran's advancing nuclear program, the Saudi-led war in Yemen and security across region's waterways.

Amirabdollahian's trip to Riyadh comes as the two nations are reopening diplomatic missions in each others' countries. He was accompanied by Alireza Enayati, Iran's new ambassador to the kingdom.

The last Iranian foreign minister to visit Saudi Arabia on a public trip was Mohammad Javad Zarif, who traveled to the kingdom in 2015 to offer condolences for the death of King Abdullah.

The kingdom broke ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts there. Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric with 46 others days earlier, triggering the demonstrations.

That came as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, then a deputy, began his rise to power. The son of King Salman, Prince Mohammed previously compared Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler, and threatened to strike Iran.

Since then, the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. Iran has been blamed for a series of attacks after that, including one targeting the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in 2019, temporarily halving the kingdom's crude production.

Religion also plays a key role in tensions as well. Saudi Arabia, home to the cube-shaped Kaaba that Muslims pray toward five times a day, has portrayed itself as the world's leading Sunni nation. Iran's theocracy, meanwhile, views itself as the protector of Islam's Shiite minority.

But after the coronavirus pandemic and the U.S.' chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, Gulf Arab nations including Saudi Arabia have begun reassessing how to manage relations with Iran. In March, the kingdom and Iran reached an agreement with Chinese mediation to reopen embassies.

The war in Yemen continues, though Saudi-led strikes have dropped dramatically amid its efforts to withdraw from the conflict, which has seen the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels maintain their yearslong hold on the capital, Sanaa.

Ukrainian soldiers who were blinded in combat face the new battle of navigating the world again

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

RIVNE, Ukraine (AP) — Along a bustling street in a western Ukrainian city, Denys Abdulin takes his first independent strides since he was severely wounded and blinded while fighting invading Russian troops more than a year ago.

The 34-year-old former soldier, wearing black glasses and gripping a white mobility cane, steps onto a more crowded stretch of sidewalk. His movements become tentative and tense. He accidentally blocks the path of a woman approaching an ATM to withdraw cash.

Like many other pedestrians, she responds with a compassionate smile and gracefully moves aside. Gradually, Abdulin covers 600 meters (almost 3/10 of a mile), guided by a trainer walking ahead of him with a bracelet of small metal bells.

Five other Ukrainian military veterans conquered similar challenges while attending a rehabilitation camp for ex-soldiers who lost their vision in combat. Over several weeks, the men would learn to navigate the city of Rivne, to prepare their own meals and to use public transportation while traveling solo.

Daily tasks they previously performed without thinking now demand focus, strength and dedication.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 21 of 58

"Everyone pays their price for freedom in Ukraine," Abdulin, who spent months confined to a hospital bed and rarely takes off his dark shades, said.

The war Russia launched in Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022 has killed tens of thousands of fighters on both sides. Countless others, both Ukrainian military personnel and civilians who took up arms to defend their country, have been maimed or suffered other injuries that irreversibly reshaped their lives.

No statistics currently exist for how many service members have lost their sight due to severe wounds sustained in the war, according to Olesia Perepechenko, executive director of Modern Sight, the non-governmental organization that puts on the camp. But demand for the program is growing as the war nears its year and a half point.

Over the course of several weeks, the veterans, accompanied by their families, reside at a rehabilitation center outside of Rivne. Most receive their first canes here, take their first walks around urban and natural environments without assistance, and learn to operate sound-based programs for using cellphones and computers.

"Our goal isn't to retrain them, not to change them, but simply to give them a chance to become independent and self-reliant," Perepechenko, who is herself blind, said.

Abdulin voluntarily joined the military when Russia invaded Ukraine nearly 18 months ago. Completing the 600-meter walk marked a new phase in his recovery following the wounds he sustained when a mine detonated a few meters (yards) behind him in Sieverodonesk, a city in eastern Ukraine now occupied by Russians.

"It seemed to me that a flame flew out of my eyes," he said of that day in May 2022. "I immediately realized that I had lost my eyes."

"Of course, I expected everything, but becoming blind, I couldn't even imagine," Abdulin continued. "I thought that I could lose an arm or a leg, and I didn't want to die at all. I never even thought that I would become blind. Therefore, at first, it was very difficult".

In 2014, when Russia unlawfully annexed Crimea and armed conflict erupted in Ukraine's Donbas region, Perepechenko yearned to be on the front lines helping in some way. Her request to join the army was declined, so she decided to embrace a new mission: helping soldiers who lost their sight to reclaim a sense of autonomy.

Modern Sight held its first rehabilitation camp in 2019 and organized around 10 more since then. However, only two camps have taken place during the war. Although there is a waiting list of 30 people for the next session, the non-profit's primary hurdle is funding: each camp costs about 15,000 euros (\$16,400) to put on.

Abdulin spent almost a year receiving treatment for his injuries, which included a shattered jaw from the shrapnel that also stole his vision and left him with breathing and balance problems. His wife, Olesia Abdulina, returned with their two children from Lithuania, where the three of them sought refuge after Russia's full-scale invasion.

"His eyes were still so swollen, with bandages over them, covered in cotton pads," Abdulina said of seeing her husband at the hospital for the first time after their months of separation.

"The main thing is that you're alive," she said she responded when he told her he would never see again.

During the months after that, she fed him with a spoon and rarely left his side.

At the Modern Sight camp, the two of them were learning how to integrate his impairment into their family life.

While Denys attended physiotherapy or cooking classes, Abdulina and other women with husbands or boyfriends in the program go through their own training exercises. One purpose of the camp is reminding the spouses they are not "nannies" but life partners to their men, Perepechenko said.

During one such session, Abdulina is blindfolded and given a long cane. She tentatively probes the floor while another participant holds her hand. The purpose of the exercise is to help the women better understand what their partners experience and need.

"We remain the same people. We have the same capabilities," Ivan Soroka, 27, who joined the Ukrainian army on the day Russia invaded and was attending the camp for a second time. "We need to stand up,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 22 of 58

take control and work on improving myself.”

A projectile wounded Soroka near Bakhmut in August 2022, when the longest battle of the war so far was just beginning. Russian forces ended up taking the city in eastern Ukraine in May after more than eight months of intense combat.

“I lost my sight immediately, thrown by the blast wave. I felt that I was dying,” Soroka said. “I lay there for about two minutes. Then I realized that no, someone isn’t letting me go there.” As he recalls those moments, he implies it was his fiancée, Vlada, now sitting beside him, who kept him alive.

The couple met when Soroka was participating in the defense of the Kyiv region in the spring of last year. Their love blossomed swiftly against the backdrop of war. Prior to Soroka’s summer deployment to the Donetsk region, he proposed to Vlada. She agreed to marry him.

But soon after, the two were spending days and nights in a hospital instead of preparing for a wedding. The happy occasion that was postponed because of Soroka’s injury is now planned for early September; after months of rehabilitation, he feels both physically and psychologically strong.

“I’ve realized that unless I rise on my own and start doing something, nothing will change,” he said.

The men and their partners spend camp breaks and evenings in a gazebo on the rehabilitation center’s grounds. An atmosphere of tranquility prevails, occasionally interrupted by hearty laughter and jokes from their time as soldiers.

By the time they leave the center, the men will know they have the tools to get around a city and gained something equally vital - a sense of community forged through shared experiences and a common trauma.

One evening, when the day’s activities were completed, the camp participants gathered in a courtyard to celebrate Oleksandr Zhylchenko’s birthday. He lost his sight late last year, though did not share details about the circumstances.

“I’m drawing you into a circle, into your family’s circle. There are about 50 of us here,” Perepechenko said, handing Zhylchenko a heart-shaped balloon in the yellow and blue of Ukraine’s national flag. “This is our collective heart.”

The trainers and trainees stood in a circle and, one by one, shared their birthday wishes for the man of the moment. Careless days. A bright future. Patience, confidence, faithfulness. A peaceful sky. The final wish was for “victory for all of us and for Ukraine.”

Moved, Zhylchenko held the balloon a moment longer, silently conjuring his own wish.

Then, he released it, without seeing it swiftly ascend into the sky.

More than 60 Senegalese migrants are dead or missing after monthlong voyage for Spain

By ZANE IRWIN Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — More than 60 migrants are feared dead after a Spanish fishing vessel off the Atlantic island of Cape Verde rescued a boat that started with more than 100 aboard, authorities and migrant advocates said Thursday.

Seven dead bodies were found on the boat, while an estimated 56 people are missing at sea and presumed dead, said International Organization for Migration spokesperson Safa Msehli. According to Senegal’s foreign affairs ministry, 38 survivors were rescued earlier in the week near Cape Verde, about 620 kilometers (385 miles) off the coast of West Africa.

The Spanish migration advocacy group Walking Borders said the vessel was a large fishing boat, called a pirogue, which had left Senegal on July 10.

Families in Fass Boye, a seaside town 145 kilometers (90 miles) north of the capital Dakar, had reached out to Walking Borders on July 20 after 10 days without hearing from loved ones on the boat, group founder Helena Maleno Garzón said.

Cheikh Awa Boye, president of the local fishermen’s association, said he has two nephews among the missing. “They wanted to go to Spain,” Boye said.

Cape Verde’s National Police said a Spanish fishing vessel came across the fishing boat on Monday morn-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 23 of 58

ing about 150 miles north of the archipelago's Sal island.

The Spanish vessel was unable to tow the fishing boat and took the survivors on board, according to a Cape Verde police statement on Facebook.

The route from West Africa to Spain is one of the world's most dangerous, yet the number of migrants leaving from Senegal on rickety wooden boats has surged over the past year. The boats try to reach Spain's Canary Islands, an archipelago off the northwest coast of Africa that has been used as a stepping stone to continental Europe.

Nearly 1,000 migrants died while trying to reach Spain by sea in the first six months of 2023, Walking Borders says. Worsening youth unemployment, political unrest, violence by armed groups, and climate change push migrants across West Africa to risk their lives on overcrowded boats.

Nearly 10,000 people have reached Spain's Canary Islands by sea from the Northwest coast of Africa so far this year according to Spain's Interior Ministry figures.

On Aug. 7, the Moroccan navy recovered the bodies of five Senegalese migrants and rescued 189 others after their boat capsized off the coast of Western Sahara.

In 2021, an AP investigation found at least seven migrant boats from northwest Africa got lost in the Atlantic and were found drifting across the Caribbean and even in Brazil, carrying only lifeless bodies.

Fires and other disasters are increasing in Hawaii, according to this AP data analysis

By SETH BORENSTEIN, MARY KATHERINE WILDEMAN and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press
KIHEI, Hawaii (AP) — Hurricane-fueled flash floods and mudslides. Lava that creeps into neighborhoods. Fierce drought that materializes in a flash and lingers. Earthquakes. And now, deadly fires that burn block after historic block.

Hawaii is increasingly under siege from disasters, and what is escalating most is wildfire, according to an Associated Press analysis of Federal Emergency Management Agency records. That reality can clash with the vision of Hawaii as paradise. It is, in fact, one of the riskiest states in the country.

"Hawaii is at risk of the whole panoply of climate and geological disasters," said Debarati Guha-Sapir, director of the international disasters database kept at the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. She listed storms, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes.

Hawaii has been in more danger lately. This month alone, the federal government declared six different fire disasters in Hawaii — the same number recorded in the state from 1953 to 2003.

Across the United States, the number of acres burned by wildfires about tripled from the 1980s to now, with a drier climate from global warming a factor, according to the federal government's National Climate Assessment and the National Interagency Fire Center. In Hawaii, the burned area increased more than five times from the 1980s to now, according to figures from the University of Hawaii Manoa.

Longtime residents — like Victoria Martocci, who arrived on Maui about 25 years ago — know this all too well.

"Fire happened maybe once a year or once every two years. Over the last 10 years, it has been more frequent," said Martocci, who lost a boat and her business, Extended Horizons Scuba, to the fire that swept through Lahaina.

From 1953 to 2003, Hawaii averaged one federally declared disaster of any type every two years, according to the analysis of FEMA records. But now it averages more than two a year, about a four-fold increase, the data analysis shows.

It's even worse for wildfires. Hawaii went from averaging one federally declared fire disaster every nine years or so to one a year on average since 2004.

Watching the fires on Maui, Native Hawaiian Micah Kamohoali'i's mind drifted to 2021, when the state's largest ever wildfire burned through his family's Big Island home and scorched a massive swath of land on the slopes of Mauna Kea.

Linda Hunt, who works at a horse stable in Waikoloa Village on the Big Island, had to evacuate in that

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 24 of 58

fire. Given the abundance of dry grass on the islands from drought and worsening fires, Hunt said fire agencies need to "double or triple" spending on fire gear and personnel.

"They are stretched thin. They ran out of water on Maui and had to leave the truck," she said. "Money should be spent on prevention and preparedness."

FEMA assesses an overall risk index for each county in America and the risk index in Maui County is higher than nearly 88% of the counties in the nation. The federal disaster agency considers that a "relatively moderate" risk.

Hawaii's Big Island has a risk index higher than 98% of U.S. counties.

A 2022 state emergency management report listed tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, health risks and cyber threats as high risk to people, but categorized wildfire as a "low" risk, along with drought, climate change and sea level rise.

Yet fire is the No. 1 cause of Hawaii's federally declared disasters, equaling the next three types of disaster combined: floods, severe storms and hurricanes. Hawaii by far has more federally declared fire disasters per square mile than any other state.

For most of the 20th century, Hawaii averaged about 5000 acres (about 20 square kilometers) burned per year, but that's now up to 15,000 to 20,000 acres, said University of Hawaii Manoa fire scientist Clay Trauernicht.

"We've been getting these large events for the last 20 to 30 years," he said from Oahu.

What's happening is mostly because of changes in land use and the plants that catch fire, said Trauernicht. From the 1990s on, there has been a "big decline in plantation agriculture and a big decline in ranching," he said. Millions of acres of crops have been replaced with grasslands that burn easily and fast.

He called it "explosive fire behavior."

"This is much more a fuels problem," Trauernicht said. "Climate change is going to make this stuff harder."

Stanford University climate scientist Chris Field said "these grasses can just dry out in a few weeks and it doesn't take extreme conditions to make them flammable."

That's what happened this year. For the first four weeks of May, Maui County had absolutely no drought, according to the U.S. drought monitor. By July 11, 83% of Maui was either abnormally dry or in moderate or severe drought. Scientists call that a flash drought.

Flash droughts are becoming more common because of human-caused climate change, an April study said.

Another factor that made the fires worse was Hurricane Dora, 700 miles (1,100 kilometers) to the south, which helped create storm-like winds that fanned the flames and spread the fires. Experts said it shows that the "synergy" between wildfire and other weather extremes, like storms.

Stanford's Field and others said it's difficult to isolate the effects of climate change from other factors on Hawaii's increasing disasters, but weather catastrophes are increasing worldwide. The nation has experienced a jump in federally declared disasters, and Hawaii has been hit harder.

Because Hawaii is so isolated, the state is often more self-sufficient and resilient after disasters, so when FEMA calculates risks for states and counties, Hawaii does well in recovery, said Susan Cutter, director of the Hazards Vulnerability and Resilience Institute at the University of South Carolina. Still, it shocks people to think of disasters in places they associate with paradise.

"Those are places of fantasy and nothing bad is supposed to happen there. You go there to escape reality, to leave pain behind, not face it head on," said University of Albany emergency preparedness professor Jeannette Sutton. "Our perceptions of risk are certainly challenged when we have to think about the dangers associated with paradise, not just its exotic beauty."

Maui resident Martocci said, "it is paradise 99% of the time."

"We've always felt secure about living in paradise, and that everything will be OK," she said. "But this has been a reality check for West Maui. A significant reality check."

Heavy rain and landslides have killed at least 72 people this week in an Indian Himalayan state

By CHONCHUI NGASHANGVA and SIBI ARASU Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Days of relentless rain in India's Himalayan region have killed at least 72 people this week, a government official said Thursday, as a heavy monsoon triggered landslides and flash floods that have submerged roads, washed away buildings and left residents scrambling for safety.

Rescuers in the mountainous Himachal Pradesh state have been working through challenging weather conditions to save people trapped under mud and debris from the rains that struck over the weekend. India's weather department has put the state on high alert and expects the downpours to continue over the next few days.

Vikram Singh, an operator at the state's emergency operation center, said on Thursday that the 72 deaths occurred over the previous five days and that rescue work was ongoing.

Hundreds of roads remain blocked and schools in the capital city of Shimla have been ordered shut as the Indian Air Force and disaster response teams help evacuate people from low-lying, vulnerable areas. The state's chief minister, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, said over 2,000 people have been rescued using helicopters and motor boats and are now safe in relief camps.

Visuals on social media showed trees falling apart as homes, built atop the hills, collapsed in succession. In the background, people can be heard crying out in horror, as they shouted "get out from here" and "get back."

In Shimla, a Hindu temple collapsed on Monday amid deadly landslides, and authorities feared that people are still buried under the debris. Authorities said the temple was crowded with devotees, raising fears that the death toll could rise as rescue work carries on.

Homes in some districts were also washed away after a cloudburst — a sudden, very heavy rain — Sunday night, leaving roads flooded and people stranded.

Cloudbursts are defined as when more than 10 centimeters (3.9 inches) of rainfall occurs within 10 square kilometers (3.8 square miles) within an hour. They are a common occurrence in Himalayan regions, where they have the potential to cause intense flooding and landslides affecting thousands of people.

Sukhu, the chief minister, told the Press Trust of India news agency that it will take a year to rebuild infrastructure destroyed by the rains of this monsoon, and claimed the estimated loss to be about 100 billion rupees (\$1.2 billion). "It's a big challenge, a mountain-like challenge," he said.

Last month, record monsoon showers killed more than 100 people over two weeks in parts of northern India, including in Himachal Pradesh, which was the worst hit.

Disasters caused by landslides and floods are common in India's Himalayan north during the June-September monsoon season. Scientists say they are becoming more frequent as global warming increases.

However, local experts say the current disaster is likely due to unplanned construction in this vulnerable region. "It is poor planning and governance that has led to this much damage," said Anand Sharma, a retired meteorologist with the Indian Meteorological Department, the country's weather agency.

Sharma is from the Himalayan region and has closely observed weather patterns in this region for over three decades. He said the heavy and sometimes extreme rains is expected in the Himalayan foothills during the monsoon season.

"All the fallen buildings are those that were constructed recently, buildings built a 100 years ago have witnessed little to no damage," he said, adding that growing tourism to the region is another factor.

"They build anywhere they like and when heavy rains occur, such disasters inevitably follow," Sharma said.

China's government tries to defuse economic fears after real estate developer's debt struggle

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's government is trying to reassure jittery homebuyers after a major real estate developer missed a payment on its multibillion-dollar debt, reviving fears about the industry's shaky finances and their impact on the struggling Chinese economy.

There is no indication Country Garden's problems might spread beyond China, which seals off its financial system from global capital flows, economists say. But they highlight the industry's struggle under pressure from the ruling Communist Party to reduce soaring debt that is seen as an economic threat. That has bankrupted hundreds of small developers and depressed China's economic growth.

The Country Garden episode has echoes of Evergrande Group, which is trying to restructure more than \$340 billion owed to banks and bondholders. Fears of a possible Evergrande default in 2021 rattled global markets, but they eased after the Chinese central bank said its problems were contained and Beijing would keep credit markets functioning. A central bank official said in March financing conditions have "improved significantly."

Financial markets were rattled when Country Garden Holdings Co. missed two payments totaling \$22.5 million due to buyers of dollar-denominated bonds on Aug. 6. It has a 30-day grace period before it would be declared in default.

A government spokesperson tried to reassure the public and financial markets, saying conditions are improving and regulators are getting debt under control.

"The risks of housing enterprises are expected to be gradually resolved," said Fu Linghui of the National Bureau of Statistics.

Policy changes "will help boost market confidence," Fu said at a news conference. "Housing consumption and housing enterprises' willingness to invest are expected to gradually improve."

On Thursday, a half-dozen homebuyers sat outside a Country Garden development under construction in Beijing beside a sign that said they have been "fighting for their rights" for 97 days.

The homebuyers, who sat under tent in 31 C (89 F) heat, declined to talk to a reporter but a security guard said their complaint stemmed from a Country Garden project in Malaysia.

Country Garden, previously seen as one of China's financially healthiest developers, suspended trading of its bonds Monday on Chinese exchanges. That followed a warning last week that it might post a loss of as much as 55 billion yuan (\$7.5 billion) for the first half of 2023.

Abroad, the impact "seems likely to be limited," said Jennifer McKeown of Capital Economics in a report.

Foreign investors pulled out of Chinese real estate after earlier defaults and "policymakers should step in to prevent a meltdown in China," McKeown said.

Real estate propelled China's economic boom, but developers borrowed heavily as they turned cities into forests of apartment and office towers. That helped to push total corporate, government and household debt to the equivalent of more than 300% of annual economic output, unusually high for a middle-income country.

After years of warnings that led to global rating agencies cutting the Chinese government's credit rating in 2017, the ruling party cracked down on real estate debt in 2020. It imposed controls known as "three red lines" that prohibit heavily indebted developers from borrowing more to pay off bonds and bank loans as they matured.

A weak real estate industry complicates efforts by Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government to reverse a deepening economic slump after a rebound following the end of anti-virus controls fizzled out sooner than expected.

The economy grew by a robust 2.2% over the previous quarter in the January-March period. But that fell to just 0.8% in the three months ending in June. That is equal to a 3.2% annual rate, which would be among China's weakest in decades.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 27 of 58

Revving up real estate spending was the ruling party's solution for previous downturns. Xi's government has eased restrictions on borrowing by developers and told banks to lend to homebuyers. But it appears to be trying to stick to its overall debt-reduction goal.

Real estate accounts for some 20% of China's economy. When spending on steel and copper for construction, furniture and other related purchases is added in, estimates of its share of the economy rises as high as 35%.

Real estate's troubles are causing a vicious cycle by prompting jittery households to put off housing, auto and other big purchases, which in turn depresses economic activity further. Auto sales shrank 2.6% in July from last year's already depressed level under anti-virus curbs.

Country Garden's debt struggle might "drive potential homebuyers away from privately owned developers," Moody's Investors Service said in a report. That would "weaken effects of any potential supportive measures by the government to stabilize property sales."

The industry also might be squeezed as investors and banks shy away from lending to smaller developers, Moody's said.

In a sign of weak demand, prices paid for new homes fell for a second month in July, according to the statistics bureau. Prices in 35 smaller cities declined 0.3% from June. Prices in 31 bigger cities edged down 0.2%.

Sales of land use rights are down, adding to the strain on local governments that are trying to manage debt burdens that swelled with the expense of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Country Garden was founded in 1992 by Yang Guoqiang, a former farmer and construction worker. Yang handed over his shares in 2005 to his 25-year-old daughter, Yang Huiyan. She was ranked the richest woman in Asia by Forbes magazine with a net worth of \$11 billion.

Yang Huiyan's fortune rose to \$33.1 billion in 2020, making her the 11th-richest private individual in China, according to Hurun Report, which follows the country's wealthy. Forbes estimated this week that plunged almost 90% to \$4.3 billion as Country Garden's share price tumbled.

Country Garden's possible losses are a sliver of those of Evergrande, headquartered in Shenzhen, adjacent to Hong Kong, which reported in June that it lost \$81 billion in 2021-22.

But both ran into the same problem: They have more assets than debt but can't turn slow-selling real estate into cash fast enough to repay lenders.

Country Garden reported 1.7 trillion yuan (\$233 billion) versus 1.4 trillion yuan (\$193 billion) of liabilities at the end of 2022. The business news magazine Caixin cited an unidentified source who said the developer might have an additional 200 billion yuan (\$27 billion) in debt.

The developer had only 147.6 billion yuan (\$20 billion) of cash. Some 60 billion yuan (\$8 billion) was buyer deposits and other money that couldn't be freely used.

Country Garden, headquartered in Shunde, near Hong Kong, said Aug. 10 sales this year through July fell 35% from the same period of 2022 to 140.8 billion yuan (\$19.3 billion). It said July sales fell 60%.

"The company has encountered the biggest difficulties since its establishment," its president, Mo Bin, said in a statement.

Country Garden had outstanding bonds and asset-backed securities of 104 billion yuan (\$14.25 billion), including 78 billion yuan (\$10.7 billion) of bonds sold abroad, according to Caixin. It said bonds worth 7.3 billion yuan (\$1 billion) will mature in September.

The company also owes 162.5 billion yuan (\$22.3 billion) to banks and other financial institutions, according to Moody's.

Evergrande, the global industry's most heavily indebted company, was big enough that regulators stepped in to supervise its debt restructuring, which has yet to be completed. But they avoided bailing out the company or its creditors to avoid sending the wrong message about the need to reduce debt.

Local authorities took control of stalled Evergrande building projects to make sure buyers got apartments that already were paid for.

Country Garden said in a July 31 statement it would "seek guidance and support from the government and regulatory authorities."

Authorities have yet to say whether the company is a big enough risk for regulators to get involved in its restructuring or take over building projects.

Heavy rain in Germany causes flooding and leads to flight cancelations in Frankfurt

BERLIN (AP) — Heavy rain in parts of Germany caused flooding and led to dozens of flight cancelations at Frankfurt Airport, the country's busiest and a major European hub, authorities said Thursday.

The airport said large quantities of water accumulated on the tarmac Wednesday evening and ground handling was suspended for more than two hours, German news agency dpa reported.

The airport website showed about 70 flights were canceled by 11 p.m., when flying is ordinarily halted for the night, while 23 flights headed for Frankfurt were diverted to other airports.

Downpours in parts of southwestern and central Germany led to flooded basements and streets. In Gelsenkirchen, in the western Ruhr district, the fire service said people were rescued from their cars where several highway underpasses were under water.

As Israeli settlements thrive, Palestinian taps run dry. The water crisis reflects a broader battle

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JIFTLIK, West Bank (AP) — Across the dusty villages of the occupied West Bank, where Israeli water pipes don't reach, date palms have been left to die. Greenhouses are empty and deserted. Palestinians say they can barely get enough water to bathe their children and wash their clothes — let alone sustain livestock and grow fruit trees.

In sharp contrast, neighboring Jewish settlements look like an oasis. Wildflowers burst through the soil. Farmed fish swim in neat rows of ponds. Children splash in community pools.

The struggle for water access in this strip of fertile land reflects a wider contest for control of the West Bank — and in particular the Jordan Valley, which Palestinians consider the breadbasket of their hoped-for future state and Israelis view as key to protecting their eastern border.

"People are thirsty, the crops are thirsty," said Hazeh Daraghmeh, a 63-year-old Palestinian date farmer in the Jiftlik area of the valley, where some of his palms have withered in the bone-dry dirt. "They're trying to squeeze us step by step," Daraghmeh said.

Across the West Bank, water troubles have stalked Palestinian towns and cities since interim peace accords of the 1990s gave Israel control over 80% of the West Bank's water reserves — and most other aspects of Palestinian life.

The accords also created a limited self-rule Palestinian government that would provide water to its swelling cities by tapping the rapidly depleting reservoirs it shares with Israel and buying water from Israel's state-run company. The arrangement left the Palestinians who live in the remaining 60% of the West Bank under full Israeli civil control stranded — disconnected from both Israeli and Palestinian water grids. This includes much of the Jordan Valley.

Intended to last five years, the interim accords remain in place today.

"The amount of water that Israel is supplying has not adapted to the needs of Palestinians and in many cases has not changed since the 1970s," said Eyal Hareuveni, author of a recent report on the water crisis from Israeli human rights group B'Tselem. "The infrastructure is designed to benefit settlements."

The 500,000 Jewish settlers who live in the West Bank are connected to the Israeli water grid through a sophisticated network that provides water continuously, but Palestinian cities are not. So in the scorching summer, Palestinians get municipal water only sporadically.

With regional droughts intensifying, temperatures rising and Israel's far-right government entrenching

ments.

"They don't want us to be farmers," Sawafta said of Israeli authorities. "They don't want us to be self-sufficient."

Air evacuations are to begin for people in the path of wildfires in Canada's Northwest Territories

YELLOWKNIFE, Northwest Territories (AP) — Air evacuations were to begin Thursday to move residents in the capital of Canada's Northwest Territories out of the path of wildfires that neared the city of 20,000 people.

People in the four areas of Yellowknife at highest risk should leave as soon as possible and residents in other areas have until noon Friday to leave, the Northwest Territories government said. Only those who don't have the option of leaving by road should register for the flights out, officials added. People who are immunocompromised or have a condition that puts them at higher risk were encouraged to sign up.

"I want to be clear that the city is not in immediate danger and there's a safe window for residents to leave the city by road and by air," Shane Thompson, a government minister for the Territories, told a news conference.

The fire was burning about 17 kilometers (10 miles) outside the city. The evacuation order issued Wednesday night applies to the city of Yellowknife and the neighboring First Nations communities of Ndilo and Dettah.

"Without rain, it is possible it will reach the city outskirts by the weekend," Thompson said.

If smoke limits visibility, those leaving Yellowknife by highway will be escorted through the active fire zone.

More than 200 wildfires have already burned a widespread area of the Northwest Territories. There were 1,067 active wildfires burning across Canada as of Wednesday.

Eight communities totaling nearly 6,800 people, or 15% of the Northwest Territories' population, have already evacuated, Mike Westwick, the region's fire information officer, said earlier in the day.

Many highways have been closed and the territory has had what officials called the largest airlift in its history. Canadian Forces personnel are helping firefighters and have flown evacuees out on Hercules aircraft.

Canada has seen a record number of wildfires this year. More than 21,000 square kilometers (8,108 miles) have burned.

Hillsong Church founder Brian Houston found not guilty of concealing his father's child sex crimes

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Hillsong Church founder Brian Houston was ruled not guilty Thursday of an Australian charge of concealing his father's child sex crimes.

Houston, 69, was the Sydney-based church's senior global pastor when police charged him two years ago with concealing a serious indictable offense. He resigned from his church roles months later.

Sydney Magistrate Gareth Christofi ruled Brian Houston had a reasonable excuse for not reporting Frank Houston's offenses to police. Christofi accepted that Houston believed the victim Brett Sengstock did not want the abuse in the 1970s reported to police.

Sengstock testified in the trial that began in December that he never told Houston not to report the abuse.

Sengstock told reporters outside court that the verdict blamed him for the church's failure to report the elder Houston to police.

"Frank Houston was no pioneer for Christianity. His legacy remains a faded memory of a pedophile," Sengstock told reporters.

The Associated Press does not usually identify victims or alleged victims of sexual abuse, but Sengstock has chosen to identify himself in the media.

"Regardless of today's outcome, I have received a life sentence. Blaming the victim is as repulsive as the assaults themselves," Sengstock added.

The magistrate said that regardless of what Sengstock told Houston, Houston had been told of Sengstock's attitude by others.

"Victims of sexual abuse ought to feel safe to confide in others without being concerned they are exposing those others to a criminal offense," Christofi said.

Houston appeared teary-eyed when he spoke to media outside court.

"I want to express my sadness to Brett Sengstock, genuine sadness about what my father did to him and all his victims. He was obviously a serial pedophile. We probably will never know the extent of his pedophilia," Houston told reporters.

"A lot of people's lives have been tragically hurt and for that I'll always be very sad. But I'm not my father," he added.

Hillsong acknowledged the ruling in a statement from the church. "Our prayer is that those impacted deeply and irrevocably by the actions of Frank Houston will find peace and healing, and that our former senior pastor Brian Houston and his family can look to the future and continue to fulfil God's purpose for their lives," it said.

Houston became aware in 1999 of his father's abuse of the then-7-year-old Sengstock. His father confessed and was defrocked as an Assemblies of God pastor. Frank Houston died in 2004 at age 82 without being charged.

Brian Houston shared information about his father's crimes with church leaders but not with police.

Prosecutor Dareth Harrison said Houston had found a convenient excuse to avoid reporting the allegation to authorities to protect both the church and his father.

Christofi said proving that motivation beyond reasonable doubt was a "tall order indeed."

Prosecutors also submitted that Brian Houston had used vague language when he spoke publicly about his father's abuse and removal as a minister.

Christofi found that while Brian Houston might have used euphemisms in public, his meaning was obvious and speaking "widely and freely" about his father's abuse indicated Houston wanted people to know, the magistrate said.

"That is the very opposite of a cover-up," Christofi said.

The charge followed the findings of an Australian government inquiry published in 2015 into institutional responses to allegations of child sex abuse.

The inquiry found Frank Houston had been allowed to retire quietly in response to his crimes. Brian Houston had faced a potential 5-year prison sentence if convicted.

California town of Paradise deploys warning sirens as 5-year anniversary of deadly fire approaches

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — California residents driven from their homes by one of the deadliest wildfires in recent history had one request before they would rebuild in the small mountain town of Paradise: warning sirens to bolster town emergency systems that failed some people before the fast-moving inferno that killed 85.

Town officials started testing the new sirens this summer after installation began in spring and as the five-year anniversary of the wildfire that wiped out much of the community approaches this November. There will eventually be 21 sirens erected throughout town that will emit one minute of loud, Hi-Lo warning sounds followed by evacuation instructions.

"If you're going to come back to town, if you're going to be part of Paradise again, what would make you feel secure and happy and wanting to come back? What do you need?" Paradise Mayor Greg Bolin recalled asking residents after the fire. "Number one on that list was a warning system."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 31 of 58

Tests of the sirens began in July and are run on the first Saturday of every month. Twelve sirens were ready for testing in early August, at locations ranging from Town Hall to police headquarters to remote intersections. The town's protocol says the sirens and messaging will sound for 10 minutes, followed by intervals of five minutes of silence and five minutes of warnings "until the emergency has subsided."

Reliable, audible warning systems are becoming more critical during wildfires of increasing speed and ferocity, especially as power lines and cell towers fail, knocking out communications critical to keeping people informed. After 2017 fires that ripped through California's wine country, killing dozens, residents complained they got little to no warning from officials, who used phone calls and other alert systems but did not deploy a widespread cellphone alert. Many residents of Paradise had the same complaint.

Even when siren systems are in place, officials must make the choice to activate them.

Officials in Hawaii failed to activate sirens last week, raising questions about whether everything was done to alert the public in a state that devised an elaborate emergency warning system for potential dangers that include war, volcanoes, hurricanes and wildfires. On Maui, a fast-moving wildfire has killed more than 100.

As in Paradise, some people tried to flee Lahaina but perished in their cars after getting stuck in traffic gridlock.

In Paradise, the Camp Fire broke out in the early morning of Nov. 8, 2018, amid dry, gusty weather. It tore through the town of 28,000 people, incinerating roughly 19,000 homes, businesses and other buildings. An investigation determined Pacific Gas & Electric's aging equipment started the blaze and the utility pleaded guilty to 84 counts of involuntary manslaughter.

Many residents said they received no warning on their cellphones or landlines as the fire quickly spread their way. They jumped in their vehicles to escape only after seeing smoke and flames, or after relatives or neighbors knocked on their doors.

"If that fire would have happened just a few hours earlier than what it did, we would have had hundreds of people die from that because they'd have been in bed," Bolin said.

The new sirens, similar to a tsunami warning system, are being incorporated into the city's emergency services, which include mass cell notifications, an emergency call center for people to call, and an AM radio station to broadcast public safety information.

Paradise's siren system can be controlled manually, over the internet, or by satellite. The towers' power is hard-wired underground, but each siren also has a solar panel that can store two weeks worth of power.

"We've got back-up after back-up on these," Bolin said.

University of California forest expert Yana Valachovic said the redundancy in emergency services is needed to address different scenarios.

"We cannot guarantee that we'll have power and cellphone communication capacities so, every community needs a full toolbox of resources," she said.

Authorities also need to consider designating temporary refuge areas and practice evacuating their communities at different times of the day, she added.

As part of rebuilding Paradise, crews have removed thousands of trees, cleared defensible space around homes to slow down fires, buried power cables underground, and widened evacuation routes to handle more traffic, Bolin said.

Like Paradise, communities across California are coming up with systems to notify people in case of an emergency, from sirens to police patrol cars and other emergency vehicles to cellphone notification systems. In May, officials in Santa Rosa, where the wine country fires broke out, tested a new cellphone alert system. In March, Beverly Hills began installing 12 outdoor sirens. Sonoma County has installed a sophisticated fire camera system to detect blazes early.

The California Office of Emergency Services in 2019 issued alert and warning guidelines for counties. It warns sirens can have limited effectiveness because people inside well-insulated homes and buildings may not hear them well.

"If a public siren is used for alert and warning, it should include an extensive public outreach campaign

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 32 of 58

to train residents and visitors on what the siren means and the intended protective action," it says.

Jen Goodlin, a Paradise native and director of Rebuild Paradise who moved back after the fire to help with the reconstruction, said she supports the sirens because many in the community don't have easy access to the internet or media.

Having the sirens "is a way to help them escape sooner. It makes me feel safer," Goodlin said.

Biden will use Camp David backdrop hoping to broker a breakthrough in Japan-South Korea relations

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Camp David, the rustic presidential retreat in the mountains of Maryland, has been a backdrop for signal moments in U.S. foreign policy, perhaps none more notable than the peace accord President Jimmy Carter brokered between Egypt and Israel in 1978.

On Friday, President Joe Biden will reach for his own place in Camp David lore, hoping that walks on leafy trails and necktie-free talks with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol will encourage the U.S. allies, who have been thawing their frosty relationship, to cooperate more given their shared concerns about aggression from China and North Korea.

It will be the first time that Biden has hosted world leaders at the secluded retreat nestled in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains, about an hour's drive northwest of the White House.

Run by the Navy, guarded by Marines and less imposing than the White House, Camp David was a deliberate choice by a president who puts a premium on face-to-face interactions with his foreign counterparts, Biden aides said.

"One of the interesting things about Camp David is that it provides a less formal venue for presidents and their visitors to really get to know each other on a one-to-one basis," said Sarah Fling, a historian at the White House Historical Association.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and Margaret Thatcher, a successor to Churchill, are just a few of the storied world figures who have spent time at Camp David at the invitation of U.S. presidents.

President Barack Obama assembled leaders of the world's largest economies for a Group of Eight summit in 2012, the biggest foreign contingent to ever gather there.

President Donald Trump tweeted in September 2019 that he had canceled a secret meeting planned for Camp David with Taliban and Afghanistan leaders after an American soldier was among those killed in a bombing in Kabul.

To produce the Camp David Accords, Carter sought an intimate location, a place away from the press where he thought Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin would be encouraged to talk to one another. Unlike at the White House, where journalists come and go, the news media are barred from Camp David, unless they are invited to cover an event, like Friday's summit.

Three days were set aside for the talks, but the summit lasted nearly two weeks. The Camp David Accords were signed at the White House in March 1979.

Camp David was established in 1942 during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency and has been used by every president since.

Roosevelt had liked to relax on a presidential yacht, but the military and Secret Service started to worry about his safety on the open water during World War II. Roosevelt asked the National Park Service to identify sites within 100 miles of the White House that he could use for rest.

He chose what is now known as Camp David. He gave it the original name of Shangri-La, from James Hilton's novel "Lost Horizon." President Dwight Eisenhower renamed it Camp David, after his grandson and father.

Roosevelt also set the precedent for hosting foreign leaders at Camp David, inviting Churchill to the retreat twice. In 1943, they discussed the Normandy invasion; Roosevelt also took the prime minister along

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 33 of 58

on a fishing trip.

Eisenhower hosted Khrushchev for two days in 1959, the first time a Soviet leader had come to the United States. They watched American Western movies, among other activities.

Bill Clinton hoped to replicate Carter's feat by inviting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to Camp David for a fresh round of Mideast peace talks in 2000. But after two weeks of talks, the summit ended without an agreement.

George W. Bush visited often, hosting an array of foreign leaders and spending Christmases with his family. Britain's Tony Blair was first to visit the newly elected Bush there in 2001.

When reporters asked the president to describe something that he and Blair found they had in common, Bush quipped, "We both use Colgate toothpaste."

"They're gonna wonder how you know that, George," Blair responded.

In addition to the G-8 summit, Obama hosted a group of Persian Gulf leaders in 2015.

But Camp David is more than just a place for presidents to hold sensitive diplomatic talks with foreign leaders or ponder issues of war and peace. Its primary function is as a place for presidents, and their families, to escape Washington, a place where they can be themselves and where they can rest, relax and recharge as much as a 24/7 president is allowed to.

The 180-acre (73-hectare) retreat has a cabin, named Aspen by first lady Mamie Eisenhower, that's reserved for the president, plus about a dozen other cabins for guests. There's a main lodge with conference rooms, a dining room and an office for the president.

Guests have a range of indoor and outdoor amenities at their disposal, including a fitness center, bowling alley, movie theater, heated swimming pool, and tennis and basketball courts. There's also a chapel for religious services.

Carter liked to run on the trails. Ronald Reagan liked to ride horses and is the president who spent the most time at Camp David, said Fling, the historian.

"Reagan really enjoyed visiting Camp David," she said. "He and first lady Nancy Reagan enjoyed just going and spending time together there as a couple."

Susan Ford, President Gerald Ford's daughter, once described it as a place where "you could go and have fun and be silly and not end up in the press."

One presidential wedding has been held there. Bush's sister, Dorothy, married her second husband, Robert Koch, at Camp David in 1992.

Biden goes to spend time with his family. He first visited in February 2021, weeks after taking office, and trounced one of his granddaughters as they played the Mario Kart video game, according to a post on Naomi Biden Neal's social media accounts.

Biden has returned 27 times since, spending all or part of a total of 96 days, according to Mark Knoller, a former CBS News White House correspondent who keeps presidential statistics.

Biden's approval rating on the economy stagnates despite slowing inflation, AP-NORC poll shows

By JOSH BOAK and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has devoted the past several weeks to promoting the positive impacts of his policies — but his efforts have yet to meaningfully register with the public.

Only 36% of U.S. adults approve of Biden's handling of the economy, slightly lower than the 42% who approve of his overall performance, according to the new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Both figures are close to where Biden's approval numbers have stood for about the past year and a half, including just two months ago. Signs of an improving economic outlook have done little to sway how people feel about the Democratic president as he gears up for a 2024 reelection campaign that could pit him against his predecessor and 2020 opponent, Republican Donald Trump.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 34 of 58

military rule over the territory, Palestinians say their water problems have worsened.

"This is the hardest summer we've had in nine years," said Palestinian Water Minister Mazen Ghunaim.

Ghunaim accused Israel's national water company of reducing water supplies to the Palestinian cities of Bethlehem and Hebron by 25% for the past nine weeks. Palestinians in Hebron say their taps have run dry this summer for as long as a month.

Osama Abu Sharkh, a 60-year-old carpenter in Hebron's Old City, has planned each day this summer according to the water flow. When his tap finally springs to life — even if a trickle — his family is jolted into a frenzy of chores: Cooking, cleaning, and, crucially, filling their water tanks. The tanks hold costly trucked-in water during the long stretches when the taps are dry.

Ghunaim claimed the recent water cuts were a "political problem" under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ultranationalist government, which has taken a particularly hard line against the Palestinians. "If we were settlers, they would solve this problem instantly," he said.

Israel's water authority called the recent disruption to Palestinian cities a technical problem and directed further questions to COGAT, the Israeli agency that liaises with the Palestinians on civilian affairs.

COGAT denied any reduction in water flow and insisted "the supply is continuing in accordance with the agreements."

But the overall supply is shrinking as the demands of Israeli and Palestinian societies outpace natural replenishment. In the majority of the West Bank where Israel maintains full civilian and security control, Palestinians cannot dig or deepen wells without hard-to-get permits. Since 2021, Israeli authorities have demolished nearly 160 unauthorized Palestinian reservoirs, sewage networks and wells across the West Bank and east Jerusalem, according to the United Nations humanitarian agency, OCHA.

The rate of demolition is quickening: Over the first half of 2023, authorities knocked down almost the same number of Palestinian water installations as they did all of last year.

Defending the demolitions, COGAT said "the allocation of water for agriculture is performed in accordance with the law."

In the herding communities of the northern Jordan Valley, Palestinian water consumption is just 26 liters (7 gallons) a day. That is so far below the World Health Organization's minimum standard of 50-100 liters that it is ranked as a disaster zone, according to B'Tselem.

In contrast, Israeli settlers in the Jordan Valley consume 400-700 liters per capita a day on average, the rights group said.

Yet unlike neighboring Jordan and other parched Mideast states, Israel has plenty of water. With a world-leading desalination network and recycled waste water, the country no longer relies on subterranean reserves in the same way it did after first capturing the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war.

"The main motivation for Israeli actions are not so much about water anymore but about politics," said Jan Selby, a political expert on water issues at the University of Sheffield.

Israel's water network is used not only to power settlements — which most of the international community considers illegal — but also to irrigate the abundant vineyards and olive groves of Jewish outposts, which are built without official authorization.

By empowering Jewish outposts to cultivate disputed land and export fine wines and soft dates, Israel expands authority over the West Bank, said anti-settlement researcher Dror Etkes.

"Agricultural cultivation is a much more effective way to grab land than construction," he said.

For Ibrahim Sawafta, a local council member of the Palestinian village of Bardala in the northern Jordan Valley, Israeli water allocation has become a zero-sum game: Palestinian water scarcity as a result of Israeli settlement prosperity.

Over the years, he has watched his village shrink as its few available water sources have dried up, leaving dates tasteless and forcing farmers to give up their citrus and banana groves.

More than a dozen farming families have recently left Bardala for a northern town with more water, he said, and others have swapped their fields for better-paying jobs in the flourishing farms of Israeli settle-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 35 of 58

Job growth has stayed solid with the unemployment rate at 3.5%, while the pace of inflation has slowed sharply over the past year to the annual rate of 3.2%.

Both Biden and Trump have weaknesses as older candidates seeking a rematch. Trump, 77, faces a series of criminal indictments that include his possession of classified material and allegations that he tried to overturn the 2020 election, which has rallied support among Republicans while leaving him with substantial vulnerabilities in a potential general election contest.

Biden, 80, has yet to fully bring Democrats to his side as the lingering aftershocks of inflation still weigh on people's minds. Along with members of his cabinet and Vice President Kamala Harris, Biden has been speaking about the \$500 billion worth of new investments by private companies that he said came from incentives he signed into law.

Erica Basile, a teacher who describes herself as a "staunch Democrat," said she feels the economy is "mediocre, but improving."

"I do think in many ways they're working very hard at getting the economy back on track post-COVID," said Basile, who lives in Lynnwood, Washington.

Just 65% of Democrats approve of Biden's economic leadership, while 76% approve of how he's handling the job overall.

In follow-up interviews, some survey respondents felt torn between the desire to return to a sense of normalcy after Trump's presidency and the desire for even more sweeping policies to address climate change, health care costs and taxes.

"When Joe Biden was selected to be the nominee and eventually won, my feeling at the time was that he could be the most milquetoast and undramatic president to help the country cool down," said Steven Peters, 41, who works in information technology in White House, Tennessee. "Unfortunately, that's what he's been. I'm dissatisfied because I had hoped there would be more change."

Peters added, "He's really middle of the road when a lot of people would like to see more dramatic action."

For GOP supporters, such as Merritt Rahn, 74, Biden has gone too far. Rahn said he is retired but also works at Home Depot and sees higher gasoline and food costs as making it harder for families to get by financially. The Jensen Beach, Florida, resident said Biden will further hurt the U.S. by moving energy sources away from oil and gas.

"It's a death to our society and economy," said Rahn, who added that he believes Biden "has no clue what's going on."

The poll also found that 55% of Democrats say they don't think Biden should run again in 2024, though a large majority — 82% — say they would definitely or probably support him if he is the nominee. Overall, only 24% of Americans say they want Biden to run again.

Among Democrats who approve of how Biden is handling the economy, 58% would like him to seek another term. Just 20% of those who disapprove of his performance on the issue want the incumbent president to run again.

Biden continues to struggle to appeal to younger Democrats, especially on the economy. Only 52% of Democrats under age 45 say they approve of his handling of the economy, compared with 77% of those older.

The president has used the term "Bidenomics" to try to encompass his ideas to lower costs for people on Medicare, shift toward electric vehicles and renewable energy, and build factories for advanced computer chips and batteries. Yet some are still struggling to understand what the term means.

Asked about the definition of Bidenomics, Cory O'Brien, 39, said: "You know what, dude, I have no idea. Biden is a free market capitalist like most moderate Democrats are."

The age gap extends to Biden's reelection campaign: Just 34% of Democrats under 45 want him to run again, compared with 54% of those older than that. Still, about three-quarters of younger Democrats say they'll most likely support him if he's the nominee, though only 28% say they definitely will.

O'Brien, who works in education and lives in Massachusetts, said he expects the 2024 election to be "miserable" for voters because of the likely Biden and Trump rematch.

"I think it's going to be a miserable election cycle," he said. "We're going to see a lot of the same stuff

that we saw in 2020.”

Biden also faces renewed pressure related to investigations over his son Hunter’s business dealings. The poll finds that a majority of Americans — 58% — have hardly any confidence in Biden to reduce corruption in government, though that’s unchanged since January. Another 30% have some confidence and 10% have hardly any.

The poll shows that 23% of Americans say they have a great deal of confidence in Biden’s ability to effectively manage the White House, 31% have some confidence and 45% have hardly any. Despite the fact that Biden has achieved several of his major policy goals, just 16% say they have high confidence in his ability to do that, while 38% say they have some confidence and 44% hardly any.

Few Americans say they think the national economy is doing well: 34% describe it as very or somewhat good. No more than about a third of Americans have called the economy good since 2021.

Dozens of Senegalese migrants are dead or missing after their boat is rescued with 38 survivors

By ZANE IRWIN Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Dozens of migrants headed for Spain are believed missing and feared dead after coast guards off the Atlantic Island of Cabo Verde rescued 38 people on a boat that had left Senegal in West Africa over one month ago with more than 100 aboard, authorities and migrant advocates said.

Senegal’s foreign affairs ministry said the boat was rescued on Tuesday with 38 survivors and several dead on board by the coast guard in Cabo Verde, about 620 kilometers (385 miles) off the coast of West Africa. Authorities did not confirm how many migrants died, or what caused the trip to fail.

The Spanish migration advocacy group Walking Borders said the vessel was a large fishing boat, called a pirogue, which had left Senegal on July 10 with more than 100 migrants on board.

Families in Fass Boye, a seaside town 145 kilometers (90 miles) north of the capital Dakar, had reached out to Walking Borders on July 20 after 10 days without hearing from loved ones on the boat, group founder Helena Maleno Garzón said.

Cheikh Awa Boye, president of the local fishermen’s association, said he has two nephews among the missing. “They wanted to go to Spain,” Boye said.

The route from West Africa to Spain is one of the world’s most dangerous, yet the number of migrants leaving from Senegal on rickety wooden boats has surged over the past year.

Nearly 1,000 migrants died while trying to reach Spain by sea in the first six months of 2023, Walking Borders says. Factors such as youth unemployment, political unrest and the impact of climate change push migrants to risk their lives on overcrowded boats.

On Aug. 7, the Moroccan navy recovered the bodies of five Senegalese migrants and rescued 189 others after their boat capsized off the coast of Western Sahara.

Nicaraguan government seizes highly regarded university from Jesuits

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Nicaragua’s government has confiscated a prestigious Jesuit-run university alleging it was a “center of terrorism,” the college said Wednesday in announcing the latest in a series of actions by authorities against the Catholic Church and opposition figures.

The University of Central America in Nicaragua, which was a hub for 2018 protests against the regime of President Daniel Ortega, called the terrorism accusation unfounded and the seizure a blow to academia in Nicaragua.

The government did not confirm the confiscation or comment on the Jesuits’ statement.

The Jesuit order, known as the Society of Jesus, said it received a judicial order Tuesday notifying it of the confiscation. It said the government seized all the university’s property, buildings and bank accounts.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 37 of 58

"With this confiscation, the Ortega government has buried freedom of thought in Nicaragua," said María Asunción Moreno, who was a professor at the university until she was forced into exile in 2021.

The order quoted the government as claiming the university "operated as a center of terrorism."

"This is a government policy that systematically violates human rights and appears to be aimed at consolidating a totalitarian state," the Society of Jesus of Central America said in a statement.

Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian A. Nichols, said in a tweet that the seizure of the university "represents further erosion of democratic norms and a stifling of civic space by Ortega-Murillo," referring to vice president and first lady Rosario Murillo.

The university, known as the UCA, has been one of the region's most highly regarded colleges. It has two large campuses with five auditoriums, engineering laboratories, a business innovation center, a library with more than 160,000 books in Spanish and English, a molecular biology center and facilities for 11 sports. Of the 200,000 university students in Nicaragua, an estimated 8,000 attend UCA.

Founded 63 years ago, UCA also houses the Institute of History of Nicaragua and Central America, which is considered the main documentation and memory center in the country, equipped with its own library, a newspaper library and valuable photographic archives.

The university's seizure "represents further erosion of democratic norms and a stifling of civic space by Ortega-Murillo," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian A. Nichols, said in a tweet, referring to vice president and first lady Rosario Murillo.

Since December 2021, at least 26 Nicaraguan universities have been closed and their assets seized by order of the Ortega government with a similar procedure. Seven of those were foreign institutions.

In April, the Vatican closed its embassy in Nicaragua after the country's government proposed suspending diplomatic relations.

Two congregations of nuns, including from the Missionaries of Charity order founded by Mother Teresa, were expelled from Nicaragua last year.

The expulsions, closures and confiscations have not just targeted the church. Nicaragua has outlawed or closed more than 3,000 civic groups and non-governmental organizations.

In May, the government ordered the Nicaraguan Red Cross shut down, accusing it of "attacks on peace and stability" during antigovernment demonstrations in 2018. The local Red Cross says it just helped treat injured protesters during the protests.

In June, the government confiscated properties belonging to 222 opposition figures who were forced into exile in February after being imprisoned by Ortega's regime.

Those taken from prison and forced aboard a flight to the United States on Feb. 9 included seven presidential hopefuls barred from running in the 2021 election, lawyers, rights activists, journalists and former members of the Sandinista guerrilla movement.

Thousands have fled into exile since Nicaraguan security forces violently put down mass antigovernment protests in 2018. Ortega says the protests were an attempted coup with foreign backing, aiming for his overthrow.

Police who fatally shot a pregnant woman are sued by her family in Colorado

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press/Report for America

DENVER (AP) — Destinee Thompson was supposed to be on her way to lunch with her stepmother in August 2021 when Colorado police, mistaking her for a robbery suspect, fatally shot the pregnant mother as she fled in her minivan.

Frustrated by the district attorney's decision last year not to charge the officers, Thompson's family filed a wrongful death and excessive force lawsuit on Tuesday against five officers from the Denver suburb of Arvada who were present when she was killed.

"I want their badges," said Francis Thompson, Destinee's father. "She's 5-foot tall, seven months pregnant."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 38 of 58

... You're a grown man and you're threatened by that? You don't deserve to be able to wear a badge."

They allege Destinee Thompson's race — she's part Hispanic and part Native American — played a role in her being targeted. Officers were looking for a suspect described as white or Hispanic.

"If this was a affluent white person getting into her vehicle, they would never have stopped her," said Siddhartha Rathod, an attorney representing her family.

In a statement Wednesday, the Arvada Police Department said the family's lawyer has mischaracterized the events surrounding Thompson's death, and the agency plans to mount a vigorous legal defense.

Police spokesperson Dave Snelling said the officers were justified in using deadly force because they believed Thompson's actions posed an imminent threat.

The episode took place on Aug. 17, 2021, when officers responded to a report of a woman who had stolen from a Target and brandished a knife at an employee. A witness followed the suspect to a nearby motel, where police arrived. Thompson was leaving that same motel to meet her stepmother, according to the lawsuit, which was first reported by The Denver Post.

While the description of the suspect included a white tank top — which Thompson was wearing — it also specified a chest tattoo, which Thompson did not have.

Officers noted that she didn't exactly match the description but decided to stop her to rule her out, according to the lawsuit. Thompson kept walking when police asked her to stop, told them she wasn't the person they were looking for, and said she didn't have an ID to show them.

The police spokesperson said the officers had "reasonable suspicion" to believe Thompson may have been involved in the robbery and were therefore justified in contacting her.

Thompson's family strongly disagrees.

"She's done nothing wrong ... and she is confronted by these policemen and doesn't want to talk to them," Rathod said. "You have the right not to talk to police."

Thompson, sitting in her minivan and surrounded by five officers, locked the doors and refused to get out, repeating, "It wasn't me," the district attorney wrote in the 2022 letter explaining their decision not to charge the officers.

One officer smashed the passenger window with a baton, and Thompson backed the car up, hitting a police vehicle parked behind her. She then drove forward over the curb and onto the road.

One officer began shooting, according to the district attorney's letter, because he believed another officer was struck by the car or being dragged under it, and eventually shot and killed Thompson. Her unborn child also died.

Thompson's family alleges the officer who fired could see that the other officer hadn't been hit or dragged by the car.

"Not a single one of the other officers thought it was necessary to shoot," added Rathod in an interview. "This is a murder of a pregnant woman."

Snelling, the police spokesperson, said the department stands behind its officers' actions.

"Thompson unfortunately chose to engage in conduct that the officer reasonably believed posed an imminent threat to the life of another officer," Snelling wrote. "He chose to use deadly force to stop that threat."

Snelling added that the agency later discovered Thompson had warrants out for her arrest and the autopsy found illicit drugs in her system.

Rathod and Francis Thompson dismissed the police mention of those warrants, saying it doesn't justify the officers' actions and that police at the scene didn't know about her background during the interaction.

"All they knew was this woman didn't fit the description of the shoplifting suspect," Rathod said.

For Francis Thompson, who described his daughter as eager to help others and quick with a laugh, it feels like the police department is using Destinee's past to justify her death.

The grief hasn't abated, he said. Every day there are moments when he cries, he said. "It's hard for me to find a purpose in a lot of things anymore."

Kansas prosecutor says police should return computers and cellphones seized in raid on newspaper

By JOHN HANNA and JIM SALTER Associated Press

MARION, Kansas (AP) — A police raid that drew national attention to a small Kansas newspaper over threats to press freedoms wasn't supported by evidence, a prosecutor said Wednesday, as the paper's staff scrambled to print its first weekly edition since their cellphones and computers were seized.

Forced to rewrite stories and reproduce ads from scratch, the four-person newsroom toiled overnight to print Wednesday's edition, with a defiant front-page headline that read: "SEIZED ... but not silenced." Under the 2-inch-tall (5-centimeter) typeface, they published stories on the raid and the influx of support the weekly newspaper has since received.

On Wednesday, Marion County Attorney Joel Ensey said his review of police seizures from the Marion County Record offices and the publisher's home found "insufficient evidence exists to establish a legally sufficient nexus between this alleged crime and the places searched and the items seized."

"As a result, I have submitted a proposed order asking the court to release the evidence seized. I have asked local law enforcement to return the material seized to the owners of the property," Ensey said in a news release.

But in a statement released along with the county attorney's, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation said it still is examining whether the newspaper violated state laws. A warrant for the raid, signed by a local judge, suggested the raid was over whether the paper improperly used a local restaurant owner's personal information to access her state driving record online. Editor and Publisher Eric Meyer has said the paper did nothing illegal.

In Topeka, Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach, a conservative Republican who oversees the KBI, said its "principal interest" remains the computer access allegations. He told reporters he didn't understand the KBI's role to include "an evaluation of constitutional claims about the raid."

The KBI said it would continue its work without examining any evidence seized last Friday. Once the state investigators finish, Kobach said, the county attorney will decide whether to prosecute.

Meyer said that the county sheriff's office, which had been storing the items for the police, released them Wednesday afternoon to a computer forensics firm from the Kansas City area hired by the newspaper's attorney. It is reviewing their files and programs to see whether materials on the devices have been copied, Meyer said.

"You cannot let bullies win," Meyer said. "We have a staff that's very experienced, including myself, and we're not going to take crap."

Meyer has said that the stress from the raid of his home caused the death Saturday of his 98-year-old mother, Joan, the paper's co-owner.

Last week's police raid put the town into the center of a national debate about press freedom, with watchdog groups condemning the department's actions. Meyer said he believes the raid was carried out because the newspaper was investigating why the police chief left his previous post as an officer in Kansas City, Missouri.

Police Chief Gideon Cody left the Missouri department earlier this year and began the job in Marion in June. He has not responded to interview requests, and he did not reply to an email seeking comment about Wednesday's developments.

Meyer said police seized a computer tower and cellphone belonging to a reporter who wasn't part of the effort to check on the business owner's background — but who was looking into Cody's background.

Asked if the newspaper's investigation of Cody may have had anything to do with the decision to raid it, Bernie Rhodes, the newspaper's attorney, responded: "I think it is a remarkable coincidence if it didn't."

Meyer's family has long published the newspaper in the town of about 1,900 among rolling hills about 150 miles (241 kilometers) southwest of Kansas City, an area that once was a sea of tall prairie grass. It's known for its aggressive coverage of local politics, and some residents have accused it of driving businesses away, something Meyer dismisses.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 40 of 58

Dennis Calvert, a 67-year-old Wichita resident and U.S. Navy nuclear submarine veteran, drove more than an hour to get a copy of Wednesday's edition and sign up for a six-month subscription.

Asked about the role of local journalists, he said, "It'd be equal to, how important is your doctor if you're going into surgery?"

At one point, a couple visiting from Arizona stopped at the front desk to buy a subscription, just to show their support, said Emily Bradbury, executive director of the Kansas Press Association, who was helping at the paper. Many others from around the country have purchased subscriptions since the raids. An office manager told Bradbury that she's having a hard time keeping up with demand.

Even the White House weighed in. "This administration has been vocal about the importance of the freedom of press, here and around the globe," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said at her daily briefing on Wednesday. "That is the core value when you think about our democracy, when you think about the cornerstone of our democracy, the freedom of press is right there."

She said the raid raises "a lot of concerns and a lot of questions for us."

To put out the Wednesday edition of the paper, journalists and those involved in the business side of the newspaper used a couple of old computers that police didn't confiscate, taking turns to get stories to the printer, to assemble ads and to check email.

Because electronics were so scarce, it took the newsroom until 5 a.m. to finish the paper, Bradbury said. She chipped in herself by answering phones and ordering meals for staffers.

"There were literally index cards going back and forth," said Rhodes, who was also in the office. "They had all the classified ads, all the legal notices that they had to recreate. All of those were on the computers."

The newspaper's press run is normally 4,000 papers. But since the raids, they have received more than 2,000 new subscriptions, Meyer said.

A warrant signed by a magistrate about two hours before Friday's raid said that local police sought to gather evidence of potential identity theft and other computer crimes stemming from a conflict between the newspaper and the local restaurant owner, Kari Newell.

Newell accuses the newspaper of violating her privacy and illegally obtaining personal information about her, while the newspaper has countered that it received information about her unsolicited, then verified its authenticity through public records online.

Meyer said the newspaper ultimately decided not to write a story about Newell, but later reported about a city council meeting, in which Newell confirmed she'd had a DUI conviction and drove after her license was suspended.

An appeals court backs some abortion drug limits, pending the Supreme Court's approval

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Mail-order access to a drug used in the most common form of abortion in the U.S. would end under a federal appeals court ruling issued Wednesday that cannot take effect until the Supreme Court weighs in.

The decision by three judges on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans overturned part of a lower court ruling that would have revoked the Food and Drug Administration's 23-year-old approval of mifepristone. But it left intact part of the ruling that would end the availability of the drug by mail, allow it to be used through only the seventh week of pregnancy rather than the 10th, and require that it be administered in the presence of a physician.

Those restrictions won't take effect right away because the Supreme Court previously intervened to keep the drug available during the legal fight.

The panel's ruling would reverse changes the FDA made in 2016 and 2021 that eased some conditions for administering the drug.

"In loosening mifepristone's safety restrictions, FDA failed to address several important concerns about

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 41 of 58

whether the drug would be safe for the women who use it," Judge Jennifer Walker Elrod wrote for the panel. She was joined by Judge Cory Wilson. Judge James Ho dissented, arguing to fully uphold a Texas-based federal judge's April ruling that would revoke the drug's approval, which the FDA granted in 2000.

President Joe Biden's administration said it would appeal, with Vice President Kamala Harris decrying the potential effect on abortion rights, as well as on the availability of other medications.

"It endangers our entire system of drug approval and regulation by undermining the independent, expert judgment of the FDA," Harris' statement said.

Abortion rights advocates said the ruling poses a major threat to abortion availability following last year's Supreme Court ruling that overturned *Roe v. Wade* and the nationwide right to abortion.

"If the Supreme Court affirms this decision, it will prevent patients from receiving their medication in the mail in all 50 states in the nation," Jennifer Dalven of the American Civil Liberties Union said during an online news conference. "That means that patients will have to travel often hundreds of miles, especially if they're coming from a state that has banned abortion, for the sole purpose of picking up a pill."

Abortion opponents hailed the ruling, although they, too, might appeal to seek full revocation of the FDA's approval of the drug.

"Chemical Abortion Pills take one life almost every time, an innocent child, and exposes women to all kinds of known problems," said a statement from the anti-abortion Students for Life of America.

Erin Hawley, an attorney for the Alliance Defending Freedom, which filed the Texas lawsuit, said her organization had not yet decided whether to appeal to the Supreme Court to try to get mifepristone's approval fully revoked. The conservative Christian legal group was also involved in the Mississippi case that led to the June 2002 Supreme Court ruling that has allowed states to ban abortion.

An attorney for drugmaker Danco Laboratories, which argued in favor of upholding the FDA approval and revisions, did not respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking comment. Drugmaker GenBioPro, which was not part of the lawsuit, noted that the ruling would keep its generic mifepristone available, subject to the restrictions.

There is virtually no precedent for a U.S. court overturning the approval of a drug that the FDA has deemed safe and effective. While new drug safety issues often emerge after FDA approval, the agency is required to monitor medicines on the market, evaluate emerging issues and take action to protect U.S. patients. Congress delegated that responsibility to the FDA — not the courts— more than a century ago.

However, during a May 17 hearing, the 5th Circuit panel pushed back frequently against assertions that U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk's April 7 ruling was unprecedented and unwarranted.

Kacsmaryk, Ho and Wilson are all appointees of former President Donald Trump. Elrod was appointed to the 5th Circuit by former President George W. Bush. All of the judges have a history of supporting abortion restrictions.

Elrod's opinion said the full revocation of FDA's approval of the drug was likely barred by legal time limits. Ho argued that the approval violated the 19th century Comstock Act. He also said the FDA gave the green light to mifepristone under a law that allows approval for drugs that treat serious or life threatening illness. "Pregnancy is not an illness," Ho wrote.

Mifepristone is one of two pills used in medication abortions. The other drug, misoprostol, is also used to treat other medical conditions. Health care providers have said they could switch to misoprostol if mifepristone is no longer available or is too hard to obtain. Misoprostol is somewhat less effective in ending pregnancies.

Devastated Tuohys ready to end conservatorship for Michael Oher, lawyers say

By ADRIAN SAINZ and TERESA M. WALKER Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — A prominent Memphis couple with a longstanding relationship to former NFL player Michael Oher want to end a conservatorship that he's challenging in court, their lawyers said.

Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy intend to enter into a consent order to end the conservatorship, lawyer

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 42 of 58

Randall Fishman told reporters on Wednesday.

Oher filed a petition Monday in a Tennessee probate court accusing the Tuohys of lying to him by having him sign papers making them his conservators rather than his adoptive parents nearly two decades ago.

Oher, now 37, wants a full accounting of assets considering his life story produced millions of dollars, though he says he received nothing from the Oscar-nominated movie "The Blind Side." He accuses the Tuohys of falsely representing themselves as his adoptive parents, saying that he discovered in February 2023 that the conservatorship was not the arrangement he thought it was — and that it provided him no familial relationship to the Tuohys.

But the Tuohys' attorneys said Oher knew very well that he had not been adopted. Fishman said Oher mentioned the Tuohys being conservators for him three times in "I Beat The Odds: From Homeless, To The Blind Side," Oher's first book in 2011.

The couple's attorneys also said that the Tuohys and Oher have been estranged for about a decade. Steve Farese said Oher has become "more and more vocal and more and more threatening" over the past decade or so, and this is "devastating for the family."

The Tuohys have called the allegations a ridiculous shakedown attempt, and "a court of law is no place to play," Fishman said. In a statement released by their lawyers Tuesday, the Tuohys said Oher had threatened before the court filing to plant a negative news story about them unless they paid him \$15 million.

Oher's lawyers did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

The conservatorship paperwork was filed months after Oher turned 18 in May 2004. Oher accuses the Tuohys of never taking legal action to assume custody from the Tennessee Department of Human Services before he turned 18, though he was told to call them "Mom" and "Dad."

Oher alleges the Tuohys had him sign paperwork almost immediately after he moved in as part of the adoption process. Oher says he was "falsely advised" that it would be called a conservatorship because he was already 18, but that adoption was the intent.

The couple didn't simply adopt Oher, Fishman said, because the conservatorship was the fastest way to satisfy the NCAA's concerns that the Tuohys weren't simply steering a talented athlete to Mississippi, their alma mater where Oher later attended.

Oher, who has never been a fan of the movie about his life, asks that the Tuohys be sanctioned and required by the probate court to pay damages. He asks to be paid what he is due, along with interest.

Agents negotiated a small advance for the Tuohys from the production company for "The Blind Side," based on a book written by Sean Tuohy's friend Michael Lewis, the couple said. That included "a tiny percentage of net profits" divided equally among a group that included Oher, they said in their statement.

The attorneys said they estimated each of the Tuohys and Oher received \$100,000 apiece, and the couple paid taxes on Oher's portion for him. "Michael got every dime, every dime he had coming," Fishman said.

"They don't need his money," Farese said. "They've never needed his money. Mr. Tuohy sold his company for \$220 million."

Martin Singer, an attorney for the Tuohys, said that profit participation checks and studio accounting statements support their assertions. The movie won Sandra Bullock an Oscar for her portrayal of Leigh Anne Tuohy.

When Oher refused to cash the checks, the statement said, the Tuohys deposited Oher's share into a trust account.

The Tuohys said that they set up the conservatorship to help Oher with health insurance, a driver's license and being admitted to college. In Tennessee, a conservatorship removes power from a person to make decisions for themselves, and it is often used in the case of a medical condition or disability.

But Oher's conservatorship was approved "despite the fact that he was over 18 years old and had no diagnosed physical or psychological disabilities," his petition said.

Oher was the 23rd overall pick in the 2009 draft out of Mississippi, and he spent his first five seasons with the Baltimore Ravens where he won a Super Bowl. He played 110 games over eight NFL seasons, including 2014 when he started 11 games for the Tennessee Titans. Oher finished his career with two years in Carolina.

He last played in 2016 and was released in 2017 by Carolina. He is on a book tour for "When Your Back's Against the Wall: Fame, Football, and Lessons Learned Through a Lifetime of Adversity."

Americans are divided along party lines over Trump's actions in election cases, AP-NORC poll shows

By LINLEY SANDERS and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are deeply divided along party lines in their views of President Donald Trump's actions in the most recent criminal cases brought against him, a new poll shows, with about half saying his alleged attempt to interfere in Georgia's 2020 vote count was illegal.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which was conducted before Monday's charges in the Georgia case, also shows that about half of Americans — 53% — approve of the Justice Department indicting Trump over his efforts to remain in office after losing the 2020 election.

The poll finds 85% of Democrats approve of the criminal charges brought Aug. 2 by Special Counsel Jack Smith, compared with 47% of independents and just 16% of Republicans. Overall, 3 in 10 Americans disapprove, including about two-thirds of Republicans.

The survey suggests that the unprecedented indictments of a former president have done little to shake up a fundamental divide in the electorate: The majority of Americans disapprove of Trump, but he remains popular within the GOP.

Overall, 35% of Americans have a favorable view of Trump and 62% unfavorable. Among Republicans, though, seven in 10 view the former president favorably, and about 6 in 10 say they want him to make another run for the White House.

The poll was conducted Aug. 10-14, before Trump and 18 of his allies were indicted Monday in Georgia over their efforts to overturn the state's election results but with strong indications that charges were imminent. At the time of the survey, 51% of U.S. adults believed Trump acted illegally in that case, including 16% of Republicans. That's consistent with an AP-NORC poll conducted in June.

Trump has denied wrongdoing and says the charges against him are politically motivated as he seeks a rematch against Democratic President Joe Biden.

Only about 2 in 10 U.S. adults — 17% — say they have "a great deal" of confidence in the people running the Justice Department. The low level of confidence spans the political spectrum, with just 26% of Democrats, 14% of independents and 7% of Republicans saying they have a great deal of confidence in the federal law enforcement agency. About half of Americans have "only some" confidence in DOJ, while about a third have "hardly any confidence at all." Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to have hardly any confidence in the Justice Department, 48% to 18%.

"Trump is obviously running for president and the sitting administration is pushing to have their political rival arrested and put in jail," said Cary Arnold, a 56-year-old Republican from Eldersburg, Maryland. "Just on the surface that's a very, very bad look. That's something that you would expect to see in third world countries that are run by dictators."

Trump's actions did not cross the line to merit criminal charges, he said.

"I have not seen anything that seemed to be illegal," Arnold said. "I know people have said that he did things illegally, but none of the things that they've said make any sense."

Trump has been indicted four times since April, but Americans do not view the indictments equally.

While about half believe Trump did something illegal when it comes to the Jan. 6 insurrection and the Georgia charges, along with the case involving classified documents found at his home in Florida, only about one-third say Trump acted illegally in allegedly covering up hush money payments to a woman who said he had an affair with her. That was the basis for charges Trump faces in New York City brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg.

Overall, Americans say that Trump's actions after the 2020 presidential election did more to threaten democracy than to defend it, 54% to 19%. One-quarter of U.S. adults say he did neither. Republicans are

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 44 of 58

split on the impact of Trump's decisions: 43% say he defended democracy, while 23% say he threatened it. About a third of Republicans say he neither defended nor threatened democracy.

"Trump and a lot of his supporters are saying, 'They're just using this to get at him in the election,'" said David Biggar, a 60-year-old Republican from Navarre, Florida who twice voted against Trump. "I think he's being targeted because he did stuff that he needs to be tried for."

Americans largely disagree with Trump's contention that the 2020 election was stolen from him. Seven in 10 say that Biden was legitimately elected president, a number that's been consistent in the last year. But among Republicans, 57% say Biden's election was illegitimate, compared with 32% of independents and 2% of Democrats.

Treasa Howell, a 58-year-old Republican from Springfield, Missouri, said a lot of the accusations against Trump ring true, but she believes they're motivated more by politics than justice and Trump is being singled out.

"I honestly don't feel like anybody in the political arena plays 100% fair," Howell said. "I feel like it was a political indictment, but I absolutely believe it's true. And that's my problem with Trump."

But if Trump wins the GOP nomination and faces a rematch against Biden, she'll reluctantly vote for him, she said.

Plea negotiations could mean no 9/11 defendants face the death penalty, the US tells families

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The suspected architect of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and his fellow defendants may never face the death penalty under plea agreements now under consideration to bring an end to their more than decadelong prosecution, the Pentagon and FBI have advised families of some of the thousands killed.

The notice, made in a letter that was sent to several of the families and obtained by The Associated Press, comes 1 1/2 years after military prosecutors and defense lawyers began exploring a negotiated resolution to the case.

The prosecution of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four others held at the U.S. detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, has been troubled by repeated delays and legal disputes, especially over the legal ramifications of the interrogation under torture that the men initially underwent while in CIA custody. No trial date has been set.

"The Office of the Chief Prosecutor has been negotiating and is considering entering into pre-trial agreements," or PTAs, the letter said. It told the families that while no plea agreement "has been finalized, and may never be finalized, it is possible that a PTA in this case would remove the possibility of the death penalty."

Some relatives of the nearly 3,000 people killed outright in the terror attacks expressed outrage over the prospect of ending the case short of a verdict. The military prosecutors pledged to take their views into consideration and present them to the military authorities who would make the final decision on accepting any plea agreement.

The letter, dated Aug. 1, was received by at least some of the family members only this week. It asks them to respond by Monday to the FBI's victim services division with any comments or questions about the possibility of such a plea agreement. The FBI had no comment Wednesday on the letter.

On Sept. 11, 2001, conspirators from the al-Qaida militant group seized control of jets to use them as passenger-filled missiles, hitting New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon near Washington. A fourth plane was headed for Washington but crashed in Pennsylvania after crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit.

It was Mohammed who presented the very idea of such an attack on the United States to al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, and who received authorization from bin Laden to craft what became the 9/11 attacks,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 45 of 58

the United States' 9/11 Commission concluded. The four other defendants are alleged to have supported the hijackers in various ways.

The attacks led to the U.S. "war on terror," which included U.S. invasions and prolonged wars in Afghanistan, where al-Qaida was based, and in Iraq, which had no connection with the attacks.

Jim Riches, who lost his firefighter son Jimmy in 9/11, went to Guantanamo for pretrial hearings in 2009. He remains deeply frustrated that the case remains unresolved 14 years later. He said he laughed bitterly when he opened the government's letter Monday.

"How can you have any faith in it?" Riches asked. The update "gives us a little hope," he said, but justice still seems far off.

"No matter how many letters they send, until I see it, I won't believe it," said Riches, a retired deputy fire chief in New York City. He said he initially was open to the use of military tribunals but now feels that the process is failing and that the 9/11 defendants should be tried in civilian court.

The Obama administration at one point sought to do so, but the idea was shelved because of opposition from some victims' relatives and members of Congress and city officials' concerns about security costs. As the 22nd anniversary of the attacks approaches, "those guys are still alive. Our children are dead," Riches said.

Other family members — part of a network of 9/11 families that has pushed for answers and accountability over the years — said they would insist that any plea agreement allow their lawyers to question the defendants on the extent of any Saudi official involvement in 9/11. Saudi Arabia denies involvement by senior Saudi officials.

It's about "holding people responsible, and they're taking that away with this plea," said Peter Brady, whose father was killed in the attack. He received the letter this week.

The case "needs to go through the legal process," not be settled in a plea deal, Brady said.

The 9/11 hearings have been on hold while military officials examine whether one of the defendants is competent to stand trial. Hearings are set to resume Sept. 18.

The five defendants were captured at various times and places in 2002 and 2003 and sent to Guantanamo for trial in 2006.

The case has played out with a changing series of defense lawyers and judges, all grappling with the legalities and logistics of the military trial. Much of the hearings have been mired in litigation over how much of the testimony should be considered inadmissible by the torture that defendants underwent in early CIA custody, including the waterboarding of Mohammed 183 times.

Target Q2 sales fall on muted spending, Pride month backlash, and it cuts profit outlook for 2023

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Target reported its first quarterly sales drop in six years, dragged down by shoppers' inflation worries and a negative reaction by some customers, widely publicized on social media, to its Pride merchandise.

The Minneapolis retailer expects high interest rates, which makes credit cards more expensive to use, and higher prices on food to continue to put a strain on customers and on Wednesday, the chain cut its profit outlook for the year. It also expects sales will decline for the remainder of the year. In lowering its forecast, Target also cited the end of the student loan moratorium, which had provided one-time college students a little more financial breathing room.

Profit for the fiscal second quarter came in above expectations, however, as Target brought inventories closer in line with cautionary spending on discretionary items by customers.

Shares rose 3% Wednesday despite trimming profit expectations for the year.

Target is among the first major U.S. retailers to report quarterly financial results and the impact of rising prices and elevated interest on its customers will get a lot of attention ahead of a raft of quarterly reports

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 46 of 58

from companies like Walmart other retailers.

CEO Brian Cornell said higher high prices for food and household essentials are taking a bigger chunk out of the paychecks of customers, who have also pulled back on buying some goods in favor of travel or spending time out of the house in other ways.

"Guests are out at concerts," Cornell told reporters on a media call Tuesday. "They're going to movies. They've seen 'Barbie.' They're enjoying those experiential moments, and they're shopping very carefully for discretionary goods."

Other retailers are seeing the same thing.

Home Depot, the nation's largest home improvement retailer, said Tuesday that sales continued to decline after surging in recent years. Sales of big-ticket items, those that may require financing, were particularly hard hit.

Industry analysts will be eager to see if the same forces are impacting other retailers reporting earnings this week, including Walmart, the nation's largest, on Thursday. Macy's, Kohl's and Nordstrom post quarterly results later this month.

This week, the U.S. reported that Americans increased their spending last month, but higher interest rates are weighing on economic activities that are highly dependent on credit, like sales of homes, vehicles, furniture and electronics.

Target is more vulnerable than other big box discounters like Walmart. More than 50% of Target's annual sales come from discretionary items like toys, fashion and electronic gadgets, according to the company's latest annual financial report.

Target also faced a unique problem during the most recent quarter, becoming one of the companies that was targeted for its LGBTQ+ support, in particular, its displays of Pride Month merchandise. It pulled some items in particular regions and made other changes after encountering hostility from some customers who confronted workers and tipped over displays. Company executives said this week that it couldn't tease out how much the negative reaction had on its business, but once it made the changes, those incidents subsided. Overall sales improved in July from June.

Cornell said the company has learned from the backlash and that it will be more thoughtful in merchandise offerings for its heritage months, which celebrate various ethnic and marginalized groups. Target said it will have a slightly more focused assortment and will reconsider the mix of its own and national brands with its external partners.

"We'll continue to celebrate Pride and other heritage moments, which are just one part of our commitment to support a diverse teams and guests," Cornell told reporters. "However, as we navigate an ever changing operating and social environment, we're applying what we've learned to ensure we're staying close to our guests and their expectations of Target."

Target earned \$835 million, or \$1.80 per share, in the quarter that ended July 29. That compares with \$183 million, or 39 cent per share, in the year-ago period.

Sales fell nearly 5% to \$24.77 billion as shoppers focused more on groceries than discretionary items. Business in the quarter was also hurt because results were being compared with heavy discounting in the year-ago period that was meant to clear unwanted inventory as shoppers pulled back.

Analysts had been expecting profits of \$1.43 per share on sales of \$25.18 billion, according to FactSet. Inventory at the end of the second quarter was 17% lower than last year, reflecting a 25% reduction in discretionary categories like fashion and home furnishings.

Comparable sales — those from stores or digital channels operating for the past 12 months — fell 5.4% in the latest quarter. In the fiscal first quarter, sales were unchanged.

Target now expects comparable sales in a wide range around a mid-single digit decline for the remainder of the year. It also now projects full-year adjusted earnings per share of \$7 to \$8, compared with the prior range of \$7.75 to \$8.75. Analysts were expecting \$7.72 per share for the year, according to FactSet.

Target's shares closed up at \$128.75.

A former fundraiser for Rep. George Santos has been charged with wire fraud and identity theft

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A former fundraiser for U.S. Rep. George Santos was indicted Wednesday on federal charges that he impersonated a high-ranking congressional aide while soliciting contributions for the New York Republican's campaign.

Sam Miele, 27, was charged with four counts of wire fraud and aggravated identity theft in an alleged scheme to defraud donors and obtain money for Santos under false pretenses. Prosecutors said Miele used a fake name and email address to impersonate a "high-ranking aide to a member of the House with leadership responsibilities."

The indictment did not name the person who was impersonated, but the details of the charges match with multiple news reports identifying the aide as Dan Meyer, now retired as the longtime chief of staff to House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who at the time was minority leader.

Santos was not charged in the indictment. The facts of the case rest on events that overlap with the congressman's own alleged crimes of wire fraud and money laundering, federal prosecutors said in a filing Wednesday.

Miele pleaded not guilty to the charges in Brooklyn federal court and was released on a \$150,000 bond. His attorney, Kevin Marino, did not immediately return a phone message.

Meyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Santos' office did not respond to a request for comment.

Federal prosecutors said Miele sent "fraudulent fundraising solicitations" to more than a dozen prospective donors between August and December of 2021, at times signing the emails with the aide's full name and title.

In a letter sent to Santos last September, Miele admitted to "faking my identity to a big donor," according to the indictment. He went on to describe himself as "high risk, high reward in everything I do."

Miele earned a commission of 15% for each contribution he raised, prosecutors said.

A McCarthy spokesman confirmed they were first made aware of the impersonation in August 2021.

The indictment came three months after Santos was arrested on charges of wire fraud, money laundering, theft of public funds and making false statements to Congress. He has pleaded not guilty and insisted he has no plans to resign from Congress.

Republican leaders in the House, protecting a narrow majority, have stopped short of calling for Santos to be expelled.

The case against Santos involves separate allegations that he embezzled money from his campaign for personal use, lied to Congress about his finances and cheated his way into undeserved unemployment checks.

During his run for office, Santos fabricated swaths of his life story, falsely portraying himself as a wealthy Wall Street dealmaker when he had actually been struggling to pay his rent and had worked for a company accused of running a Ponzi scheme.

Federal Reserve minutes: Too-high inflation, still a threat, could require more rate hikes

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Federal Reserve officials last month still regarded high inflation as an ongoing threat that could require further interest rate increases, according to the minutes of their July 25-26 meeting released Wednesday.

At the same time, the officials saw "a number of tentative signs that inflation pressures could be abating." It was a mixed view that echoed Chair Jerome Powell's noncommittal stance about future rate hikes.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 48 of 58

at a news conference after the meeting.

According to the minutes, the Fed's policymakers also said that despite signs of progress on inflation, it remained well above their 2% target. They "would need to see more data ... to be confident that inflation pressures were abating" and on track to return to their target.

At the meeting, the Fed decided to raise its benchmark rate for the 11th time in 17 months in its ongoing drive to curb inflation. But in a statement after the meeting, it provided little guidance about when — or whether — it might raise rates again.

Most investors and economists have said they believe July's rate hike will be the last. Earlier this week, economists at Goldman Sachs projected that the Fed will actually start to cut rates by the middle of next year.

Since last month's Fed meeting, more data has pointed in the direction of a "soft landing," in which the economy would slow enough to reduce inflation toward the central bank's 2% target without falling into a deep recession. The Fed has raised its key rate to a 22-year high of about 5.4%.

Inflation has cooled further, according to the latest readings of "core" prices, a category that excludes volatile food and energy costs. Core prices rose 4.7% in July a year earlier, the smallest such increase since October 2021. Fed officials closely track core prices, which they believe provide a better read on underlying inflation.

Overall consumer prices rose 3.2% in July compared with a year earlier, above the previous month's year-over-year pace because of higher gas and food costs. Still, that is far below the peak inflation rate of 9.1% in June 2022.

That progress has been made without the sharp increase in unemployment that many economists had expected would follow the Fed's sharp series of interest rate hikes, the fastest in four decades. The unemployment rate actually ticked down to 3.5% in July, near the lowest level in a half-century.

Hiring has slowed, however, with employers having added 187,000 jobs in July, a solid gain but roughly one-third of the pace of monthly job growth earlier this year.

Still, the Fed now faces upticks in gas and some food prices, which could keep overall inflation from falling much further in the coming months. And rising costs for services, from auto insurance to restaurant meals to dental services, could keep core inflation persistently high.

In a sign that at least some officials think the Fed is nearing the end of its rate hikes, the minutes said "a number" of policymakers think their benchmark rate is high enough to restrain the economy.

These officials also think the risk of raising rates too high is roughly equal to the risk of not raising them high enough. That marks a significant shift from earlier this year, when the Fed routinely said the main risk was tilted toward not doing enough to slow borrowing and spending.

Data this week suggests that the economy, if anything, is picking up, which could keep inflation sticky at its current elevated level. Consumers are still spending at a healthy pace. A report Tuesday showed that retail sales rose faster than expected last month, fueled by rising online shopping and healthy sales at restaurants and bars, among other categories.

The strong sales figures "suggest a much more robust underpinning to the economy, certainly not what the Fed wants to see" as it seeks to slow inflation, said Quincy Krosby, chief global strategist for LPL Financial.

The Fed's decision in July to raise rates for an 11th time was unanimous, a sign that the officials remain largely unified even as their decisions become more fraught. The minutes, though, said that two officials favored keeping the Fed's rate unchanged last month, out of the 18 that took part in the meeting. At least one or both could be among the officials who lacked a vote last month. Only 11 officials currently vote on the Fed's rate policies.

Since the meeting, Fed officials have expressed contrary views. On Tuesday, Neel Kashkari, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, said he wants the Fed to keep its options open for another rate hike.

"I'm not ready to say that we're done, but I'm seeing positive signs that say, hey, we may be on our way," Kashkari said. "We can take a little bit more time and get some more data in before we decide

whether we need to do more.”

By contrast, Patrick Harker, president of the Philadelphia Fed, said he would support leaving rates unchanged for the rest of this year.

“Absent any alarming new data between now and mid-September,” Harker said, “I believe we may be at the point where we can be patient and hold rates steady.”

New study finds far more hurricane-related deaths in US, especially among poor and vulnerable

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Hurricanes in the U.S. the last few decades killed thousands more people than meteorologists traditionally calculate and a disproportionate number of those victims are poor, vulnerable and minorities, according to a new epidemiological study.

A team of public health and storm experts calculated that from 1988 to 2019 more than 18,000 people likely died, mostly indirectly, because of hurricanes and lesser tropical cyclones in the continental United States. That’s 13 times more than the 1,385 people directly killed by storms that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration figures, but the study authors said those numbers aren’t directly comparable.

Instead of just looking at people who drowned, were hit by debris or killed directly by the storm, the study in Wednesday’s journal *Science Advances* examines changes in a storm-hit county’s overall number of deaths just before, during and after a hurricane and compared those to normal years. Researchers attributed the excess deaths to the storm, using a standard public health technique.

“It’s the difference between how many people died and how many people would have died on a normal day” with no hurricane, said study lead author Robbie Parks, an environmental epidemiologist at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health.

After a storm, deaths spike because of heart and lung problems, infections, injury and mental health issues, Parks said. It’s a stressful time with clean-up and rebuilding.

Parks said meteorologists do an admirable job counting people killed during the height of the storm, but so many people die indirectly and especially after the storm, he said “it does seem to be an undercount” that misses the poorest and most vulnerable Americans.

“People who have the least means suffer the most,” said study lead author Robbie Parks, an environmental epidemiologist at Mailman. “It’s a good opportunity to put a number on that.”

Using the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention’s social vulnerability index, Parks divided American counties into the least vulnerable third, the most vulnerable third and the middle, categories that often correlate with the richest, poorest and middle income people. In the case of the heaviest hurricane winds, the most vulnerable third had 57% of the excess deaths and least vulnerable had 6%.

“Conceptually the results of the study make sense, as tropical cyclones often leave communities vulnerable for long periods of time after impact,” National Hurricane Center Director Michael Brennan said in an email.

The hurricane center has noticed this when their experts study storm sites, so the center is trying to increase community engagement to more socially vulnerable populations and expand translation of storm warnings into other languages, Brennan said.

“It does not surprise me, but deeply saddens me that excess mortality is largest among the most vulnerable segments of our population,” said MIT hurricane scientist Kerry Emanuel, who wasn’t part of the study. “It is the poorer people with fewer places to evacuate to and fewer means to get out who take the brunt of the suffering.”

After a storm, people need to have money “to do more than just survive from day to day,” which is why the poorer, more vulnerable survive less, said former NOAA hurricane scientist Jim Kossin of the climate risk nonprofit First Street Foundation, who also was not part of the study.

Finding out how many people are really killed because of a storm is much more challenging to quantify than merely counting direct deaths reported in the media, Kossin said.

For example, the National Hurricane Center estimates that 1,200 people died in 2005's Hurricane Katrina, but using deaths before, during and after and comparing them to 30 years of normal death rates for those places at that time of year, Parks and colleagues figured a death count of 1,491.

Parks' team found bigger gaps between official death counts and what they calculated for 2012's Superstorm Sandy, where the hurricane center said 147 people died. Parks put the death toll at 1,193. And the largest gap was for 2017's Irma, where NOAA said 92 people died directly or indirectly in the United States, while Parks counted 1,202.

The National Hurricane Center's Brennan said his agency writes official reports on storms that use fatality statistics based on information from government officials, medical examiners and the media within several months of landfall. The center doesn't have access to the longer-term statistical studies used to calculate "indirect" deaths, but tries to bring them in when able, such as in the case of 2005's Katrina and 2017's Maria.

In a separate report for the American Meteorological Society, the National Hurricane Center analyzed how people died in direct hurricane deaths the last 10 years and compared them to earlier. It found that a much lower percentage of people are being killed by storm surge, but a higher percentage of Americans are dying in freshwater flooding.

From 1963 to 2012, storm surge was responsible for almost half of the hurricane deaths. NOAA has made a concerted effort to improve storm surge forecasts, warning and education of residents on the coast. Since 2013, only 11% of the hurricane deaths were storm-surge related, the hurricane center said.

But freshwater flooding deaths went from 27% of the deaths to 57% of all hurricane deaths, a figure that may be skewed by 2017's Hurricane Harvey, when there 65 freshwater flooding deaths. Rip current and surf deaths went from 6% of the hurricane deaths to 15%.

First major jihadi attack since coup kills 17 and wounds dozens in Niger, fueling Western fears

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — Insurgents killed 17 soldiers and wounded nearly 24 in the first major attack in half a year against the army in Niger, where Western powers fear a coup by the elite presidential guard last month is weakening a rare ally against jihadi violence in West Africa's Sahel region.

Niger was one of the last democratic countries in the region south of the Sahara and France and the U.S. have about 2,500 military personnel there who were training Niger's forces. France also conducted joint operations with its former colony, but since the coup Paris and Washington have suspended military operations, giving the jihadis more breathing room.

A military detachment was attacked Tuesday afternoon as it moved between the villages of Boni and Torodi in the Tillaberi region, the Ministry of Defense said on state television Tuesday. The wounded were evacuated to the capital, Niamey.

It was the first major attack against Niger's army in six months, a worrying sign of possible escalation, said Wassim Nasr, a journalist and senior research fellow at the Soufan Center, a think tank.

"What we are witnessing today is both jihadi warring factions, the Islamic State group and (al-Qaida affiliate Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin), marking their territory because of the security void caused by the coup. This definitely should be seen in the context of the ongoing war between the two groups," he said.

Neighboring countries are threatening military action against the coup, whose supporters said Wednesday that they would register volunteers to fight and help with other needs so the junta has a list in case it needs to call on people.

One organizer, Amsarou Bako, claimed that the junta is not involved in finding volunteers to defend the coup, although it is aware of the initiative.

It's not clear how real the possibility of regional conflict is.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 51 of 58

Many Bazoum supporters have been silenced or gone into hiding, and rallies to support the president are quickly shut down by police. Several ministers and politicians from deposed President Mohamed Bazoum's regime have been detained since the coup, with human-rights groups unable to access them.

The West African regional bloc, ECOWAS, says it has activated a "standby force" to restore order in Niger. Bako, one of the founders, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that a recruitment drive will launch Saturday in Niamey as well as in cities where invasion forces might enter, such as near the borders with Nigeria and Benin, two countries that have said they would participate in an intervention.

Regional tensions are deepening as the standoff between Niger and ECOWAS shows no signs of defusing, despite signals from both sides that they are open to resolving the crisis peacefully. Last week the junta said it was open to dialogue with ECOWAS after rebuffing the bloc's multiple efforts at talks, but shortly afterwards charged Bazoum with "high treason" and recalled its ambassador from neighboring Ivory Coast.

Analysts say the longer the coup drags on, the less likely an intervention will occur as the junta cements its grip on power, likely forcing the international community to accept the status quo.

United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday there was still room for diplomacy to return the country to constitutional rule and said the U.S. supported ECOWAS' dialogue efforts, including its contingency plans.

The new U.S. ambassador to Niger, Kathleen FitzGibbon, is expected to arrive in Niamey at the end of the week, according to a U.S. official. The United States hasn't had an ambassador in the country for nearly two years. Some Sahel experts say this has left Washington with less access to key players and information.

While regional and western countries scramble for how to respond, many Nigeriens are convinced they'll soon be invaded. The country of some 25 million people is one of the poorest in the world and residents are hoping the new regime will set the nation on a new path. In Niamey Wednesday, eager locals said they'd do what it took to defend the country.

"My children and I love these soldiers and I invite young people to join the army and develop our country and our villages," said Amadou Hawa, a Niamey resident who lives in a shanty town on the side of the road.

The details of Niger's volunteer force are still vague, but similar initiatives in neighboring countries have yielded mixed results. Volunteer fighters in Burkina Faso, recruited to help the army battle its jihadi insurgency, have been accused by rights groups and locals of committing atrocities against civilians.

Bako, one of the heads of the group organizing Nigerien volunteers, said Niger's situation is different.

"The (volunteers in Burkina Faso) are fighting the Burkinabe who took weapons against their own brothers ... The difference with us is our people will fight against an intrusion," he said in English.

Militia clashes in Libyan capital have killed 45, in city's most intense bout of violence this year

By JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The death toll in this week's clashes between rival militias in Libya's capital rose to 45 on Wednesday as troops fanned out across Tripoli to restore calm after a 24-hour bout of fighting that was the city's most intense violence this year.

The clashes erupted late on Monday between militiamen from the 444 brigade and the Special Deterrence Force, and continued into Tuesday evening. Tensions flared after Mahmoud Hamza, a senior commander of the 444 brigade, was allegedly detained by the rival group at an airport in Tripoli, according to local media reports. Hamza was later released as part of deal aimed at quelling the violence, the reports said.

The death toll rose Wednesday to 45, up from the 27 dead reported Tuesday, as more casualties were confirmed, said Malek Merset, the spokesperson for Libya's Emergency Medicine and Support Center. An additional 146 were injured, up from 106 on Tuesday. It remains unclear how many of the dead were militiamen or civilians.

Libyan security forces patrolled the streets and fanned out across Tripoli on Wednesday. The country's

Interior Ministry said security forces were deployed to areas where the fighting was most intense, including the southern Fernaj neighborhood and the al-Shouk Road. A situation room had been set up to monitor developments, but by Wednesday a tentative calm had returned to the city.

The violence underscored the fragility of war-torn Libya following the 2011 uprising turned civil war, which toppled and later killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi. Amid the chaos, militias grew in wealth and power, particularly in Tripoli and the west of the country.

Since 2014, Libya has been divided between rival administrations in the east and the west, each supported by an array of well-armed militias and different foreign governments. Both of Libya's legislative chambers called for an end to the bloodshed in separate statements on Tuesday.

In a statement issued Wednesday, The European Union called on "all parties to continue to refrain from armed hostilities and to engage in dialogue in order to de-escalate the situation and restore calm."

Tripoli has seen similar episodes of violence in recent years, although most have only lasted a couple of hours. Last August, clashes between two other militia active in the capital killed at least 23 people.

"We heard many promises about imminent efforts to promote genuine security sector reform and militia disarmament," said Jalel Harchaoui, a Libya specialist and associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute. "No progress whatsoever was made on those fronts."

The 444 brigade and the Special Deterrence Force are two of the largest militias operating in Tripoli. Both have previously been backed by the administration based there.

Pig kidney works in a donated body for over a month, a step toward animal-human transplants

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Surgeons transplanted a pig's kidney into a brain-dead man and for over a month it's worked normally — a critical step toward an operation the New York team hopes to eventually try in living patients.

Scientists around the country are racing to learn how to use animal organs to save human lives, and bodies donated for research offer a remarkable rehearsal.

The latest experiment announced Wednesday by NYU Langone Health marks the longest a pig kidney has functioned in a person, albeit a deceased one — and it's not over. Researchers are set to track the kidney's performance for a second month.

"Is this organ really going to work like a human organ? So far it's looking like it is," Dr. Robert Montgomery, director of NYU Langone's transplant institute, told The Associated Press.

"It looks even better than a human kidney," Montgomery said on July 14 as he replaced a deceased man's own kidneys with a single kidney from a genetically modified pig — and watched it immediately start producing urine.

The possibility that pig kidneys might one day help ease a dire shortage of transplantable organs persuaded the family of Maurice "Mo" Miller from upstate New York to donate his body for the experiment. He'd died suddenly at 57 with a previously undiagnosed brain cancer, ruling out routine organ donation.

"I struggled with it," his sister, Mary Miller-Duffy, told the AP about her decision. But he liked helping others and "I think this is what my brother would want. So I offered my brother to them."

"He's going to be in the medical books, and he will live on forever," she added.

Attempts at animal-to-human transplants, or xenotransplantation, have failed for decades as people's immune systems attacked the foreign tissue. Now researchers are using pigs genetically modified so their organs better match human bodies.

Last year with special permission from regulators, University of Maryland surgeons transplanted a gene-edited pig heart into a dying man who was out of other options. He survived only two months before the organ failed for reasons that aren't fully understood but that offer lessons for future attempts.

Next, rather than last-ditch efforts, the Food and Drug Administration is considering whether to allow

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 53 of 58

some small but rigorous studies of pig heart or kidney transplants in volunteer patients.

The NYU experiment is one of a string of developments aimed at speeding the start of such clinical trials. Also Wednesday, the University of Alabama at Birmingham reported another important success -- a pair of pig kidneys worked normally inside another donated body for seven days.

Kidneys don't just make urine — they provide a wide range of jobs in the body. In the journal *JAMA Surgery*, UAB transplant surgeon Dr. Jayme Locke reported lab tests documenting the gene-modified pig organs' performance. She said the weeklong experiment demonstrates they can "provide life-sustaining kidney function."

These kinds of experiments are critical to answer remaining questions "in a setting where we're not putting someone's life in jeopardy," said Montgomery, the NYU kidney transplant surgeon who also received his own heart transplant — and is acutely aware of the need for a new source of organs.

More than 100,000 patients are on the nation's transplant list and thousands die each year waiting.

Maryland's Dr. Muhammad Mohiuddin cautions that it's not clear how closely a deceased body will mimic a live patient's reactions to a pig organ. But he said the research educates the public about xenotransplantation so "people will not be shocked" when it's time to try again in the living.

Previously, NYU and a team at the University of Alabama at Birmingham had tested pig kidney transplants in deceased recipients for just two or three days. An NYU team also had transplanted pig hearts into donated bodies for three days of intense testing.

But how do pig organs react to a more common human immune attack that takes about a month to form? Only longer testing might tell.

The surgery itself isn't that different from thousands he's performed "but somewhere in the back of your mind is the enormity of what you're doing ... recognizing that this could have a huge impact on the future of transplantation," Montgomery said.

The operation took careful timing. Early that morning Drs. Adam Griesemer and Jeffrey Stern flew hundreds of miles to a facility where Virginia-based Revivicor Inc. houses genetically modified pigs — and retrieved kidneys lacking a gene that would trigger immediate destruction by the human immune system.

As they raced back to NYU, Montgomery was removing both kidneys from the donated body so there'd be no doubt if the soon-to-arrive pig version was working. One pig kidney was transplanted, the other stored for comparison when the experiment ends.

One other trick: Surgeons attached the pig's thymus to the transplanted kidney in hopes that the gland, which helps train immune cells, would increase human tolerance of the organ. Otherwise, the team is relying on standard immune-suppressing drugs used by today's transplant patients.

"You're always nervous," Griesemer said. To see it so rapidly kickstart, "there was a lot of thrill and lot of sense of relief."

How long should these experiments last? Alabama's Locke said that's not clear — and among the ethical questions are how long a family is comfortable or whether it's adding to their grief. Because maintaining a brain-dead person on a ventilator is difficult, it's also dependent on how stable the donated body is.

In her own experiment, the donated body was stable enough that if the study wasn't required to end after a week, "I think we could have gone much longer, which I think offers great hope," she said.

Russia hits Ukrainian grain depots again as a foreign ship tries out Kyiv's new Black Sea corridor

By HANNA ARHIROVA and SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian drones pounded grain storage facilities and ports along the Danube River that Ukraine has increasingly relied on as an alternative transport route to Europe, after Moscow broke off a key wartime shipping agreement using the Black Sea.

At the same time, a loaded container ship stranded at the Black Sea port of Odesa since Russia's full-scale invasion more than 17 months ago set sail along a temporary corridor established by Ukraine for

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 54 of 58

merchant shipping.

Ukraine's economy, crunched by the war, is heavily dependent on farming. Its agricultural exports, like those of Russia, are also crucial for world supplies of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other food that developing nations rely on.

A month ago, the Kremlin tore up an agreement brokered last summer by the U.N. and Turkey to ensure safe Ukraine grain exports through the Black Sea. Since then, Kyiv has sought to reroute transport through the Danube and road and rail links into Europe. But transport costs that way are much higher, some European countries have balked at the consequences for local grain prices, and the Danube ports can't handle the same volume as seaports.

Odesa Gov. Oleh Kiper said the primary targets of Russia's overnight drone bombardment were port terminals and grain silos, including at the ports in the Danube delta. Air defenses managed to intercept 13 drones over Odesa and Mykolaiv regions, according to the Ukraine Air Force's morning update.

It was the latest attack amid weeks of aerial strikes as Russia has targeted the Danube delta ports, which are only about 15 kilometers (10 miles) from the border with Romania, a NATO member. The Danube is Europe's second-longest river and a key transport route.

Meanwhile, the container ship departing Odesa was the first vessel to set sail since July 16, according to Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's deputy prime minister. It had been stuck in Odesa since February 2022.

The Hong Kong-flagged Joseph Schulte was traveling down a temporary corridor that Ukraine asked the International Maritime Organization to ratify. The United States has warned that the Russian military is preparing for possible attacks on civilian shipping vessels in the Black Sea.

Sea mines also make the voyage risky, and ship insurance costs are likely to be high for operators. Ukraine told the IMO it would "provide guarantees of compensation for damage."

Analysts say Black Sea shipping has in general remained steady since the end of the grain deal, despite higher insurance rates, but shipments out of Ukraine have dropped off.

Last Sunday, a Russian warship fired warning shots at a Palau-flagged cargo ship in the southern Black Sea. According to Russia's Defense Ministry, the Sukru Okan was heading northwards to the Ukrainian Danube River port of Izmail.

Ship-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press confirmed that the Joseph Schulte was steaming south.

The Joseph Schulte is carrying more than 30,000 tons of cargo, with 2,114 containers, including food products, according to Kubrakov.

He said the corridor will be primarily used to evacuate ships stuck in the Ukrainian ports of Chornomorsk, Odesa and Pivdennyi since the outbreak of war.

Wheat prices climbed more than 5% in Chicago trading Wednesday amid Russia's attacks, which have caused grain prices to zigzag on global markets.

Prices for global food commodities like wheat, rice and vegetable oil rose in July after months of declines, following the end of the grain deal and India's restrictions on some rice exports, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said.

The Joseph Schulte was the highest value ship of the 60 still stuck in Ukraine since the war began, according to John Stawpert, senior manager of environment and trade for the International Chamber of Shipping, which represents 80% of the world's commercial fleet.

He noted that China's political closeness to Russia likely helped enable the ship's departure. It is unlikely other vessels will follow, he said, either because of their flags or locations in Ukraine.

On the war's front line, Ukrainian officials claimed another milestone in Kyiv's grinding counteroffensive, with Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar saying troops have retaken a village in the eastern Donetsk region.

The village of Urozhaine is near Staromaiorske, a hamlet that Ukraine also claimed to have recaptured recently. The claims could not be independently verified.

Ukraine appears to be trying to drive a wedge between Russian forces in the south, but it is up against strong defensive lines and is advancing without air support.

Elsewhere, an 18-year-old civilian was killed and four others were injured by Russian shelling of the

southeastern Ukraine town of Mezhova, local authorities said.

Also Wednesday, the Russian military said it shot down three drones over the Kaluga region southwest of Moscow and blamed the attack on Ukraine. No damage or casualties were reported.

It was not possible to verify the sides' battlefield claims.

Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said Wednesday that about 45,000 of the Russian capital's residents are fighting in Ukraine — some 20,000 as draftees, 20,000 as contract soldiers and volunteers and an estimated 5,000 are fighting with private groups. In late July, he said about 30,000 Muscovites were in the war. The discrepancy in the figures could not be explained.

Sobyanin said the Muscovites' presence is "a significant part of those who are there." The total number of Russian troops in Ukraine is not known, but the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War has estimated the number at about 300,000.

England moves into the Women's World Cup final against Spain after ending Australia's run

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

SYDNEY (AP) — Lauren Hemp didn't let the Women's World Cup semifinal match between Australia and England become the Sam Kerr show.

Hemp scored to restore England's lead eight minutes after a superb equalizer from Kerr, and then provided a perfect pass for the clincher as the Lionesses moved into their first World Cup championship game with a 3-1 victory over Australia on Wednesday.

The semifinal outcome ended a Matildas run that captivated Australia for almost a month and sent England to a matchup with Spain in the final, where the Lionesses will have a chance to bring a World Cup home for the first time since 1966.

Sarina Wiegman became the first coach to lead two countries to the Women's World Cup final, and in back-to-back tournaments. Her run with the Netherlands in 2019 ended with a loss to the United States.

On either side of that, she guided Netherlands to the European title in 2017 and then took over the England squad for its breakthrough Euro 2022 title.

"I'm the lucky one — the last two tournaments I'm going to the final," said Wiegman, the only female head coach of any team to reach the quarterfinals.

"You make it to finals, it's really special," she said. "I'm like, 'Am I here in the middle of a fairytale or something?'"

England dominated possession in the first half, starving the Australians of the ball and shutting down the Matildas' transitional, counter-attacking game.

It was rewarded when Ella Toone scored in the 36th minute with a powerful right-foot shot diagonally inside the far post. A throw-in from Rachel Daly went to Hemp, who turned and sent it into the area where Alessia Russo turned the ball back past Hemp for Toone to swoop.

Kerr was in Australia's starting lineup for the first time in the tournament after overcoming a left calf injury.

Her equalizer in the 63rd gave the 75,784-strong crowd and millions of fans watching around Australia renewed hope, but Hemp responded with a goal in the 71st and provided a perfect through ball for Russo to finish from a tight angle four minutes from the end of regulation.

"Even after Sam's goal there was no fear in the squad. We weren't nervous. We just played our football," Hemp said. "We showed the relentlessness inside the squad to make it 2-1. And then even when we're on the backfoot going into the final few minutes, I felt like we showed calm, composure on the ball to manage to counterattack them and obviously make it 3-1."

England and Spain will each be playing in the Women's World Cup final for the first time at Stadium Australia on Sunday. It will be the first all-European final since 2003.

Australia will play Sweden, which lost to Spain 2-1 in the other semifinal, for third place on Saturday in Brisbane.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 56 of 58

"We had a chance for 2-2 and a couple of minutes later it was 3-1," Australia coach Tony Gustavsson said. "It was one of those games, unfortunately."

Katrina Gorry created chances in each half of her 100th game for Australia but said the Matildas weren't able to dominate the way they needed to.

"But you know, we've got a quick turnaround and we want to win the bronze medal," she said.

After topping its group, advancing over Nigeria on penalties in the round of 16 and beating Colombia in the quarterfinals, England was playing in the semifinals for the third consecutive Women's World Cup. Australia was in the final four for the first time.

It showed, particularly in the first half and in the last 20 minutes, when England had a harder edge and was more clinical when it counted.

The Australians seem to have played their final in the 7-6 penalty shootout win over France last weekend, their first win in four quarterfinal appearances at the Women's World Cup.

Kerr missed the group stage, played the last 10 minutes in the round-of-16 win over Denmark and went on as a second-half substitute in that narrow win over fifth-ranked France before finally getting a start against England.

She ended up on the ground after her first touch after a tangle with Keira Walsh. In the ninth minute, England defender Alex Greenwood received a yellow card for a sliding tackle from behind that left Kerr on the ground again.

After being subdued by England's defense for an hour, Kerr took the ball around halfway, sprinted forward in a solo run and launching a long-range right-foot shot that lightly touched defender Millie Bright before going into the top left corner.

Kerr started making inroads as momentum shifted briefly before England responded, with Hemp running onto a long ball into the area and scoring with a left-foot finish after Australia defender Ellie Carpenter over-ran the ball.

Kerr missed a chance to equalize again with a header in the 82nd and miscued another shot as Australia squandered three opportunities before Hemp set up Russo to finish off the scoring.

After putting Australia out of contention, Hemp said the England squad wanted to relive the kind of euphoria that their win in the European Championship generated last year.

"Obviously you've seen last year how successful we were. We want to do the same again, we want to go one step further," Hemp said. "We've all got a dream and I feel like we're really pushing each other to be the best that we can."

Fresh look at DNA from Oetzi the Iceman traces his roots to present day Turkey

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oetzi the Iceman has a new look. Decades after the famous glacier mummy was discovered in the Italian Alps, scientists have dug back into his DNA to paint a better picture of the ancient hunter.

They determined that Oetzi was mostly descended from farmers from present day Turkey, and his head was balding and skin darker than what was initially thought, according to a study published Wednesday in the journal *Cell Genomics*.

Oetzi, who lived more than 5,000 years ago, was frozen into the ice after he was killed by an arrow to the back. His corpse was preserved as a "natural mummy" until 1991, when hikers found him along with some of his clothing and gear — including a copper ax, a longbow and a bearskin hat. Since then, many researchers have worked to uncover more about the mummy, which is displayed at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, Italy.

An earlier draft of Oetzi's genome was published in 2012. But ancient DNA research has advanced since then, so scientists decided to take another look at the iceman's genes, explained study author Johannes

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 57 of 58

Krause, a geneticist at Germany's Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. They used DNA extracted from the mummy's hip bone.

The updated genome is "providing deeper insights into the history of this mummy," said Andreas Keller of Germany's Saarland University. Keller worked on the earlier version but was not involved with the latest study.

Based on the new genome, Oetzi's appearance when he died around age 45 was much like the mummy looks today: It's dark and doesn't have much hair on it, said study author Albert Zink, head of the Institute for Mummy Studies at Eurac Research in Italy. Scientists previously thought the iceman was lighter-skinned and hairier in life, but that his mummified corpse had changed over time.

His genome also showed an increased chance of obesity and diabetes, the researchers reported.

And his ancestry suggests that he lived among an isolated population in the Alps, Zink said. Most Europeans today have a mix of genes from three groups: farmers from Anatolia, hunter-gatherers from the west and herders from the east. But 92% of Oetzi's ancestry was from just the Anatolian farmers, without much mixing from the other groups.

Today in History: August 17, First commercial CDs are produced

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Aug. 17, the 229th day of 2023. There are 136 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 17, 1982, the first commercially produced compact discs, a recording of ABBA's "The Visitors," were pressed at a Philips factory near Hanover, West Germany.

On this date:

In 1807, Robert Fulton's North River Steamboat began heading up the Hudson River on its successful round trip between New York and Albany.

In 1863, federal batteries and ships began bombarding Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor during the Civil War, but the Confederates managed to hold on despite several days of pounding.

In 1915, a mob in Cobb County, Georgia, lynched Jewish businessman Leo Frank, 31, whose death sentence for the murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan had been commuted to life imprisonment. (Frank, who'd maintained his innocence, was pardoned by the state of Georgia in 1986.)

In 1945, the George Orwell novel "Animal Farm," an allegorical satire of Soviet Communism, was first published in London by Martin Secker & Warburg.

In 1978, the first successful trans-Atlantic balloon flight ended as Maxie Anderson, Ben Abruzzo and Larry Newman landed their Double Eagle II outside Paris.

In 1987, Rudolf Hess, the last member of Adolf Hitler's inner circle, died at Spandau Prison at age 93, an apparent suicide.

In 1988, Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq and U.S. Ambassador Arnold Raphel (RAY'-fehl) were killed in a mysterious plane crash.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton gave grand jury testimony via closed-circuit television from the White House concerning his relationship with Monica Lewinsky; he then delivered a TV address in which he denied previously committing perjury, admitted his relationship with Lewinsky was "wrong," and criticized Kenneth Starr's investigation.

In 1999, more than 17,000 people were killed when a magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck Turkey.

In 2004, at the Athens games, Romania won its second straight Olympic gold medal in women's gymnastics; the United States took silver while Russia won the bronze.

In 2011, Vice President Joe Biden arrived in Beijing to meet with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

In 2020, Texas joined New York, New Jersey and California as states with at least 10,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths; about 80 percent of the Texas deaths were reported since June 1, after the state embarked on one of the fastest reopenings in the country.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 054 ~ 58 of 58

Ten years ago: The attorney for a young man who'd testified he was fondled by former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky said his client had reached a settlement, the first among dozens of claims made against the school amid the Sandusky child sex abuse scandal. Nick Davilla threw six touch-down passes and the Arizona Rattlers defeated the Philadelphia Soul 48-39 in the ArenaBowl. Kansas City's Miguel Tejada was suspended 105 games by Major League Baseball for violating its Joint Drug Program, one of the longest suspensions ever handed down.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump said he had canceled plans for a Veterans Day military parade, citing what he called a "ridiculously high" price tag; he accused local politicians in Washington of price-gouging. Tesla CEO Elon Musk, in an interview with The New York Times, said he'd been overwhelmed by job stress, an admission that pushed down the stock value of the electric car company and brought pressure on its board to take action; shares in Tesla tumbled about 9 percent.

One year ago: The head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced a shakeup of the organization, saying it failed to meet the moment of COVID-19's arrival and needed to become more nimble. A bombing at a mosque in the Afghan capital of Kabul during evening prayers killed at least 10 people, including a prominent cleric, and wounded at least 27. Two former Pennsylvania judges who orchestrated a scheme to send children to for-profit jails in exchange for kickbacks were ordered to pay more than \$200 million to hundreds of people they victimized.

Today's Birthdays: Former MLB All-Star Boog Powell is 82. Actor Robert DeNiro is 80. Movie director Martha Coolidge is 77. Rock musician Gary Talley (The Box Tops) is 76. Actor-screenwriter-producer Julian Fellowes is 74. Actor Robert Joy is 72. International Tennis Hall of Famer Guillermo Vilas is 71. Rock singer Kevin Rowland (Dexy's Midnight Runners) is 70. Rock musician Colin Moulding (XTC) is 68. Country singer-songwriter Kevin Welch is 68. Olympic gold medal figure skater Robin Cousins is 66. Singer Belinda Carlisle is 65. Author Jonathan Franzen is 64. Actor Sean Penn is 63. Jazz musician Everette Harp is 62. Rock musician Gilby Clarke is 61. Singer Maria McKee is 59. Rock musician Steve Gorman (The Black Crowes) is 58. Rock musician Jill Cunniff (kuh-NIHF') is 57. Actor David Conrad is 56. Singer Donnie Wahlberg is 54. College Basketball Hall of Famer and retired NBA All-Star Christian Laettner is 54. Rapper Posdnuos (PAHS'-deh-noos) is 54. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jim Courier is 53. Retired MLB All-Star Jorge Posada is 52. TV personality Giuliana Rancic is 49. Actor Bryton James is 37. Actor Brady Corbet (kohr-BAY') is 35. Actor Austin Butler is 32. Actor Taissa Farmiga is 29. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Gracie Gold is 28.