

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 1 of 79

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Ken's Food Fair Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [4- City Council Story](#)
- [6- Kingsbury County Fatal Crash](#)
- [7- 1973 50th Class Reunion](#)
- [7- Music Department looking for followers/chaperones for the 2024 Spring Music Trip](#)
- [8- Warner has clean sweep over Groton Area](#)
- [9- Community Transit Letter](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: 'They are important to us': Remains of Sisseton Wahpeton children returning home](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Construction begins on state's largest soybean processing facility](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Ground blessing marks Pine Ridge's first stand-alone museum](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Former U.S. Capitol Police chief blames intelligence failures, not Trump, for Jan. 6 attack](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: U.S. House GOP spending bills falter as Congress struggles to avoid a shutdown](#)
- [18- Weather Pages](#)
- [22- Daily Devotional](#)
- [23- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- News from the Associated Press](#)

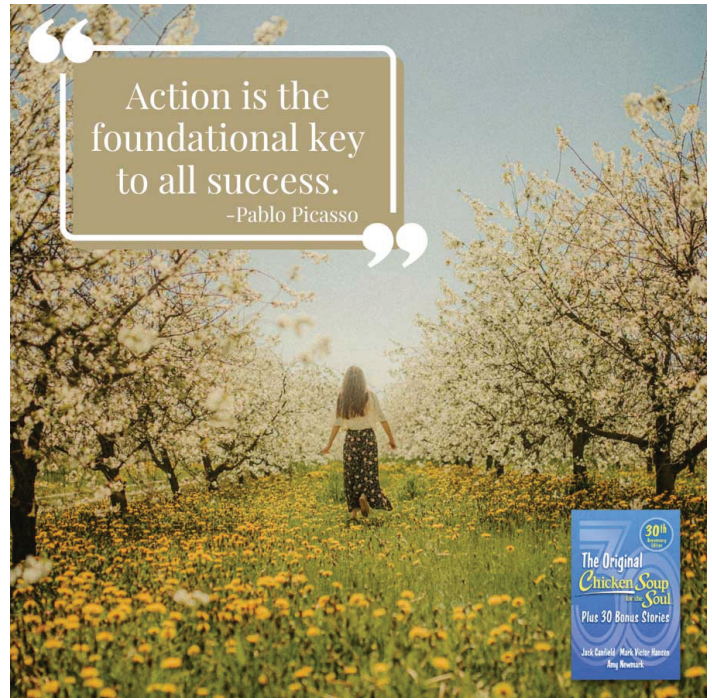
The Boys Soccer Game with Dakota Valley scheduled on Saturday, September 30th has been rescheduled to Monday, September 25th at 4pm.

Wednesday, Sept. 20

Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, acini depepi fruit salad.
St. John's Lutheran Bible Study, 2:45 pm.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.
Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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

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



Thursday, Sept. 21

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, California blend, peaches, whole wheat bread.
Boys Golf at Sisseton, 10 a.m.
Boys Soccer hosts James Valley Christian, 4 p.m.
Volleyball at Tiospa Zina with C match at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

Friday, Sept. 22

Senior Menu: Taco salad with chips, Mexican rice and black beans, Mandarin oranges, pineapple, breadstick.
Football at Sisseton, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 23

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.
Junior High Volleyball Tournament at Hamlin, 9 a.m.
Girls Soccer at Tea Area, 11 a.m. (No JV)
Youth Football at Clark Jamboree

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 2 of 79

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

majority of the state House. Powell beat GOP's Erin Connelly Autenreith to fill a seat vacated by former state Rep. Sara Innamorato.

India expelled one of Canada's top diplomats in a tit-for-tat move after Canada expelled an Indian official over allegations tying New Delhi to the killing of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Canada worked "very closely" with the U.S. on intelligence, Reuters reported.

The Spanish women's soccer squad has agreed to end their boycott of the national team after the country's football federation said it would make "immediate and profound changes" to its structure.

At least six Palestinians have been killed in an Israeli military operation in the West Bank and unrest in the Gaza Strip, the latest spike in violence in the region.

The Greek coast guard has launched a rescue operation to save dozens of migrants aboard a yacht reported to be in difficulty around 40 nautical miles from the coastal town of Pylos.

Ray Epps, a Jan. 6 protester who was theorized by Tucker Carlson to be an FBI informant, has been charged with a misdemeanor count of disruptive or disorderly conduct in a restricted area. The ruling has sparked a new theory.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv is cutting away at Russia's "premier" S-400s, as Kyiv's forces increasingly target Moscow's expensive long-range air defense systems in Crimea. The S-400 is considered broadly equivalent to the U.S. military's Patriot air defense system, and the gold standard of Russian air defense.

TALKING POINTS

"We're going to keep hitting the company where we need to, when we need to. And we're not going to keep waiting around forever while they drag this out. I have been clear with the Big Three every step of the way. And I'm going to be crystal clear again right now. If we don't make serious progress by noon on Friday, September 22nd, more locals will be called on to Stand Up and join the strike." UAW President Shawn Fain warned to expand the ongoing auto strike against the Big Three if a deal is not reached.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

The Federal Reserve concludes its two-day monetary policy meeting. Analysts expect the central bank to hold rates at the current 5.25%-5.5% level. A rate decision is due at 2 p.m. ET, followed by Chair Jerome Powell's press conference at 2:30 p.m.

King Charles III and Queen Camilla begin their royal visit to France, where they will meet French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte in Paris as both nations seek to rebuild ties challenged by Brexit. Charles and Macron are scheduled to meet on Wednesday and Thursday before the royals travel to Bordeaux on Friday.

American Horror Story: Delicate, part one of season 12 of the horror anthology TV series, is set to premiere on FX and will be available to stream on Hulu on Thursday. The series was originally meant to premiere as a full season, but production was put on hold due to the ongoing writers' and actors' strikes in Hollywood.



Full time shift supervisor opening at Ken's Food Fair, Groton SD.

Looking for a hard working self motivated individual with leadership skills and willing to take on responsibilities.

Pay will depend on experience. Benefits available will discuss at interview.

Apply at Ken's in Groton SD.

Baseball complex projects, water rate increase discussed during Groton City Council meeting

by Elizabeth Varin

Groton took one step forward, but are now two steps back from a new concession stand at the baseball fields.

The city received notice at the end of August that a grant application for the replacement of the concession stand and bathroom at the complex on the west side of town would not receive federal funding next year.

The city and Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation applied for a federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant in April through the state's Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The state department received applications for assistance with 20 projects totaling \$2.2 million, but only recommended seven to be funded by the federal grant.

"We're kind of back to square one," said Councilman Jason Wambach.

The concession stand and bathroom replacement project was estimated to cost more than \$222,000 as of April, but \$10,000 of that budget was for a walk-in cooler that the grant wouldn't have covered. The city applied for funding that would cover about 35 percent of the project, not including the walk-in cooler. The total requested amount was \$65,667.

The city and baseball/softball foundation had planned to split the remaining costs of the project.

However, with the Aug. 31 letter, both the city and foundation are reconsidering funding options.

"That's kind of what they're asking right now," Wambach said. "Where do we go from here?"

"In reality, I think they still want to move forward with it," he added. "It's just a question of what the city could do."

Council members talked through options for putting funding toward the project.

"It would still be a tough pill to swallow, but for me, if they want to move forward, I think they have to cover what the grant would have covered," said Councilman Brian Bahr. "It's the only fair way, in my opinion."

Councilman Karyn Babcock asked if the city could apply for funding again next year, which they can, and whether there would be any room in the budget for next year to allocate some funding.

Councilman Kevin Nehls asked whether there would be any funding left over from this fiscal year that could be rolled over into the project fund.

Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich said this year's budget included \$124,585 for baseball and softball recreation costs, including coaches salaries, travel expenses and more. When all the bills are paid for the season, there would be about \$8,000 left of that allocation.

That money could roll over to the construction costs, Nehls suggested.

"At least they can put it towards that," he said. "I know it's only eight grand, but it's something to go toward that direction."

Nehls said, though, that he doesn't see the city being able to evenly split the costs of the project between the foundation and city. It would take the city's portion rise from a little less than \$61,000 to \$93,810.

Council members also discussed splitting costs of the project to both the 2024 and 2025 fiscal year budgets. The grant would have required construction to be completed by the end of the 2024 calendar year, but without that limitation, the city could look to the next year's budget to help with those costs too.

"All of these programs, the pool, baseball, it's needed in our community," Wambach said.

No decision was made Tuesday about funding the project.

Councilman Bahr added he would like to see where the city is at the end of the fiscal year when all baseball and softball expenses from this year have been paid.

Another problem at the baseball fields made its way before the council Tuesday.

Council members discussed the grandstand heaving, where the concrete below the grandstand has started to lift. That has become a safety issue, said Councilwoman Babcock.

City staff are looking into the issue to see what can be done to fix the grandstand.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 5 of 79

City looking to water rate increase in October

The city may look at a water rate increase at the council's Oct. 3 meeting.

The city was notified that WEB Water is increasing their water rates effective in October. The rate would go up 33 cents per 1,000 gallons of water used and 68 cents per 1,000 over-the-contract rate.

The city has already recently raised water rates for the new water tower and other WEB Water increases, said Councilwoman Shirley Wells. This rise, though, would be 33 cents per 1,000 gallons used and 66 cents for 2,000 gallons used.

"A bottle of water is \$4 at the store," joked Councilman Bahr.

However, the city has typically followed WEB Water in when the water system has instituted a rate increase.

Mayor Scott Hanlon agreed, asking that the rate increase be put on the Oct. 3 agenda.

"We always follow," he said. "Like Brian said, we can't go backward, so we have to follow."

In Other Action:

- The city opened bids to lease 95 acres of land at the airport north of Groton. Shawn Gengerke Farms submitted the highest bid at \$252.10 per tillable acre. Four other sealed bids were opened, which included \$225 per acre from Rix Farms Inc., \$195.23 per acre from Thurston Cattle Company, \$247 per acre from Darin and Kayde Stange and \$211.50 per acre from Jonathan Cutler. The council awarded the two-year lease to Shawn Gengerke Farms, with the Stange bid as an alternate should Gengerke rescind his bid. The vote to finalize the lease agreement will be presented to the council at its next meeting, said Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich.

- Council members commented on the pickle ball court appearance after it was resurfaced due to the concrete cracking. While it looks good from the street, there are still some issues, said Councilwoman Karyn Babcock. She showed the council photos of cracks still present on the court, including one area where the paint is bubbling up. "The paint looks pretty. The nets look pretty. That (the bubbling paint spot) is not something that is going to stop the ball. It's not a safety issue. That bubble is not going to cause someone to trip. It's not going to cause the ball to bounce funny," she said. Councilman Brian Bahr added, "I think it's the best it's going to get. It's a vast improvement."

- Councilwoman Babcock brought up administrative issues at the swimming pool. There were periods of time when two pool managers worked at the same time. That is something that was discussed with the co-managers before the summer began. However, those issues boil down to staffing, water safety documentation requirements and that much of the management at the pool is done on paper instead of electronically. "They're drowning, literally, no pun intended," she said. "They need some type of help that would improve their ability to process all of this in a more efficient way. I don't know what it (the solution) is."

- The council approved ordering a new door for a city building that would allow the larger equipment to be stored indoors during the winter. Councilman Bahr presented a bid that included the price of the door and labor to install it. However, he added, he hasn't been able to get a quote on reframing the door. "I don't know if we just need to table this one for another meeting. I think it's really important to get a new door in before winter. ...If we're going to do this, we better get going real quick," he said. Councilman Wambach suggested moving forward with purchasing the door in case that takes time to arrive. "Time is of the essence," said Councilwoman Wells. "We're almost at the end of September. It could be snowing in October."

Kingsbury County Fatal Crash

What: Single-motorcycle fatal crash

Where: 441st Avenue and 209th Street, .5 miles south of Lake Preston

When: 11:48 a.m., Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Driver: Male, 67, Fatal injuries

Vehicle: 2005 Harley Davidson FLSTNI

Kingsbury County, S.D.- One person died today in a single motorcycle crash a half mile south of Lake Preston, S.D.

The name of the person has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates a 2005 Harley Davidson FLSTNI was traveling northbound on 441st Avenue in Kingsbury County. For an unknown reason, the motorcycle and driver entered the east ditch before vaulting over an embankment separating the driver from the motorcycle.

The 67-year-old male driver sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced deceased on the scene. He was not wearing a helmet.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.



1973 50th Class Reunion

Back: Karl Eichler, Rick Odland, John Erickson, Chris Julson, Jay Johnson, Rod Everson, Alan Strom, Faye Siefkes, Lori Niehoff, Barry Smith, Gordon Finlay, Kevin Anderson, Tim Zoellner, Wynella Abeln

Middle: Julie Shilhanek, Wayne Fulker, Shirley Guthmiller, Barney Dombrowe, Loren Bahr, Sherry Turner, Neal Abeln, Anita Horecka, Marilyn Thum, Amy Schwab, Mark Koffler, Steve Daly
Front: Steve Dunker, Randy Ries, Kim Raap, Jim Sundermeyer, Larry Kolbo, Loren Schaller, Krysferrington, LeAnn Conn, Gloria Huber, Kim Holt, Cliff Pray

Missing: Mary Fruedenthal, Karen Zoellner, Doris Anderson, Mark Neuman, Chuck Knecht, Marjie Klebsch (Photo courtesy Wynella Abeln)

Music Department looking for followers/chaperones for the 2024 Spring Music Trip

On May 17-20, 2024 the Groton Band and Show Choir will be taking a 4 day/3 night trip to Branson, MI. Some of the attractions on the trip include the Titanic Museum, Branson Landing, Legends in Concert, Silver Dollar City Theme Park, The Track GoKarts, Wonderworks, and the Haygoods Show.

"We are looking to fill up more seats, otherwise the trip cost will increase due to the low numbers of students attending," said Mrs. Yeigh Groton 5-12 Band Director. "The cost of the trip is estimated at \$850 but will increase if we can't fill up the 56-Passenger Motorcoach." The trip also includes 3 nights at a hotel, Motorcoach Transportation, 3 Continental Breakfasts, 1 Dinner at the Fall Creek Steak House, 1 Dinner at Pasghetti's Restaurant, and 1 Silver Dollar City Meal Voucher. There is a \$50 deposit required by October 1st for all those planning to attend.

If you are interested or would like more details, please contact Mrs. Yeigh at the school, or e-mail her at desiree.yeigh@k12.sd.us

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 8 of 79

Warner has clean sweep over Groton Area

Groton's volleyball teams suffered a three match loss to Warner in action played Tuesday in Warner. The Monarchs won the varsity match, 25-12, 25-17 and 25-12.

Anna Fjeldheim led the Tigers with nine kills and one ace serve, Sydney Leicht and Cheseny Weber each had two kills and an ace serve, Faith Traphagen had a kill and a block, Rylee Dunker had two kills and Jaedyn Penning had a kill.

Lauren Marcuson led the Monarchs with 16 kills and three ace serves and her sister, Kyra Marcuson, added nine kills. Kyleigh Schopp had 10 kills and one ace serve, MaKenna Leidholt had eight kills and one block, Ava Nilsson had two kills and one ace serve, Sophia Hoeft and Nevaeh Lesnar each had two kills and Libby Scepaniak added one ace serve.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Dairy Queen, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers and Locke Electric. Ryan Tracy and Aspen Johnson provided play by play commentary.

The Monarchs handed the junior varsity team its first loss of the season, 2-1. Groton Area won the first set, 25-13, then dropped the next two by scores of 25-13 and 15-9. Talli Wright had three kills, two ace serves and one block, Sydney Locke had three ace serves, Jaedyn Penning three kills, Emerlee Jones two kills, Emma Kutter one kill and one block, Kella Tracy one kill, one block and one ace serve, and Jerica Locke one ace serve.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Gordon and Dorene Nelson. Ryan Tracy provided the play-by-play with comments from Coach Chelsea Hanson during the first set.

Warner won the C match, 25-19, 25-10 and 25-23. Emerlee Jones led the Tigers with 11 kills and one ace serve, McKenna Tietz had six kills, Taryn Traphagen had four kills and one ace serve, Liby Althoff had three kills and one ace serve, Leah Jones had three kills, Avery Crank had a kill and an ace serve, and Brenna Imrie and Hannah Sandness each had an ace serve.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the White House Inn.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 9 of 79



Groton Community Transit

P.O. Box 693
205 E. 2nd Ave.
Groton, SD 57445

Dear Groton family,

Thank you, Thank you, for your loyalty and support through all of these years! We appreciate everyone of you!!

Although we have tried our best to keep the expenses low, our operating costs have increased significantly due to global factors in recent times. After carefully reviewing the finances, we have made a tough decision of increasing our transportation prices.

The change will take effect on Oct. 1, 2023 our rides within the town of Groton will be \$2 per ride, \$4 roundtrip. And, medical rides to Aberdeen from Groton will be \$20 roundtrip. Until then, you can take benefit of the old prices. We will honor old prices till Sept. 30, 2023!

We also offer a discounted pass for \$30 which includes 22 one way rides within Groton area!

We are a non-profit transportation service for the needs of all age groups of people!

As always, thank you for your loyalty and we thank you for your understanding and continued support!

Sincerely,

Dam Hansen & Eugenia Strom

Groton Transit

Steve Smith, Sherry Koehler, Topper Tostad, Dick Kolker



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

'They are important to us': Remains of Sisseton Wahpeton children returning home

Boys died more than 140 years ago at Carlisle boarding school in Pennsylvania

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 4:47 PM

Amos La Framboise and Edward Upright didn't know that they'd never see their homes and families again. The boys, of the Spirit Lake and Lake Traverse bands of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, set off to Pennsylvania in 1879 to attend the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

They didn't know they would die at the school before they'd reach 15 years old; that their graves would be marked with military-issued headstones that were riddled with spelling errors; that there would be nothing to tell their story aside from the word "Sioux" on those headstones and the date of their death.

Their remains have stayed in Pennsylvania for more than 140 years. But they're finally returning home.

Sisseton Wahpeton representatives traveled to Pennsylvania this week to oversee the disinterment of La Framboise and Upright after chairmen from the Spirit Lake and Sisseton Wahpeton tribes signed a pact with the U.S. Army. Tribal members plan to reinter the bodies on the Lake Traverse Reservation in northeast South Dakota this weekend.

The two boys were part of a group of six children from the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate to travel to the school together. They were the "best and brightest" of the time, said Tamara St. John, tribal historian for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and a member of the South Dakota House of Representatives. Many of the children were the sons and daughters of chiefs.

All four boys died before they reached adulthood. The two girls survived and returned home.

"We lost our next generation of leaders," said St. John, who has spent years researching La Framboise and Upright in order to bring them home.

The children were among thousands of Native American youth across the United States sent to Carlisle to assimilate to white culture and to draw Native American chiefs into the nation's capital.

Carlisle was the first government-run, off-reservation Native American boarding school in the United States. More than 500 boarding schools are known to have existed in the United States and Canada.

Assimilation tactics included cutting children's hair, forcing them to speak English and renaming them with English names. Punishment for breaking rules was cruel and sometimes included beatings and sexual abuse.

"Kill the Indian in him, and save the man," Richard Henry Pratt, superintendent of the Carlisle school, infamously said during an 1892 speech.

More than 180 children died between 1879 and 1918 and were buried at a cemetery near the school.

Since 2017, the remains of dozens of former Carlisle students have been repatriated to tribal nations. The Rosebud Sioux Tribe reburied the remains of nine children on its reservation in 2021.

The history of boarding schools in the United States and the repatriation of student remains is important for all Americans to understand, St. John said. Tribal history is currently a "subject of debate" in South Dakota, and the federal government's assimilation tactics are little more than an asterisk in today's history teachings, she said.

While the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate is welcoming two of its sons back home, St. John said several unmarked and unknown "Sioux" graves remain at the Pennsylvania cemetery.

"Children should be returned and allowed to be buried with their loved ones instead of far away in a field

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 11 of 79

and forgotten about," St. John said. "No child should have that. I think that's part of Carlisle, you know, the idea that they were not important. But they are important to us."

Fight takes years to bring boys home

St. John and the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate have been working to reinter the boys for years. It's been a struggle over sovereignty with the U.S. Army, St. John said, since the boys were buried in an Army-run cemetery near the site of the former school.

The Army requires notarized statements by all close living relatives of the deceased saying they don't object to the disinterment before the process begins. It took St. John several years to find La Framboise and Upright's closest living relatives, who are elders from the Sisseton Wahpeton and Spirit Lake tribes.

"How do you find that next of kin to a child that died in 1879 with no children at the age of 13 or 14?" St. John said.

The process was burdensome for the elders, St. John said. And the Army's policy asserted the reinterment was "just a family matter," which disregards the importance of the reburial for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate as a community, she added.

"It wound up being something of a false front, and I feel resentment for it because it became an obstacle and has been delayed for us for years," St. John said, "but it's also something that created division and questioning."

The Army approved the disinterment requests in 2022 and scheduled the disinterments for summer 2023. After that, the agency stopped communicating with the tribe, St. John said. The lack of communication and growing frustration with the Army's repatriation process led the Sisseton Wahpeton tribe to send a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act request in March of this year. While the Army said the act doesn't apply to Carlisle students, a federal notice was sent out in May scheduling the start of the disinterment process for September.

St. John said the effort to repatriate La Framboise and Upright will pave a path for repatriation for other tribes across the country.

"Our children are not soldiers. That is not their story," St. John said. "They deserve to be remembered, to be with their families and to come home. ... This really speaks to every child who was sent away and maybe lost. Now this is us saying we do care."

'They left together and they will come home together'

At least 233 students, nearly 3% of the 7,800 children who attended Carlisle, died while enrolled.

13-year-old Amos La Framboise, son of tribal leader Joseph La Framboise, was the first to die. He died just three weeks after arriving at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879 and was buried in the city's cemetery. His cause of death is unknown, though a local newspaper said he was ill shortly before he died.

Edward Upright, son of Spirit Lake Chief Waanatan, died in 1881 after contracting measles and pneumonia.

The two other Sisseton Wahpeton boys, John Renville and George Walker, returned to Dakota Territory. Renville's body was returned home by his father, Gabriel Renville, following the boy's death in 1880 after contracting typhus. Walker was discharged from the school in 1883 because he was "extremely anxious." St. John believes he likely died shortly after returning home.

The two girls sent to Carlisle, Nancy Renville and Justine La Framboise, returned home in 1880 and 1882, respectively. They survived into adulthood, though St. John does not know much about their lives.

This is the third time La Framboise's remains have been disinterred and the second time for Upright. La Framboise's grave was moved a month after his initial burial from the town's "White persons' cemetery" to the school's newly established private cemetery. Both of the boys' bodies were disinterred in 1927 after the Army took over the property. The more than 180 other children buried at the school were moved to clear space for a new building on the property.

St. John worried that there wouldn't be anything in La Framboise's grave before she drove to Pennsylvania with other tribal representatives. There have been instances when a grave was reopened and the child wasn't inside or there were body parts from different children in the grave, St. John said.

The boys will be brought home "in the right way," St. John said. The caskets will be covered with a buffalo

robe, she said, which is "probably one of the most honorable, loving ways" to have wrapped individuals for burial at the time, she explained.

"They left together and they will come home together," St. John said, "and they will be laid to rest together in a place we can protect them."

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.

Construction begins on state's largest soybean processing facility

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 6:11 PM

MITCHELL — Construction of the largest soybean processing facility in South Dakota began Tuesday with a groundbreaking ceremony.

The High Plains Processing plant, 2 miles south of Mitchell, is a project of South Dakota Soybean Processors, which already operates two processing plants in Volga and Miller. The company also announced Tuesday that a subsidiary of multinational oil and gas company BP is a major investor in the project.

CEO Tom Kersting told attendees at the groundbreaking that "the great energy transition" is driving the project. He described the nation as moving from below-ground to above-ground energy sources — from coal and natural gas to biofuels, wind and solar power.

Ty Eschenbaum, with a development firm assisting the project, A1 Development Solutions, said low-carbon fuel standards such as those adopted by California have created demand for U.S.-based soybean processors.

"There are two main products made here: soybean meal, which is used as feed, and soybean oil, which can be turned into renewable biodiesel," he said.

The company said the new processing plant will cost about \$500 million to build, will employ an estimated 85 full-time employees, and be capable of processing 35 million bushels of soybeans annually. Eschenbaum forecasts new demand for soybeans will raise the price "10 to 20 cents per bushel." Soybeans are currently selling for around \$13 per bushel.

Kyle Peters, also of A1 Development and the son-in-law of Gov. Kristi Noem, emceed the event. He said because of the price projections for soybeans, "We call this a regional project. We don't call this a Mitchell project."

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.

Ground blessing marks Pine Ridge's first stand-alone museum

Màpiya Lúta Heritage Center will house art, language and other elements of Lakota culture

BY: AMELIA SCHAFFER - SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 10:12 AM

PINE RIDGE — The new Màpiya Lúta, formerly Red Cloud Indian School, Heritage Center will mark the first stand-alone museum on the Pine Ridge Reservation and will feature one of the largest art collections in South Dakota.

"This was one of the institutions that suppressed our culture, but here it is evolving into a place where they're actually incorporating culture and preserving languages," said Jhon Goes In Center, Oglala Lakota and a member of the Màpiya Lúta Board of Directors.

On Sept. 14, community members and Màpiya Lúta staff held a ground blessing ceremony at the site of the future building. Tribal President Frank Star Comes Out and several descendants of Chief Red Cloud spoke before the ceremony about the importance of the building and of Màpiya Lúta.

After the ground blessing, Màpiya Lúta students drummed and sang in Lakota.

"This school has produced many leaders, not only for our tribe but nationally, and it will continue to do

that," Robert Ecoffey, Oglala Lakota and president of the Board of Directors, said to the students. "This is a great day for our tribe."

The building, which is expected to be completed by Summer 2025, has been created by and for the community and will feature an event center, interactive language spaces, a museum and an art gallery.

"We want to elevate new voices, not just history," said Heritage Center Executive Director Tawa Ducheneaux, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

The current Heritage Center is located in Drexel Hall, one of the oldest buildings on Pine Ridge, constructed in 1887. The building also houses the Jesuits and administration. After the new Heritage Center is built, the administration hopes to turn Drexel Hall into a long-term historic interpretation center.

Back in July, the Red Cloud Indian School was renamed Màpíya Lúta, which in Lakota means Red Cloud. The decision was made to phase out outdated language, reflect the Lakota who use the school and reflect the school's Lakota language programming.

"We want to honor his (Red Cloud's) vision for the school and his people," said Jennifer Irving, vice president of marketing and communications and a citizen of the Oglala Lakota tribe.

The idea to rebrand was sparked in 2019 when the sports teams began using the Lakota name rather than the English spelling. Irving said that many community members often just referred to the school as Red Cloud, leaving out "Indian school."

"Many people felt that the term Indian was derogatory and didn't capture the uniqueness of Lakota people," Irving said.

In the wake of the construction of the new Heritage Center, school officials said they felt this was the perfect time to start thinking about what they'd like to be called.

The school served as a Catholic boarding school from 1888 to 1980 but began slowly closing dormitories in the 1960s.

Over that nearly 100-year span, the school saw lots of changes. In 1967, the Holy Rosary Mission, the school's first name, began teaching Lakota language classes. The next year, the Red Cloud Art Show began.

In 2019 the school hired its first non-Jesuit leader, and now most board members, staff and those involved with the school are Lakota, many of whom attended the school themselves.

Currently, about 500 K-12 students from the Pine Ridge area attend Màpíya Lúta.

— *This story was originally co-published by the Rapid City Journal and ICT, through a news partnership that covers Indigenous communities in the South Dakota area.*

Amelia Schafer covers Indigenous communities in the South Dakota area as part of a partnership between the Rapid City Journal and ICT, an independent, nonprofit news enterprise that covers Indigenous peoples.

Former U.S. Capitol Police chief blames intelligence failures, not Trump, for Jan. 6 attack

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 8:10 PM

The FBI and U.S. Department of Homeland Security failed to share intelligence with the U.S. Capitol Police ahead of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack, leaving the Capitol Police under-prepared for that day's violence, the former chief of the Capitol Police told a U.S. House panel chaired by Georgia Republican Barry Loudermilk on Tuesday.

But Democrats at the House Administration hearing said the testimony by former USCP Chief Steven Sund didn't change that former President Donald Trump bore responsibility for boosting baseless allegations that the 2020 presidential election had been stolen.

Trump then summoned supporters to the Capitol, urged them to disrupt then-Vice President Mike Pence's ceremonial role in certifying the election and then stood by as his supporters attacked the Capitol, Democrats said.

Sund told the panel: "Significant intelligence existed that individuals were plotting to storm the Capitol building, target lawmakers and discussing shooting my officers. And yet, no intel agencies or units sounded

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 14 of 79

the alarm. We were blindsided. Intelligence failed operations. The January 6 attack at the Capitol was preventable.”

Sund told the House Administration Subcommittee on Oversight that besides intelligence failures, the U.S. National Guard had also been instructed not to assist Capitol Police out of concern for political “optics.”

Republicans on the panel, led by Loudermilk, used the hearing Tuesday to rebut the findings of the House Select Committee to Investigate the Jan. 6 Attack on the U.S. Capitol that Trump bore responsibility for the insurrection.

Loudermilk has a personal history with the Jan. 6 committee, and noted Tuesday he had been “a target” of the panel.

The committee asked Loudermilk last year to answer questions about a Capitol tour he gave the day before the attack. Some Democratic House members had said they suspected rioters used tours in the days leading up to the attack to gain a better understanding of the Capitol’s layout.

Democrats said Tuesday that Trump, who faces criminal indictments in connection with Jan. 6, is the main responsible party.

“The person responsible for directing the violence to the Capitol that day in order to undermine — to undermine — a peaceful transfer of power is the favorite to secure the Republican nomination for president,” subcommittee ranking Democrat Norma Torres of California said, referring to Trump’s 2024 bid to reclaim the presidency.

Intelligence breakdown and National Guard slowdown

Sund, who resigned from the Capitol Police two days after the Capitol attack, said that intelligence made public since the attack could have prevented that day’s violence if it was shared ahead of time.

“If the intelligence had been accurately reported and the FBI and DHS had followed their policies and established practices, I wouldn’t be sitting here today,” he told the panel.

“This could have been preventable if we had gotten the intelligence they had,” he later told Virginia Republican Morgan Griffith.

Sund’s department’s own intelligence operations also failed to note the potential danger in the days leading up to the attack, he said.

The USCP Intelligence Division issued a Jan. 3 intelligence assessment, but didn’t highlight an imminent concern, Sund said. The division had intelligence available, but failed to include it, Sund testified.

Sund also told the panel that he was stymied in efforts to have National Guard troops assist U.S. Capitol police.

He’d asked the sergeant at arms of each chamber of Congress on Jan. 3 for permission to call in the National Guard, but was denied in deference to the “optics” of having National Guard troops at the Capitol, he said.

On Jan. 6, he asked House Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving to call the National Guard, but didn’t receive approval for more than an hour, he said. The Guard’s arrival at the Capitol was delayed hours more by Defense Department officials, who also cited “the optics of the National Guard on Capitol Hill,” he said.

Memos on Jan. 4 and Jan. 5 from the Defense Department and Department of Army restricted the D.C. National Guard from being involved in responding to Jan. 6 pro-Trump protests, Sund confirmed in response to House Administration ranking Democratic Joseph Morelle of New York.

Sund was unaware of those restrictions until after the attack, he said.

Jan. 6 committee questioned

Loudermilk and other Republicans on the panel used Sund’s testimony to blame the attack on former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — not Trump, as the U.S. House committee that investigated the attack, found.

The Jan. 6 committee didn’t ask Sund to appear, the former chief said Tuesday, in response to a question from Loudermilk.

Republicans highlighted Sund’s testimony that Irving delayed National Guard backup and noted that, as the House’s top law enforcement officer, Irving reported to Pelosi.

“None of us in this room are saying what happened on Jan. 6 was correct,” U.S. Rep. Greg Murphy, a

North Carolina Republican, said. "But I absolutely believe the conditions for that to occur rest at the former speaker's lap and the two sergeant at arms, and complicit with other individuals. You know, it's one thing for something to occur, but it's another thing to create the conditions for that to occur."

Trump has also called Pelosi responsible for the attack, a claim Pelosi rejected on "The Sunday Show with Jonathan Capehart" on MSNBC.

"He knows he's responsible for that, so he projects it onto others," Pelosi said of Trump. "The assault on the Capitol building, the assault on the Constitution, the assault on our democracy. Shame on him."

Morelle at the hearing disagreed with the Republicans' effort to shift blame to Pelosi.

"I'm disturbed by that you don't blame the rioters or the president," Morelle said. "It's like blaming a homeowner when he or she is robbed instead of blaming the intruder."

Morelle added that Irving had been appointed and reappointed to his post by Republican former Speakers John Boehner and Paul Ryan.

Further, Sund's account of the National Guard's delay on Jan. 6 could not solely be attributed to Irving, Morelle noted. The Pentagon, which then was controlled by Trump appointees, also contributed to the delay in sending National Guard troops, he said.

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

U.S. House GOP spending bills falter as Congress struggles to avoid a shutdown

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ARIANA FIGUEROA - SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 5:27 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Democrats said Tuesday they are preparing their own short-term spending bill that they believe will garner bipartisan support, a decision that could stave off a partial government shutdown — and as House Republicans failed to advance two spending bills.

The Senate move would work as long as the House votes to approve whatever measures the Senate comes up with, but it's unclear what's going to pass in the deeply divided House.

"I'm working hard here in the Senate to make sure we do put together a bipartisan CR that will deliver on the necessary funding for disaster relief, supporting Ukraine, paying our wildland firefighters and more," Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray said, referring to a continuing resolution, or CR.

"We need to show the American people that Congress can come together and help people and solve problems," the Washington state Democrat added.

The announcement came as Republicans in the U.S. House, led by Speaker Kevin McCarthy, remained stuck in the mud, unable to reach consensus on a short-term government funding bill as well as a path forward for the dozen full-year government spending bills.

House GOP leaders couldn't find the votes needed Tuesday to advance a 31-day government funding bill that two factions of their own members agreed to just this past weekend. The lack of support forced them to pull a key procedural vote from the schedule a few minutes before the chamber came into session.

House Republicans were also unable to win enough votes to adopt the rule that would have set up debate and a final approval vote on the full-year Defense spending bill. That floor vote was 212-214, with five GOP lawmakers voting against adopting the rule.

Republican Reps. Andy Biggs of Arizona, Dan Bishop of North Carolina, Ken Buck of Colorado, Ralph Norman of South Carolina and Matt Rosendale of Montana voted against the rule, needed under House procedures to begin debate on bills that lack two-thirds support.

'Reckless, cruel CR'

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer chided House Republicans for their partisanship, saying during a press conference the House GOP's short-term spending bill is a "non starter."

"It's a slapdash, reckless, cruel CR," Schumer said.

The New York Democrat said he wants the Senate to come together on a bipartisan continuing resolu-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 16 of 79

tion, though he didn't get into details.

"Our first job is to get the House to pass something. We'll see if they can. But we need a bipartisan bill in each body," Schumer said.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky pushed back against the idea of a partial government shutdown, saying what is "critically important to the American people is for the government not (to) shut down."

But McConnell said he couldn't "predict exactly how this ends" and appeared to leave room for the Senate to move its own short-term spending bill.

"We'll see what the House does and act accordingly," he said.

McConnell didn't voice support for the House CR, but said he supports "what the speaker is trying to accomplish."

"He's trying to avoid a government shutdown," McConnell said.

Wisconsin senator slammed

Continuing resolutions, or CRs, are regularly used to keep the government funded for a couple of months while the House and Senate finish work on the 12 annual spending bills.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved all of those bills on broadly bipartisan votes earlier this year and the Senate began debating three of them this month.

But that debate hit a snag last week when Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson blocked amendment votes on a three-bill spending package.

Murray criticized Johnson for blocking last week's votes, as did New Hampshire Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, who chairs the Commerce-Justice-Science spending panel.

"Make no mistake," Shaheen said during Tuesday's press conference. "This was an effort to help extremists in the House shut down the government."

Murray said that while she is working to secure an agreement to quickly hold amendment votes, the Senate on Wednesday will hold a procedural vote "to get things rolling."

"If we aren't able to keep our bills moving on the floor, then an omnibus will be where we end up," Murray said, referring to a huge package of all the spending bills. "I personally do not want to let a few members cause chaos and stop other senators, especially those who have not served on the Appropriations Committee, from weighing in on these bills on the Senate floor."

Spending patch

Congress is supposed to pass the dozen annual government funding measures before the start of the new fiscal year on Oct. 1, though lawmakers rarely complete their work on time.

So for more than two decades, lawmakers have leaned on a short-term stopgap spending bill that's often called a continuing resolution to extend government funding for a couple of months.

But especially conservative House Republicans are furious the short-term spending bill would extend funding levels and policies approved last December during unified Democratic control of Congress.

So House Republicans are attempting to reduce domestic spending in the short-term government spending bill and add in several bills that stand no chance of passing the Democratically controlled Senate.

Oklahoma's Cole: 'Give and take and discussion'

House Rules Chair Tom Cole, an Oklahoma Republican, said during floor debate on the rule for the Defense funding bill that passing spending bills through that chamber is just one step in the process.

Appropriations subcommittee chairs in the House and Senate will eventually need to head to conference to reconcile their differences.

"As my friends know, the Democrats control the United States Senate and we have a Democrat as the president of the United States," Cole said. "So wherever we end up, it's going to be a process of give and take and discussion. But it's important that the House has an opening position."

Efforts to work out final spending bills that can pass both the House and Senate would be considerably sidetracked if Congress doesn't approve a short-term stopgap spending bill before Oct. 1.

Compromise on such a continuing resolution continued to elude House Republicans on Tuesday.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 17 of 79

House Freedom Caucus Chair Scott Perry told reporters following a closed-door meeting that members have two choices on government funding.

"One path is where we offer something and the American people can see what we stand for," said Perry, a Pennsylvania Republican. "And the other path is, quite honestly, accepting whatever the Senate sends us, which is likely to be 100% worse than everything and anything that we stand for."

The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved all 12 of the annual government funding bills with broadly bipartisan votes. All of the House's bills approved in committee were approved solely with GOP lawmaker support.

House Republicans, Perry said, need to understand that collectively they represent millions of Americans and that there will be different opinions about funding levels and policy throughout the process.

"You're not going to get every single thing that you want," Perry said. "But if you don't do something, you're not going to get anything."

House GOP 'personality conflicts'

Arkansas Republican Rep. Steve Womack, chair of the Financial Services appropriations subcommittee, said following the morning meeting that the conference was still "heavily divided" on how to fund the government past the Oct. 1 deadline.

Womack said the disagreements are not just about spending levels or federal policy, but about personal dynamics within the House GOP Conference.

"I think there are personality conflicts at work involving certain members and the speaker and that this is coming down to a situation where they want to fight the speaker," Womack said.

"And that is really unfortunate. We're the governing majority with a narrow majority, and we have to have everybody on the rope pulling in the same direction," he added. "And I think you've got some folks in our conference, who just simply will not pull their weight in the direction that conference legitimately needs to go"

Some especially conservative House Republicans, such as Florida's Matt Gaetz, have threatened to remove McCarthy through a motion to vacate, which any one lawmaker can bring up for a floor vote.

Gaetz has argued that the California Republican has not kept his promises made in private to hard-line Republicans in January in order to secure his position as speaker.

One of those promises, Gaetz said, was members would vote on each spending bill individually, rather than together as an omnibus.

"This was promised, and it has not been delivered," he said.

Gaetz said that he would not support any continuing resolution, or CR, that would fund the government at current spending levels.

"My objective this week is to defeat this CR," Gaetz said. "I do not have an objective beyond that."

Kentucky Republican Rep. Thomas Massie, who sits on the House Rules Committee, said that he does not fear a government shutdown.

"When you go into a shutdown, you need to have a message that all of your conference can stick with to the end," he said.

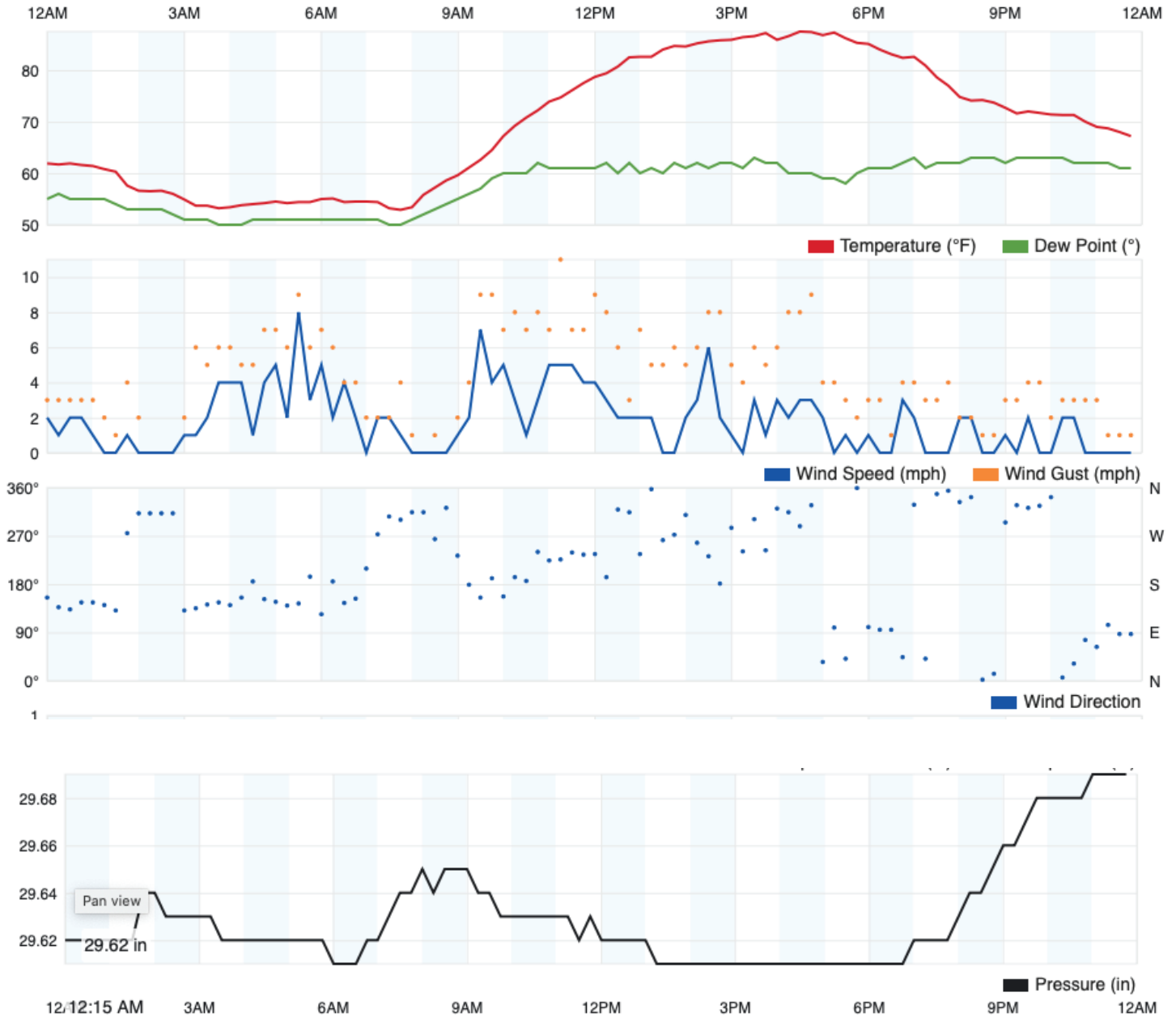
Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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

Groton Daily Independent






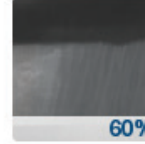
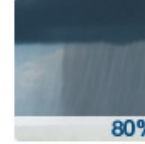
Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 18 of 79

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 19 of 79

Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Mostly Sunny	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance Showers	Showers Likely	Showers
High: 83 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 77 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 70 °F



Timing Precipitation

September 20, 2023
4:06 AM

Dry today with moisture potential increasing tonight

Main Takeaway

Onset of moisture tonight and potential persisting all the way thru early next week.

Moisture Range

1 to 3 inches with locally higher amounts

Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	9/21 Thu		9/22 Fri				9/23 Sat				9/24 Sun				9/25 Mon					
	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	
Aberdeen	30	35	40	50	50	50	45	55	55	65	65	80	70	50	50	50	30	20	20	25
Britton	25	30	35	40	40	40	30	40	45	55	55	70	70	60	50	45	35	30	25	25
Clark	10	25	30	35	35	35	30	45	55	65	55	75	70	50	50	55	35	20	25	30
Eagle Butte	40	25	25	55	75	75	60	80	90	75	80	80	55	50	45	45	20	15	15	10
Ellendale	40	40	45	45	45	50	45	50	45	60	65	75	70	60	50	40	30	25	20	20
Eureka	40	40	45	55	65	65	55	65	70	75	75	80	65	50	50	45	25	15	20	20
Gettysburg	30	25	30	50	60	65	60	65	80	75	75	80	60	45	50	50	25	15	15	15
Kennebec	25	20	20	45	55	65	50	60	80	65	60	65	45	45	40	35	20	20	15	15
McIntosh	50	30	30	55	75	75	50	75	85	85	75	80	60	55	45	45	20	15	10	10
Milbank	5	10	15	20	15	25	20	35	35	50	45	65	70	60	50	55	35	30	25	30
Miller	30	30	35	45	50	55	50	60	75	75	70	75	60	45	50	45	25	15	20	20
Mobridge	35	30	30	50	60	65	55	65	75	75	75	75	55	45	45	45	20	15	15	15
Murdo	25	20	20	45	70	70	45	70	80	60	60	60	50	40	35	35	20	15	10	10
Pierre	30	25	25	50	70	65	50	70	85	60	65	70	50	40	45	45	20	15	15	15
Redfield	25	30	40	45	35	45	45	55	55	70	65	75	65	55	50	50	25	20	25	25
Sisseton	5	15	20	30	30	30	20	35	40	50	50	65	75	60	50	50	35	30	25	30
Watertown	5	20	25	25	25	30	30	35	50	60	55	70	75	55	50	50	35	25	30	30
Webster	10	20	30	35	30	35	30	40	45	60	55	70	75	60	50	50	35	30	25	25
Wheaton	5	15	20	25	25	20	15	30	35	45	45	60	70	60	50	50	35	30	25	30

Maximum Temperature Forecast

	9/20 Wed	9/21 Thu	9/22 Fri	9/23 Sat	9/24 Sun
Aberdeen	83	78	74	66	67
Eagle Butte	79	74	67	66	64
Miller	84	78	72	68	66
Mobridge	80	77	70	68	66
Murdo	86	79	70	68	66
Pierre	88	81	73	67	67
Redfield	86	79	74	66	68
Sisseton	83	78	75	70	66
Watertown	86	79	76	68	68
Wheaton	85	80	77	71	66



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Moisture begins to move into the region tonight and persists through the weekend. Most areas will see a decent soaking, though it won't be a complete washout with periods of light rain or no rain in between occasionally heavy rainfall. #SDWX

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 21 of 79

Today in Weather History

September 20, 1970: During the late afternoon, golfball hail fell in and around Redfield with a tornado reported just north of Doland. No damage was reported with the hail or the tornado.

September 20, 1972: About 430 pm, in southeast South Dakota, a tornado caused an estimated \$95,000 damage to property and 50,000 damage to crops in Utica and nearby rural areas. Buildings were damaged; trees and power lines were downed.

1909: A large and deadly Category 3 hurricane made landfall near Grand Isle, Louisiana during the late evening hours. The states of Louisiana and Mississippi showed catastrophic damage resulting in 371 deaths and \$265 million in damage (2010 USD).

1845 - A tornado traveled 275 miles across Lake Ontario, New York and Lake Champlain. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1926 - A hurricane which hit Miami, FL, on the 18th, pounded Pensacola with wind gusts to 152 mph. Winds raged in excess of 100 mph for four hours, and above 75 mph for 20 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1961: On September 10th, the Television Infrared Observation Satellite observed an area of thunderstorms west-southwest of the Cape Verde Islands, suggesting a possible tropical cyclone. This storm is the first large tropical cyclone to be discovered on satellite imagery and would eventually become Hurricane Esther. On September 20th, Hurricane Esther, a Category 4 storm off of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina began to slow down as it moved north-northeast well off the Jersey shore. The storm continued to weaken as it made a five-day loop south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, then moved to Cape Cod and into Maine on the 26th.

1967 - Hurricane Beulah moved into South Texas, and torrential rains from the hurricane turned the rich agricultural areas of South Texas into a large lake. Hurricane Beulah also spawned a record 115 tornadoes. (David Ludlum)

1983 - The temperature at West Yellowstone MT plunged to six degrees below zero, while the temperature at San Francisco CA soared to 94 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma and west Texas. In Oklahoma, a thunderstorm at Seiling produced three inches of rain in one hour, golf ball size hail, and wind gusts to 60 mph which collapsed a tent at the state fair injuring nine persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in central Wyoming, and snow in some of the higher elevations. Casper WY reported 1.75 inches of rain in 24 hours, and a thunderstorm north of the Wild Horse Reservoir produced 1.90 inches of rain in just forty minutes.

1989 - Hugo jilted Iris. Hurricane Hugo churned toward the South Atlantic Coast, gradually regaining strength along the way. Tropical Storm Iris got too close to Hugo, and began to weaken. A cold front brought strong and gusty winds to the Great Basin and the Southern Plateau Region, with wind gusts to 44 mph reported at Kingman AZ. (The National Weather Summary)

2002: A glacial avalanche buries the village of Karmadon in Russia, killing more than 100 people.

2005 - Hurricane Rita tracked through the Florida Straits and just south of the Florida Keys. Winds were sustained at tropical storm force at Key West, where peak winds gusted to 76 mph.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

DID GOD REALLY CAUSE THE FIRE?

Shortly after a new nightclub was opened near a church, the members decided to call an all-night prayer meeting. While they were praying, a powerful thunderstorm engulfed the city, and lightning struck the club and burned it to the ground.

The owner of the club became angry and decided to sue the church. At the hearing, however, the church denied any responsibility for the destruction of the club.

Confused, the judge exclaimed, "I'm not sure where the guilt may lie. On one hand, the nightclub owner believes in prayer, but - strangely - the members of the church don't."

On one occasion when Jesus was teaching His followers and disciples about eternal life, someone asked, "But who can be saved?" He replied, "Humanly speaking, it is something man cannot do. But with God, all things are possible."

Prayer is asking and receiving. It is not hoping or wishing or wondering. It is receiving God's blessings - whatever they may be. Yet, it is not unusual for Christians to pray, and then be amazed, even surprised, when God answers a prayer that exceeds their faith. How interesting.

Perhaps that's why Jesus made that statement when talking about salvation. Consider this: if God can redeem us from our sinful nature, make us "new creations" and grant us eternal life, can He not do anything else we ask in His name and for His glory?

Prayer: Help us, Father, to have a faith that exceeds our doubts, is stronger than the attacks of Satan, and stronger than any temptation that could ever defeat us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Mark 10:27



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

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 23 of 79

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
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes, Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 24 of 79

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

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

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

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 25 of 79



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.19.23

6 9 13 29 66 24

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$205,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 8 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.18.23

4 24 25 32 51 7

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,200,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 23 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.19.23

1 3 10 23 34 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.16.23

5 12 19 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$46,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.18.23

3 7 41 48 67 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 7 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

09.18.23

2 21 26 40 42 9

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$672,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 7 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 26 of 79

News from the  Associated Press

Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Central def. Huron, 26-24, 25-15, 25-20
Aberdeen Christian def. Waubay/Summit, 25-17, 25-14, 25-15
Baltic def. Elkton-Lake Benton, 25-21, 18-25, 25-18, 21-25, 15-13
Brandon Valley def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-18, 25-22, 26-24
Bridgewater-Emery def. Hanson, 25-10, 21-25, 24-26, 25-13, 15-5
Britton-Hecla def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-20, 25-19, 25-18
Brookings def. Mitchell, 24-26, 25-13, 25-22, 18-25, 15-11
Burke def. Platte-Geddes, 17-25, 25-22, 25-20, 16-25, 15-13
Canton def. Tri-Valley, 21-25, 25-17, 25-16, 25-21
Castlewood def. Great Plains Lutheran, 25-15, 25-13, 25-18
Chester def. Parker, 25-8, 25-14, 25-7
Colman-Egan def. Canistota, 22-25, 25-21, 25-21, 25-21
Dakota Valley def. West Central, 25-16, 25-19, 25-19
Dell Rapids def. Garretson, 25-18, 24-26, 25-14, 27-25
Dupree def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-11, 25-10, 25-9
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Beresford, 25-12, 25-15, 25-11
Estelline/Hendricks def. Hamlin, 25-23, 25-10, 25-21
Faulkton def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-22, 18-25, 25-9, 25-20
Flandreau def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-19, 25-19, 25-20
Freeman def. Scotland, 25-13, 32-30, 25-14
Gayville-Volin High School def. Marty Indian, 25-4, 25-13, 25-6
Harding County def. Heart River, N.D., 25-23, 25-23, 25-13
Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Washington, 17-25, 25-22, 25-20, 25-21
Herreid/Selby Area def. McIntosh, 25-7, 25-16, 25-9
Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. def. Bison, 25-17, 25-16, 25-14
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op, 25-15, 25-18, 25-18
Howard def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 23-25, 15-25, 25-23, 25-21, 18-16
Kimball/White Lake def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-18, 25-17, 25-21
Little Wound def. Wakpala, 25-18, 25-15, 21-25, 25-17
Lower Brule def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 9-25, 25-23, 25-19, 23-25, 15-13
Madison def. Arlington, 22-25, 25-19, 25-18, 25-18
Menno def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-18, 25-16, 25-10
Miller def. Redfield, 25-10, 25-15, 25-20
Mobridge-Pollock def. Lemmon High School, 25-13, 25-17, 25-22
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Lennox, 25-16, 25-19, 25-16
North Central Co-Op def. Sully Buttes, 16-25, 25-23, 25-17, 25-16
Northwestern def. Leola-Frederick High School, 25-14, 25-15, 25-8
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-19, 25-14, 25-11
Parkston def. Winner, 25-21, 25-23, 25-19
Philip def. White River, 25-14, 25-16, 25-22
Rapid City Christian def. Belle Fourche, 25-10, 25-20, 20-25, 25-19
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Sioux Falls O'Gorman, 26-24, 25-19, 25-16
Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Yankton, 25-13, 25-13, 25-18

Sioux Falls Lutheran def. Centerville, 25-16, 25-12, 25-17
Sioux Valley def. Milbank, 19-25, 19-25, 25-19, 25-17, 15-11
Sisseton def. Florence/Henry, 8-25, 25-18, 24-26, 26-24, 15-9
Spearfish def. Sturgis Brown, 25-10, 25-10, 25-13
St. Thomas More def. Hot Springs, 30-28, 23-25, 25-22, 28-26
Tea Area def. Vermillion, 25-19, 25-11, 26-24
Wagner def. Bon Homme, 25-20, 24-26, 25-17, 25-18
Wall def. Lyman, 25-10, 15-25, 23-25, 30-28, 15-9
Warner def. Groton Area, 25-12, 25-17, 25-12
Webster def. Wilmot, 25-18, 25-18, 25-19
Wolsey-Wessington def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-11, 25-14, 25-16

Azerbaijan and Armenian forces reach cease-fire deal for breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh, officials say

By AVET DEMOURIAN Associated Press

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — A cease-fire agreement with Azerbaijan was reached on Wednesday to end two days of fighting in the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region, local authorities and Azerbaijani officials said.

The agreement was to go into effect at 1 p.m. local time (0900 GMT), and talks between Azerbaijani officials and the breakaway region's ethnic Armenian authorities on its "re-integration" into Azerbaijan were scheduled to take place on Thursday in the Azerbaijani city of Yevlakh.

The deal was reached through negotiations with the Russian peacekeeping contingent in the region, local officials said. It envisions the withdrawal of Armenian military units and equipment from Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as disarming the local defense forces, Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry confirmed.

It comes a day after Azerbaijan launched military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh and used heavy artillery fire on Armenian positions there, an attack that local officials said killed or wounded scores of people.

Azerbaijan has called the artillery fire an "anti-terrorist operation" and said it will continue until the separatist government of Nagorno-Karabakh dismantles itself and "illegal Armenian military formations" surrender.

It claimed to be only targeting military sites but significant damage is visible on the streets of the regional capital, Stepanakert, with shop windows blown out and vehicles punctured, apparently by shrapnel.

The blasts reverberated around Stepanakert every few minutes on Wednesday morning, with some explosions in the distance and others closer to the city.

The escalation has raised concerns that a full-scale war in the region could resume between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which for more than three decades have been locked in a struggle over the mountainous territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The most recent heavy fighting there occurred over six weeks in 2020.

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry announced the start of the military operation hours after it reported that four soldiers and two civilians died in land mine explosions in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The ministry did not immediately give details but said that front-line positions and the military assets of Armenia's armed forces were being "incapacitated using high-precision weapons," and that only legitimate military targets were being attacked.

Russia's defense ministry said Wednesday that its peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh had evacuated more than 2,000 civilians, but did not give details on where they were taken.

Armenia's Foreign Ministry, however, denied that its weapons or troops were in Nagorno-Karabakh and called reported sabotage and land mines in the region "a lie." Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan alleged that Azerbaijan's main goal is to draw Armenia into hostilities.

Ethnic Armenian officials in Nagorno-Karabakh said in a statement that Stepanakert and villages in the region were "under intense shelling." The region's military said Azerbaijan was using aircraft, artillery and

missile systems, as well as drones in the fighting.

Residents of Stepanakert moved to basements and bomb shelters, and the fighting cut off electricity. Food shortages persisted in the area, with limited humanitarian aid delivered Monday not distributed due to the shelling, which resumed in the evening after halting briefly in the afternoon.

Nagorno-Karabakh human rights ombudsman Geghan Stepanyan said Wednesday that 32 people, including seven civilians, were killed and more than 200 others were wounded. Stepanyan earlier said one child was among those killed, and 11 children were among the wounded.

The Azerbaijani Prosecutor General's Office said Armenian forces fired at Shusha, a city in Nagorno-Karabakh under Azerbaijan's control, from large-caliber weapons, killing one civilian.

Neither claim could be independently verified.

Nagorno-Karabakh and sizable surrounding territories were under ethnic Armenian control since the 1994 end of a separatist war, but Azerbaijan regained the territories and parts of Nagorno-Karabakh during the 2020 fighting. That ended with an armistice placing Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh.

However, Azerbaijan alleges that Armenia has smuggled in weapons since then. The claims led to a blockade of the road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, causing food and medicine shortages.

Thousands of protesters gathered Tuesday in central Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, blocking streets and demanding that authorities defend Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. Some clashed with police, who reportedly used stun grenades. A total of 34 people — 16 policemen and 18 civilians — were injured in the clashes, Armenia's Health Ministry said. About half of them continue to receive medical assistance, the ministry said.

Associated Press writers Jim Heintz and Dasha Litvinova in Tallinn, Estonia; Aida Sultanova in London and Siranush Sargsyan in Stepanakert contributed to this report.

Six Palestinians are killed in latest fighting with Israel, at least 3 of them militants

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli military operations in the occupied West Bank and unrest in the Gaza Strip have killed six Palestinians, Palestinian health officials said Wednesday, the latest spike in a wave of violence that has roiled the region for more than a year. At least three of those killed were claimed as militant fighters.

The death toll from the most recent flare-up stood at four late Tuesday. But on Wednesday the Palestinian Health Ministry raised it, saying an Israeli raid into the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank killed four people and wounded some 30 others, while a raid in a separate refugee camp killed another Palestinian. A sixth Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire in unrest in the Gaza Strip, officials said.

The deadly violence between Israel and the Palestinians over the last year and a half has surged to levels unseen in the West Bank in some two decades. Israel has stepped up its raids on Palestinian areas and Palestinian attacks against Israelis have been mounting. Tensions also appear to be spreading to Gaza.

The Israeli military said Wednesday that troops opened fire toward a Palestinian who was throwing explosives at them while they were on an overnight arrest raid in the refugee camp of Aqabat Jabr. The camp, near the Palestinian city of Jericho, has emerged as one of the focal points of Israel's raids.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said Israeli forces killed 19-year-old Dhargham al-Akhras in the raid.

The bloodshed in the Jenin camp hours earlier was the latest in that stronghold of Palestinian militants where the Israeli military often carries out deadly raids. In July, Israel launched its most intense operation in the West Bank in nearly two decades, leaving widespread destruction in the camp.

The army said that forces carried out a rare strike Tuesday with a suicide drone during the operation and exchanged fire with gunmen in Jenin. While leaving the camp, the army said, an explosive detonated underneath an army truck as gunmen opened fire, damaging the vehicle. No soldiers were injured.

Three of those killed in Jenin were claimed as members of the Hamas militant group or the Palestinian

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 29 of 79

Islamic Jihad and were identified as Mahmoud al-Sadi, 23, Mahmoud Ararawi, 24, and Ata Yasser Musa, 29.

Videos posted on social media showed medics unloading the wounded at a hospital, while in other videos, explosions and gunfire could be heard echoing in the camp. As Israeli soldiers withdrew, a crowd of young men chanted: "Oh, you who ask, who are we? We are the Jenin Brigade."

After the Israeli military withdrew from the Jenin camp, dozens of gunmen and residents poured into the streets to protest against the Palestinian Authority and its failure to protect them, according to footage shared by residents.

Israel says the raids are meant to dismantle militant networks and thwart future attacks.

Some 190 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the year, according to a tally by The Associated Press. Israel says most of those killed have been militants, but youths protesting the incursions and others not involved in the confrontations have also been killed.

At least 31 people have been killed in Palestinian attacks against Israelis since the beginning of 2023.

In the Gaza violence, health officials said the Israeli military killed a 25-year-old Palestinian along the volatile frontier with Israel as youths mounted violent protests at a separation fence.

Unrest over the past week has escalated tensions and prompted Israel to bar entry to thousands of Palestinian laborers from the impoverished enclave.

Over the last week, dozens of Palestinians — burning tires and hurling explosive devices at Israeli soldiers — have streamed toward the fence separating Israel from Gaza, which has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007. Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent the ruling Hamas militant group from arming itself.

Hamas says youths have organized the protests in response to Israeli provocations.

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

Attorney General Garland set to face his GOP critics as Justice Department is under heavy scrutiny

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday is set to come face-to-face with his most ardent critics as House Republicans prepare to use a routine oversight hearing to interrogate him about what they claim is the "weaponization" of the Justice Department under President Joe Biden.

Garland is appearing before the House Judiciary Committee for the first time in two years and at an unprecedented moment in the Justice Department's history: He's overseeing two cases against Donald Trump, the first former president to face criminal charges, and another against the sitting president's son, Hunter Biden.

"Our job is not to take orders from the president, from Congress, or from anyone else, about who or what to criminally investigate," Garland will say, according to prepared remarks.

Republicans on the committee were tight-lipped about what they planned to ask Garland, telling The Associated Press on Tuesday that they wanted to keep that under wraps until the hearing.

But Garland will likely face tense and heated questions about the Trump and Hunter Biden criminal cases, forcing him to defend the country's largest law enforcement agency at a time when political and physical threats against agents and their families are on the rise.

"All of us at the Justice Department recognize that with this work comes public scrutiny, criticism, and legitimate oversight. These are appropriate and important given the gravity of the matters before the department," Garland will say, according to his prepared remarks. "But singling out individual career public servants who are just doing their jobs is dangerous — particularly at a time of increased threats to the safety of public servants and their families."

Democrats say they plan to "act as kind of a truth squad" against what they see as Republican misinformation and their ongoing defense of Trump, who is now the Republican front-runner to challenge Biden in next year's election. They say Republicans are trying to detract attention from the indicted former

president's legal challenges and turn a negative spotlight on Biden.

"I'll be using this opportunity to highlight just how destructive that is of our system of justice and how once again, it is the GOP willing to undermine our institutions in the defense of their indefensible candidate for president," Rep. Adam Schiff, a senior Democrat on the committee, told the AP.

Garland's testimony also comes just over a week after Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., launched an impeachment inquiry into his boss, Biden, with a special focus on the Justice Department's handling of Hunter Biden's yearslong case.

The White House has dismissed the impeachment inquiry as baseless and worked to focus the conversation on policy instead. Hunter Biden's legal team, on the other hand, has gone on the offensive against GOP critics, most recently filing suit against the Internal Revenue Service after two of its agents raised whistleblower claims to Congress about the handling of the investigation.

Republicans contend that the Justice Department — both under Trump and now Biden — has failed to fully probe the allegations against the younger Biden, ranging from his work on the board of Ukrainian energy company Burisma to his tax filings in California and Washington D.C.

"I am not the President's lawyer. I will also add that I am not Congress's prosecutor. The Justice Department works for the American people," Garland is expected to say.

An investigation into Hunter Biden had been run by the U.S. Attorney for Delaware, Trump appointee David Weiss, who Garland had kept on to finish the probe and insulate it from claims of political interference. Garland granted Weiss special counsel status last month, giving him broad authority to investigate and report his findings. He oversees the day-to-day running of the probe and another special counsel, Jack Smith, is in charge of the Trump investigation, though Garland retains final say on both as attorney general.

Last week, Weiss used that new authority to indict Hunter Biden on federal firearms charges, putting the case on track toward a possible trial as the 2024 election looms.

The Republican chairmen of the Oversight, Judiciary, and Ways and Means committees launched an investigation into Weiss' handling of the case, which was first opened in 2018 after two IRS agents claimed in congressional testimony in May that the Justice Department improperly interfered with their work.

Gary Shapley, a veteran IRS agent assigned to the case, testified to Congress that Weiss said in October 2022 that he was not the "deciding person whether charges are filed" against Hunter Biden. That testimony has been disputed by two FBI agents also in that meeting who told lawmakers that they have no recollection of Weiss saying that.

Israel's Netanyahu will meet Biden in New York. The location is seen as a sign of US displeasure

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to have his long-coveted meeting with President Joe Biden on Wednesday — bringing together the two leaders for the first time since the Israeli leader took office at the helm of his country's far-right government late last year.

Netanyahu has been a frequent visitor to the White House over the years, and Israeli leaders are typically invited within weeks of taking office. The lengthy delay in setting up the meeting with Biden, and the White House decision to hold the meeting in New York rather than Washington, have been widely interpreted in Israel as signs of U.S. displeasure with Netanyahu's new government.

"Meeting at the White House symbolizes close relations and friendship and honor, and the denial of that shows exactly the opposite," said Eytan Gilboa, an expert on U.S.-Israeli relations at Israel's Bar-Ilan University.

"This is not going to be a pleasant meeting," Gilboa said. "It is going to be a sour meeting."

The White House was tight-lipped ahead of the Wednesday meeting, declining to offer much detail on what would be on Biden's agenda for the talks.

Biden administration officials have repeatedly raised concerns about Netanyahu's contentious plan to

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 31 of 79

overhaul Israel's judicial system, and the topic is sure to come up.

Netanyahu says the country's unelected judges wield too much power over government decision-making. Critics say that by weakening the independent judiciary, Netanyahu is pushing the country toward authoritarian rule.

His plan has bitterly divided the nation and triggered months of mass protests against his government. Those protests have followed him to the U.S. Large numbers of Israeli expatriates are expected to protest outside Wednesday's meeting in Manhattan on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

Early this year, Biden voiced his unhappiness over the overhaul, saying Netanyahu "cannot continue down this road" and urging the Israeli leader to find a compromise. Netanyahu's negotiations with the Israeli opposition have stalled and his coalition has moved ahead with its plan, pushing the first major piece of the legislation through parliament in July.

The Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians has also drawn American ire. Netanyahu's coalition is dominated by far-right ultranationalists who have greatly expanded Israeli settlement construction on occupied lands claimed by the Palestinians for a future state. Israel's government also opposes a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians — a cornerstone of White House policy in the region. The deadlock has coincided with a spike in fighting in the West Bank.

The White House said Wednesday's talks would focus on "shared democratic values between our two countries and a vision for a more stable and prosperous and integrated region."

The meeting comes at a time of cooling ties between Israel and the Democratic Party. A poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that while Americans generally view Israel as a partner or ally, many are questioning whether Netanyahu's government shares American values. Republicans were significantly more likely than Democrats to call Israel an ally with shared values.

Tom Nides, who stepped down as U.S. ambassador to Israel in July, said the timing and location of Wednesday's meeting were issues and acknowledged some policy differences.

"That's what friends do. Friends argue with each other. We can articulate a strong view against settlement growth. We can say, quite frankly, arguably that they should get some compromise on judicial reform. What's wrong with that?"

But he predicted a good meeting devoid of "fireworks," noting that Biden and Netanyahu are longtime friends and the countries are still close allies. "The relationship is as strong as it has ever been," he said.

Biden administration officials downplayed that the meeting is being held on the sidelines of New York, and not Washington. Netanyahu is expected to eventually get a White House invitation, though timing of such a visit could depend on how Wednesday's meeting goes.

Topping Netanyahu's wish list will be discussions on U.S. efforts to broker a deal establishing full diplomatic relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Netanyahu, who also led Israel when former President Donald Trump brokered the "Abraham Accords" between Israel and four Arab countries, has said that a similar deal with Saudi Arabia would mark a "quantum leap" forward for Israel and the region.

The White House has acknowledged that it is seeking such a deal, but obstacles lie in the way. Saudi Arabia is pushing for a nuclear cooperation deal and defense guarantees from the U.S.

The Saudis have also said they expect Israel to make significant concessions to the Palestinians.

Biden is likely to make clear to Netanyahu that any deal will need to consider Palestinian interests. Biden is cognizant that the Saudis are wary of proceeding with normalizing relations with Israel at a time when it is led by the most right-wing government in its history, and when tensions have soared with the Palestinians.

The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, told reporters "there is no other way" to solve the conflict than by establishing a Palestinian state. But senior ministers in Netanyahu's government have already ruled out any concessions to the Palestinians.

Israel is also eager to consult with the U.S. about Iran, particularly over their shared concerns about Iran's nuclear program. Iran says the program is peaceful, but it now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

Danny Danon, a former Israeli ambassador to the U.N. who is now a lawmaker in Netanyahu's Likud

party, acknowledged that Wednesday's meeting didn't have the cachet of a White House visit.

"It doesn't have the image and the ceremony," he told Israel's army radio station. Nonetheless, he said, "It's a meaningful and very important meeting and we should be thankful it's happening."

Federman reported from Jerusalem.

Pope goes to Marseille to talk migration, but will Europe listen as it scrambles to stem an influx?

By NICOLE WINFIELD, TRISHA THOMAS and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Ten years after Pope Francis made a landmark visit to the Italian island of Lampedusa to show solidarity with migrants, he is joining Catholic bishops from the Mediterranean this weekend in France to make the call more united.

The question is whether anyone in European corridors of power will listen, as they scramble to stem a new tide of would-be refugees setting off from Africa.

Francis' overnight visit Friday to the French port city of Marseille to close out a meeting of Mediterranean bishops was scheduled months ago. But it comes as Europe's migrant problem is once again making headlines, given the nearly 7,000 migrants who came ashore on Lampedusa within a day last week, briefly outnumbering the resident population.

The drama has sparked another round of hand-wringing and pledges of solidarity from European capitals, with even talk of a naval blockade to prevent departures. It's a policy Francis has long condemned given that an EU-funded operation to return migrants to Libya lands them in what Francis has called modern-day concentration camps.

For Francis, the shocking scenes of men, women and children packed into a refugee center in Lampedusa have underscored that migration as a phenomenon must be tackled jointly. The future, he said this past weekend about his upcoming trip to Marseille, "will only be prosperous if it is built on fraternity, putting human dignity, real people and especially the most needy, first."

Francis has long made the plight of migrants a priority of his papacy, starting from that remarkable 2013 visit to Lampedusa his first as pope. There, Francis celebrated Mass on an altar made of shipwrecked wood, tossed flowers in the sea in tribute to migrants who had drowned and decried the "globalization of indifference" that the world shows people who risk their lives to flee poverty, conflict and climate disasters to seek a better life.

Since then, he has made some other high-profile gestures to draw attention to the Gospel-mandated call to welcome strangers, most spectacularly when he brought back a dozen Syrian Muslims aboard his plane following a 2016 visit to a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece. His mantra: Welcome, protect, promote and integrate, with the last exhortation an acknowledgement that governments have limits in their abilities to accept newcomers and truly integrate them well.

"The message that he is conveying is that the Mediterranean is our responsibility," said Cardinal Michael Czerny, the Vatican's top migration expert and himself a refugee. "In other words, you can't look at it as each one has a bit of coastline and is responsible for that bit. There's a collective responsibility which is largely being neglected."

In Marseille, one of the most multicultural, multi-religious and multiethnic cities on the shores of the Mediterranean, the pontiff will be joined by around 60 bishops from North Africa, the Middle East, Balkans and southern Europe, along with young people from those regions. It's the third Mediterranean summit of its kind after the first two were held in Italy.

The location is not coincidental. Marseille for centuries has been characterized by a strong presence of migrants living together in a tradition of tolerance, even though today France's second city is also known for its high crime and unemployment rates, poverty and lack of social services.

Unlike many other French cities where foreigners tend to live on the outskirts, in Marseille migrants and their descendants of a variety of backgrounds – Italians, Spaniards and Armenians; people from France's

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 33 of 79

former colonies in North Africa, West Africa and the Comoros Islands -- have settled in the city center, opening shops and restaurants that contribute to the city's reputation as a melting pot.

"Marseilles is indeed like a city that embodies this diversity of France," said Camille Le Coz, associate director of Migration Policy Institute's Europe office, in Paris. "This great tradition of migration, but also a city that is concentrating so many difficulties in terms of access to public services, insecurity, drug trafficking. It's a very complicated place."

One of the highlights of Francis' trip will be an interfaith prayer Friday at a Marseille monument dedicated to sailors who died at sea, in this case honoring the 28,000 migrants estimated by the International Organization of Migration who have drowned in the Mediterranean since 2014 trying to reach Europe.

The encounter will bring together leaders of Marseille's various faith groups -- Muslims, Jews, Armenian and Orthodox Christians, and Roman Catholics -- and will feature testimony of migrants, rescue groups and the pope. The speakers' list suggests a united voice to call for a culture of tolerance towards migrants, and lament that the Mediterranean has become, in Francis' words, "the world's biggest cemetery."

The question is whether anyone in power will listen. President Emmanuel Macron, whose government has shifted rightward on migration and security issues, will join Francis on Saturday and is slated to attend his big Mass at the Velodrome. The centrist president has taken a firm stance on migration after coming under criticism from conservatives and the far right. He is pushing to strengthen the EU's external borders and wants the bloc to be more efficient in deporting those refused entry.

As a result, France's current political climate and its tradition of "laicite" or secularism, suggests neither Macron nor other European leaders will necessarily heed Francis' call.

"I think given our complicated relationship with the church and with religion, we don't expect this to have so much impact, to be honest," Le Coz said.

Jeffery Crisp, a research fellow at Oxford University's Refugee Studies Centre, said Francis does have a moral authority and has been wielding it to speak out the issue of migration, calling especially on governments to respect international human rights principles.

"Does that translate into any kind of political pressure? I simply don't know," Crisp asked in a telephone interview. "But I think you could probably argue that it could only have been worse without his interventions."

Young men who arrived in Italy amid the recent wave of migrants hope someone will listen. On a recent day, a group from South Sudan stopped in Rome en route from Lampedusa to the French border. One particularly tall man said he wanted to go to France to play basketball, another said he wanted to go to Britain to be a doctor. Their only belongings were the clothes on their backs; volunteers gave them shoes.

After spending a few nights sleeping on the ground below a noisy highway overpass near Rome's main bus station, a non-profit association bought them cheap bus tickets north. That evening, 16 boys left on a bus bound for Marseille.

They were planning to get off before the French border, where police checks have increased amid Italy's new migrant influx, and to try to cross on foot. One of them, a 16-year-old named Dot, was wearing new yellow Converse sneakers provided by volunteers.

"We walked from South Sudan," Dot said before boarding the bus. "We can walk to France."

Corbet reported from Paris.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Who was Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the Sikh activist whose killing has divided Canada and India?

By KRUTIKA PATHI and DAVID COHEN Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Sikh independence advocate whose killing two months ago is at the center of a widening breach between India and Canada, was called a human rights activist by

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 34 of 79

Sikh organizations and a criminal by India's government.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Monday that his government was investigating "credible allegations" that Indian government agents were linked to the June 18 slaying, when Nijjar was gunned down outside a Sikh cultural center in Surrey, British Columbia.

India has denied any role in the killing, calling the allegations absurd.

A SEPARATIST AND A PLUMBER IN CANADA

Nijjar, 45 when he died, was a prominent member of a movement to create an independent Sikh homeland known as Khalistan, and was organizing an unofficial referendum among the Sikh diaspora with the organization Sikhs For Justice.

He also owned a plumbing business and served as president of a Sikh temple or gurdwara in suburban Vancouver, where banners hung with his face promoting the referendum on Tuesday. In a 2016 interview with the Vancouver Sun he responded dismissively to reports in Indian media that he was suspected of leading a terrorist cell.

"This is garbage — all the allegations. I am living here 20 years, right? Look at my record. There is nothing. I am a hard worker. I own my own business in the plumbing," Nijjar told the newspaper. At the time, he said he was too busy to take part in diaspora politics.

Following his death, the World Sikh Organization of Canada called Nijjar an outspoken supporter of Khalistan who "often led peaceful protests against the violation of human rights actively taking place in India and in support of Khalistan."

INDIA CALLED HIM A MILITANT; HE DENIED IT

Nijjar was a wanted man in India, which has for years seen Sikh separatists abroad as a security threat.

In 2016, Indian media reported that Nijjar was suspected of masterminding a bombing in the Sikh-majority state of Punjab and training terrorists in a small city southeast of Vancouver. He denied the allegations.

In 2020, Indian authorities claimed Nijjar was a member of a banned militant group and designated him a terrorist. That year, they also filed a criminal case against him as farmers, many from Punjab, camped out on the edges of New Delhi to protest controversial agriculture laws. The Indian government initially tried to discredit the protests by associating them with Sikh separatists, filing a number of such cases against Sikh activists in India and abroad.

Last year, Indian authorities accused Nijjar of involvement in an alleged attack on a Hindu priest in India and announced a reward of about \$16,000 for information leading to his arrest.

INDIA'S WAR AGAINST SEPARATISM

The modern Sikh independence movement reaches back to the 1940s but eventually became an armed insurgency that shook the country in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984, then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered a raid to capture armed separatists taking refuge in Sikhism's holiest shrine.

The raid killed hundreds of people, and two of Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards assassinated her shortly after. In response, anti-Sikh riots took place across India in which members of the minority were dragged out of their homes and killed. The insurgency was eventually suppressed in a crackdown during which thousands of people were killed, but the goal of Sikh independence still has support among some in northern India and in the Sikh diaspora.

More recently, the Hindu nationalist-led government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cracked down on both non-Hindu rights movements and dissidents.

Sikh diaspora activism has been a source of tension between India and Canada for years. Canada has the largest population of Sikhs outside India, and India has repeatedly accused it of tolerating "terrorists and extremists."

NIJJAR WAS SHOT AT A TEMPLE

Canadian police said Nijjar was shot as he was leaving the parking lot of the Sikh temple where he served as president in British Columbia. He suffered multiple gunshot wounds and died at the scene.

After the killing, a lawyer and spokesperson for Sikhs For Justice, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, said Nijjar had been a target of threats because of his activism. His killing was the second in two years of a promi-

nent member of the Sikh community in Canada.

Pannun said he had spoken to Nijjar by phone the day before he was killed and that Nijjar had told him that Canadian intelligence had warned him that his life was at risk.

CANADA'S SIKH COMMUNITY RALLIES BEHIND HIM

Nearly a week after Nijjar's slaying, about 200 protesters from Canada's Sikh community gathered in front of the Indian Consulate in Vancouver to demonstrate. Many of the protesters were convinced that Nijjar's killing was linked to his calls for an independent Sikh state.

"He was a loving man, a hard-working man, a family man," said Gurkeerat Singh, one of the protesters.

On Monday, Moninder Singh, a spokesperson for the British Columbia Sikh Gurdwara Council, told Canada's CTV that the wave of support for Nijjar seen after his death was an indication of how he was seen in the community.

"It shook the community across the entire world, including in Punjab," Singh said.

"The community is shattered. There are very, very high emotions," Sukh Dhaliwal, a member of Parliament who represents Surrey, said days after the killing.

This story has been edited to correct that the insurgency was in the 1970s and 1980s.

Cohen reported from Bangkok.

Prosecutors set to lay out case against officers in death of unarmed Black man in Denver suburb

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

BRIGHTON, Colo. (AP) — Prosecutors are expected to present opening statements after jury selection wraps up Wednesday in the trial of two police officers charged in the 2019 death of an unarmed Black man who was forcibly detained while walking on a Denver suburb.

In the first of several trials stemming from the death of Elijah McClain, lawyers for the two sides are expected to paint contrasting pictures of the deadly struggle between the officers and the 23-year-old man, who was stopped by police as he walked home from a convenience store.

One question jurors could be asked to decide is whether it was lawful for officers Randy Roedema and Jason Rosenblatt to detain and use force against McClain, who a 911 caller had reported as being suspicious. If prosecutors can convince jurors the stop was unjustified, that would undermine any argument that McClain's injuries were a result of the officers just doing their jobs.

Roedema and Rosenblatt are both charged with criminally negligent homicide, manslaughter and assault in a trial expected to last about a month. They have pleaded not guilty but have never spoken publicly about the allegations against them. A third officer and two paramedics facing charges in McClain's death are scheduled for trial later this year.

Charges were not brought for two years after McClain's death, by which time the case along with others had sparked outrage and a national reckoning over racial injustice in American policing.

Police stopped McClain on Aug. 24, 2019, while he was walking down a street listening to music in the city of Aurora after a 911 caller reported a man who seemed "sketchy." McClain, a massage therapist who was often cold, was wearing a ski mask and a jacket despite the warm weather.

Officer Nathan Woodyard, who is set to go on trial later this year, was the first to approach McClain, and was soon joined by Roedema and Rosenblatt.

McClain, using earbuds, initially kept walking as he carried a plastic bag and his phone. Within ten seconds, Woodyard put his hands on McClain, turning him around. As McClain tried to escape his grip, Woodyard said, "Relax, or I'm going to have to change this situation."

The encounter with police quickly escalated, with officers taking him to the ground and putting him in a neck hold. Paramedics arrived and injected McClain with ketamine, a sedative that was legal at the time to give to people showing erratic behavior. McClain subsequently suffered cardiac arrest on the way to

the hospital. He was pronounced dead three days later.

The paramedics and officers were also indicted along with the police officers by a state grand jury in 2021 and are also awaiting trial.

The indictments followed an outcry over McClain's death during protests ignited by the police killing of George Floyd. McClain's pleading words captured on body camera stating, "I'm an introvert and I'm different," drew widespread attention after Floyd's murder in Minneapolis.

In 2019, a local district attorney, Dave Young, decided against prosecuting the officers largely because the coroner's office could not determine exactly how McClain died. He called McClain's death "tragic," but said that finding made it hard to prove that the officers' actions caused his death.

A revised coroner's report was issued in 2021, relying in part on information from the grand jury investigation, and found that the cause of death was complications from the powerful sedative ketamine after McClain was forcibly restrained. McClain, who weighed 140 pounds (64 kilograms), overdosed because he received a higher dose of ketamine than recommended for someone of his size, pathologist Stephen Cina found.

"I believe that Mr. McClain would most likely be alive but for the administration of ketamine," Cina had said.

Cina said he couldn't rule out whether the stress of being held down by the officers may have contributed to McClain's death.

A Batman researcher said 'gay' in a talk to schoolkids. When asked to censor himself, he quit

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Marc Tyler Nobleman was supposed to talk to kids about the secret co-creator of Batman, with the aim of inspiring young students in suburban Atlanta's Forsyth County to research and write.

Then the school district told him he had to cut a key point from his presentation — that the artist he helped rescue from obscurity had a gay son. Rather than acquiesce, he canceled the last of his talks.

"We're long past the point where we should be policing people talking about who they love," Nobleman said in a telephone interview. "And that's what I'm hoping will happen in this community."

State laws restricting talk of sexual orientation and gender identity in schools have proliferated in recent years, but the clash with Nobleman shows schools may be limiting such discussions even in states like Georgia that haven't officially banned them. Some proponents of broader laws giving parents more control over schools argue they extend to discussion of sex and gender even if the statutes don't explicitly cover them.

Eleven states ban discussion of LGBTQ+ people in at least some public schools in what are often called "Don't say gay" laws, according to the Movement Advancement Project, an LGBTQ+ rights think tank. Five additional states require parental consent for discussion, according to the project.

Legislation restricting LGBTQ+ rights gained steam this year, but suppression is not new. A school district in New Jersey, which requires curriculums to be LGBTQ-inclusive, tried to bar a valedictorian from discussing his queer identity during a graduation speech in 2021. That year, a federal judge ordered an Indiana district to give the same privileges to a gay-straight alliance as to other extracurricular groups. Two years later, Indiana passed a law banning discussion of LGBTQ+ people in grades K-3.

Schools nationwide have been challenged on books with LGBTQ+ themes or characters, and many have removed them, including Forsyth County, which has been a battleground in the politics of schooling.

LGBTQ+ advocates say Nobleman bumped up against a moral panic fomented by conservatives seeking to roll back acceptance.

"The idea that these folks are saying that they just don't want to talk about it at all is very disingenuous," said Cathryn Oakley, a lawyer for the Human Rights Campaign, a leading advocacy group. "What they mean is they don't want views other than theirs to be expressed. And they believe that that means everyone should have to hear what they believe."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 37 of 79

Discussion of straight people with traditional gender identities is everywhere, she said, and if all discussion of sexuality is going to be banned, Oakley said, "then you certainly better not be teaching 'Romeo and Juliet.'"

Nobleman, a self-described "superhero geek" who lives in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., is best known as the author of "Bill the Boy Wonder: The Secret Co-creator of Batman." It lays out the story of Bill Finger, the long-uncredited author who helped create Batman and other comic book characters.

Finger died in obscurity in 1974, with artist Bob Kane credited as Batman's only creator. Finger's only child was a son, Fred Finger, who was gay and died in 1992 at age 43 of AIDS complications. Bill Finger was presumed to have no living heirs, meaning there was no one to press DC Comics to acknowledge Finger's work.

But Nobleman discovered Fred Finger had a daughter, Athena Finger. That, he said, is a showcase moment of the presentation he estimates he has given 1,000 times at schools.

"It's the biggest twist of the story, and it's usually when I get the most gasps," Nobleman said. "It's just a totally record-scratch moment."

Nobleman's research helped push DC Comics into reaching a deal with Athena Finger in 2015 to acknowledge her grandfather and Kane as co-creators. That led to the documentary "Batman & Bill," featuring Nobleman.

In Forsyth County, the author gave his first presentations at Sharon Elementary on Aug. 21. After Nobleman mentioned in his first talk that Fred Finger was gay, the principal handed him a note during his second talk that said, "Please only share the appropriate parts of the story for our elementary students."

Forsyth County schools spokesperson Jennifer Caracciolo said that just mentioning Fred Finger was gay isn't the problem. But she said it led to questions from students, meaning Nobleman and students might discuss sexuality without parents being warned.

In the past three years, conservatives in the 54,000-student district have tried to tamp down diversity policies and sexually explicit books they view as immoral.

The district was sued by a conservative group called the Mama Bears after banning a member of that group from reading explicit book excerpts at meetings. A federal judge ruled the policy unconstitutional.

The district was also warned by the U.S. Department of Education after pulling some books from libraries, with federal officials saying the discourse may have created a hostile environment that violated federal laws against race and sex discrimination.

Nobleman's discussion of sexual orientation has nothing to do with the state English language arts learning standards his presentation was supposed to bolster, Caracciolo said.

"We have a responsibility to parents and to guardians that they will know what students are learning in school," Caracciolo said.

Nobleman said he was blindsided and agreed to drop the reference to Fred Finger's sexual orientation in remaining presentations that day, as well as in three at another school the next day. But by the morning of the third day, Finger started fielding questions from reporters after the principal at Sharon Elementary sent an electronic message to parents apologizing for the mention of Fred Finger's homosexuality.

"This is not subject matter that we were aware that he was including nor content that we have approved for our students," Principal Brian Nelson wrote. "I apologize that this took place. Action was taken to ensure that this was not included in Mr. Nobleman's subsequent speeches and further measures will be taken to prevent situations like this in the future."

And so, on the third day he was presenting, after a discussion with district officials, Nobleman refused to give the last two of his scheduled presentations if required to omit Finger's sexual orientation.

Many parents have applauded Forsyth County's actions, Caracciolo said. Cindy Martin, chair of the Mama Bears, said Nobleman should be "ashamed of himself."

She argues that a 2022 Georgia law bans discussion of sexuality without parental consent for any minor because it gives parents "the right to direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training" of their children.

"No one has the right to talk to a child about sexuality unless it's the parent, or the parent has given

permission," Martin said. "Mr. Nobleman did not have permission. So he went against Georgia law."

Matt Maguire, a Sharon Elementary parent who had a daughter who attended one of Nobleman's presentations, said he was disappointed by the message and felt the school district was being bullied by Martin and others into "reactionary" censorship.

The mere mention of the word "gay" didn't merit claims made online by critics that Nobleman was "grooming or sexualizing children," he said, and it ignored that some Sharon Elementary students have gay parents.

"It didn't sit right with me. It made me feel like certain parts of our community were being kept as a dirty secret," Maguire said. "I couldn't imagine coming from a family with gay members and reading that apology just for saying the word 'gay.'"

Left behind and grieving, survivors of Libya floods call for accountability

By SAMY MAGDY and YOUSEF MURAD Associated Press

DERNA, Libya (AP) — Abdel-Hamid al-Hassadi survived the devastating flooding in eastern Libya, but he lost some 90 people from his extended family.

The 23-year-old law graduate rushed upstairs along with his mother and his elder brother, as heavy rains lashed the city of Derna on the evening of Sept. 10. Soon, torrents of water were washing away buildings next to them.

"We witnessed the magnitude of the catastrophe," al-Hassadi said in a phone interview, referring to the massive flooding that engulfed his city. "We have seen our neighbors' dead bodies washing away in the floods."

Heavy rains from Mediterranean storm Daniel caused the collapse of the two dams that spanned the narrow valley that divides the city. That sent a wall of water several meters high through its heart.

Ten days after the disaster, al-Hassadi and thousands of others remain in Derna, most of them waiting for a word about relatives and loved ones. For Hassadi, it's the 290 relatives still missing.

The floods inundated as much as a quarter of the city, officials say. Thousands of people were killed, with many dead bodies still under the rubble or at sea, according to search teams. Government officials and aid agencies have given varied death tolls.

The World Health Organization says a total of 3,958 deaths have been registered in hospitals, but a previous death toll given by the head of Libya's Red Crescent said at least 11,300 were killed. The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says at least 9,000 people are still missing.

Bashir Omar, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said the fatalities are in the thousands, but he didn't give a specific toll for the number of retrieved bodies, since there are many groups involved in the recovery effort.

Many Derna residents, including women and children, are spending all their time at collection points of bodies. They are desperate to know who is inside body bags carried by ambulances.

Inside a school in the western part of the city, authorities posted photos of the retrieved bodies.

Anas Aweis, a 24-year-old resident, lost two brothers and is still searching for his father and four cousins. He went to the Ummul Qura school in the Sheiha neighborhood to inspect the exhibited photos.

"It's chaos," he said after spending two hours waiting in lines. "We want to know where they buried them if they died."

The floods have displaced at least 40,000 people in eastern Libya, including 30,000 in Derna, according to the U.N.'s migration agency. Many have moved to other cities across Libya, hosted by local communities or sheltered in schools. There are risks to staying, including potential infection by waterborne diseases.

Rana Ksaifi, assistant chief of mission in Libya for the U.N.'s refugee agency, said the floods have left "unfathomable levels of destruction," and triggered new waves of displacement in the already conflict-stricken nation.

The houseplants on the rooftop of Abdul Salam Anwisi's building survived the waters that reached up to his 4th-floor apartment. Anwisi's and a few other families rode out the deluge on the roof, which overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. They thought they wouldn't live to see daylight. Now, as he sifts through the water-damaged debris of his home, it's unclear what comes next.

"God predetermined and he did what he wanted," he said.

Others across the country are calling for Libya's leaders to be taken to task.

Hundreds of angry protesters gathered Monday outside Derna's main mosque, criticizing the government's lack of preparation and response. They lashed out at the political class that controls the oil-rich nation since the ouster and killing of longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

The North African country plunged into chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed Gadhafi. For most of the past decade, Libya has been split between two rival administrations: one in the west backed by an array of lawless militias and armed groups, a second in the east, allied with the self-styled Libyan National Army, commanded by Gen. Khalifa Hifter. Neither government tolerates dissent.

Derna, as well as east and most of south Libya, is controlled by Hifter's forces. However, funds for municipalities and other government agencies are controlled by the rival government in the capital, Tripoli.

Al-Hassadi, the law graduate, blamed local authorities for giving conflicting warnings to residents, leaving many defenseless. They asked residents to evacuate areas along the Mediterranean coast, but at the same time, they imposed a curfew, preventing people from leaving their homes.

"It was a mistake to impose a curfew," he said.

The dams, Abu Mansour and Derna, were built by a Yugoslav construction company in the 1970s. They were meant to protect the city against heavy flooding, but years of no maintenance meant they were unable to keep the exceptional influx of water at bay.

Many Libyans are now calling for an international investigation and supervision of aid funds.

"All are corrupt here ... without exception," said rights activist Tarik Lamloum.

Magdy reported from Cairo.

Speaker McCarthy faces an almost impossible task trying to unite House GOP and fund the government

By LISA MASCARO and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing fresh challenges to his leadership, Speaker Kevin McCarthy is trying to accomplish what at times seems impossible — working furiously to convince House Republicans to come together and pass a conservative bill to keep the federal government open.

It's a nearly futile exercise that could help McCarthy keep his job, but has little chance of actually preventing a federal shutdown. Whatever House Republicans come up with is nearly certain to be rejected by the Senate, where Democrats and most Republicans want to fund the government.

In one dramatic sign of defeat Tuesday, House Republicans were even voting against their own defense bill. During a rowdy afternoon vote, the usually popular bill was turned back from consideration, 212-214, after five hard-right conservatives helped sink it. They want to see an overall plan from McCarthy.

McCarthy simply walked off the House floor. "Look, the one thing you're going to learn about me: I like a challenge — I don't like this big a challenge — but we're just gonna keep doing it until we can make it," McCarthy told reporters.

With time dwindling, Congress faces a Sept. 30 deadline to pass the broader government funding legislation and get a bill to President Joe Biden's desk to become law. Otherwise, the U.S. faces massive federal government closures and disruptions. Plans for another vote Tuesday to advance the overall spending bill were shelved.

"The ball's in Kevin's court," said Republican Rep. Ralph Norman of the Freedom Caucus.

The latest House government funding proposal, a compromise between members of the hard-right Free-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 40 of 79

dom Caucus and the more pragmatic Main Street conservatives, was almost dead on arrival, left sputtering even after McCarthy loaded it up with spending cuts and Republican priorities in a border security package.

Behind closed doors Tuesday, the speaker was trying to stress the political repercussions of a government shutdown to Republicans, warning them that no party wins with a closure.

Unlike last week when an angry and frustrated McCarthy unleashed foul language on his colleagues, he tried a different tack when addressing his members privately in the Capitol basement.

Appearing cool, calm and collected, McCarthy cast the funding plan as just a proposal and left time for rank-and-file members to debate, according to Republicans familiar with the meeting.

Still, one Republican after another rose to tell McCarthy that the current plan would not have their votes. With a slim majority, he needs almost every Republican on board.

Rep. Stephanie Bice, R-Okla., one of the negotiators for the Main Street group, urged her colleagues later to not let the "perfect be the enemy of the good."

The showdown over the usually popular defense bill shows the difficulty ahead — it was the second time McCarthy had tried to advance the measure after he abruptly withdrew it from consideration last week.

The attempt to soothe tensions among Republicans comes as tempers are flaring and as big personalities try to seize the upper hand — some trying to lead and others hoping to disrupt any plans for compromise.

Florida's two leading conservatives, Matt Gaetz and newcomer Byron Donalds, are sniping in the halls and across social media, as Gaetz criticizes the deal Donalds and others struck as insufficiently conservative.

And freshmen Rep. Victoria Spartz, R-Ind., pointedly attacked McCarthy as a "weak speaker."

One seasoned lawmaker Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark., warned the infighting could derail the House GOP, much the way it did for past speakers like John Boehner and Paul Ryan. Both retired earlier than expected amid constant threats of ousters.

Womack said he fears there is a "larger fight" brewing "that is more of a personality nature because of the conflict between certain members and the speaker."

The monthlong funding package that McCarthy is pushing would impose steep spending cuts of more than 8% on many government services, while sparing defense and veterans accounts. It would last for 31 days in hopes of giving House Republicans time to approve the more traditional government funding bills.

The White House issued a memo detailing cuts from the Republican plan, saying it would mean fewer border patrol agents, school teachers and aides, Meals on Wheels for seniors and Head Start slots for children, among other cutbacks.

"Extreme House Republicans are playing partisan games with peoples' lives and marching our country toward a government shutdown," the White House said.

Across the Capitol, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer warned of the steep cuts Republicans are planning with their "cruel" and "reckless" spending plan.

At its core, House Republicans are trying to undo the deal McCarthy reached with Biden earlier this year to set federal funding levels as part of the debt ceiling fight. Conservatives rejected that measure then, even though it was approved and signed into law, and they are trying to dismantle it now.

But House Republicans are late to the effort, with time running short to act. Whatever bills they pass are certain to run aground in the Senate, where bipartisan groups of senators have already started approving their own funding bills, some at levels higher than the Biden-McCarthy agreement.

The roughly dozen Republicans who have voiced displeasure at McCarthy's proposal see the current impasse as a make-or-break moment to hold the speaker to commitments to drastically cut topline government spending.

"If my party is not going to stand up, what is the right thing to do?" said Spartz. "No matter how hard, I don't think anyone else will."

When Spartz was asked whether she would support an effort to oust McCarthy, she said she was "open to everything."

But Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, who helped draft the proposal, all but dared his fellow Freedom Caucus members and other "so-called conservative colleagues" to reject it — particularly its "dream bill" provisions for dealing with the U.S. border with Mexico.

"If my conservative colleagues want to vote against that, go explain that," Roy said.

The holdouts want steeper cuts that would adhere to the \$1.47 trillion for annual discretionary funding they had initially advanced earlier this year to raise the nation's debt limit.

Another seasoned lawmaker, Republican Rep. Mike Simpson of Idaho, warned of pain ahead for Americans if the government shuts down.

"It would be disastrous," he said. "I've never seen a time when a shutdown is good policy or good politics."

Simpson suggested it was time for McCarthy to reach out to Democrats to strike a bipartisan deal.

But that would almost certainly lead McCarthy's right-flank to try to hold a vote to oust him from the speaker's job.

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking and Josh Boak contributed to this report.

3 fake electors want Georgia election subversion charges against them to be moved to federal court

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Lawyers for three Georgia Republicans, who falsely claimed that Donald Trump won the state and they were "duly elected and qualified" electors, are set to argue Wednesday that criminal charges against them should be moved from state to federal court.

David Shafer, Shawn Still and Cathy Latham were among the 18 people indicted last month along with Trump on charges they participated in a wide-ranging scheme to keep the Republican president in power after his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden. All 19 defendants have pleaded not guilty.

U.S. District Judge Steve Jones is set to hear arguments Wednesday on why Shafer, Still and Latham believe the case against them should be tried in federal court rather than in Fulton County Superior Court. Jones already rejected a similar effort from Trump White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, who has appealed that ruling. He held a hearing Monday on a similar bid by former U.S. Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark and has yet to rule.

Shafer, Still and Latham have all indicated in court filings that they will not be present in court for the hearing.

If their cases are moved to federal court, a jury would be drawn from a broader and potentially less Democratic pool than in Fulton County alone. And any trial would not be photographed or televised, as cameras are not allowed inside federal courtrooms. But it would not open the door for Trump, if he's elected again in 2024, or another president to issue pardons because any conviction would still happen under state law.

Part of the overarching illegal scheme, the indictment alleges, was the casting of false Electoral College votes at the Georgia Capitol on Dec. 14, 2020, and the transfer of documentation of those votes to the president of the U.S. Senate, the National Archives, the Georgia secretary of state and the chief judge of the federal court in Atlanta. Those documents were meant to "disrupt and delay" the joint session of Congress on Jan. 6, 2021, in order to "unlawfully change the outcome" of the election, the indictment says.

Prosecutors allege that Shafer, Still, Latham — and the other Georgia Republicans who participated in that plan — "falsely impersonated" electors. The related charges against them include impersonating a public officer, forgery, false statements and writings, and attempting to file false documents.

Republicans in six other battleground states that Trump lost also met and signed fake elector certificates. Michigan's attorney general in July brought criminal charges against the fake electors there.

Lawyers for the three contend that a legal challenge to the state's election results was pending and that lawyers told them it was necessary to have an alternate slate of Republican electors in case the challenge was successful.

They cite the example of the 1960 presidential election when Republican Richard Nixon was initially certified as the winner in Hawaii. Supporters of Democrat John F. Kennedy filed a legal challenge that was still pending on the day the state's presidential electors were to meet. That day, the certified electors

for Nixon and uncertified elector nominees for Kennedy met at the state Capitol to cast votes for their candidates and sent them to Congress as required by the Electoral Count Act. Kennedy ultimately won the election challenge and was certified the winner, and Congress counted the votes of the Kennedy electors.

At the time of the actions alleged in the indictment, Shafer was the chair of the Georgia Republican Party, Latham was the chair of the Coffee County Republican Party and Still was the finance chair for the state Republican Party. Still was elected to the state Senate last year and represents a district in Atlanta's suburbs.

Their lawyers say their clients were acting as contingent U.S. presidential electors and in that role were or were acting at the direction of federal officers. Their actions outlined in the indictment stem directly from that service, and they were performing duties laid out in the U.S. Constitution and the Electoral Count Act, their lawyers argue. As a result, they assert defenses under several different federal laws.

The prosecution team led by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis argues that they were not federal officers and were not acting at the direction of a federal official carrying out a federal function. Instead, they were impersonating genuine electors at the direction of Trump's campaign with the goal of illegally keeping him in power, they said.

They argued in court filings that "contingent electors" are not presidential electors — either the contingency is met and they become presidential electors or it is not met and the losing candidate's electors have no role. Even if the Trump campaign's legal challenge to the election results had been successful, they wrote, the only solution a court could impose is a new election, not a substitution by the Republican slate of electors.

In addition to the charges related to the fake elector plan, Shafer is also accused of lying to investigators for the Fulton County district attorney's office. Latham is accused of participating in a breach of election equipment in Coffee County by a computer forensics team hired by Trump allies.

Biden's Democratic allies intensify pressure for asylum-seekers to get work permits

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — As more than 100,000 migrants arrived in New York City over the past year after crossing the border from Mexico, Mayor Eric Adams and Gov. Kathy Hochul have begged President Joe Biden for one thing, above all others, to ease the crisis:

"Let them work," both Democrats have said repeatedly in speeches and interviews.

Increasingly impatient leaders of Biden's party in other cities and states have hammered the same message over the last month, saying the administration must make it easier for migrants to get work authorization quickly, which would allow them to pay for food and housing.

But expediting work permits isn't so easy, either legally or bureaucratically, experts in the process say. Politically, it may be impossible.

It would take an act of Congress to shorten a mandatory, six-month waiting period before asylum-seekers can apply for work permits. Some Democratic leaders say the Biden administration could take steps that wouldn't require congressional approval. But neither action seems likely. Biden already faces attacks from Republicans who say he is too soft on immigration, and his administration has pointed to Congress' inability to reach agreement on comprehensive changes to the U.S. immigration system as justification for other steps it has taken.

The Homeland Security Department has sent more than 1 million text messages urging those eligible to apply for work permits, but it has shown no inclination to speed the process. A backlog of applications means the wait for a work permit is almost always longer than six months.

As frustrations have mounted, Hochul has said her office is considering whether the state could offer work permits, though such a move would almost certainly draw legal challenges. The White House has dismissed the idea.

Immigrants are frustrated as well. Gilberto Pozo Ortiz, a 45-year-old from Cuba, has been living, at taxpayer expense, in a hotel in upstate New York for the last three months. He says his work authorization

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 43 of 79

is not yet in sight as social workers navigate him through a complex asylum application system.

"I want to depend on no one," Ortiz said. "I want to work."

In Chicago, where 13,000 migrants have settled in the last year, Mayor Brandon Johnson and Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker wrote Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to ask for parole for asylum-seekers, which, they say, would allow him to get around the wait for a work permit.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey, who declared a state of emergency over the migrant influx, wrote Mayorkas that work permits represent "an opportunity to meet employer needs, support our economy, and reduce dependency among new arrivals." And 19 Democratic state attorneys general wrote Mayorkas that work permits would reduce the strain on government to provide social services.

The federal government has done "virtually nothing" to assist cities, said Chicago Alderman Andre Vasquez, chair of the City Council's Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

In the meantime, migrants unable to get work permits have filled up homeless shelters in several cities.

With more than 60,000 migrants currently depending on New York City for housing, the city has rented space in hotels, put cots in recreational centers and erected tent shelters — all at government expense. The Adams administration has estimated that housing and caring for migrants could cost the city \$12 billion over three years.

"This issue will destroy New York City," Adams said at a community event this month. "We're getting no support on this national crisis, and we're receiving no support."

Advocates for migrants have objected to Adams' apocalyptic terms, saying he is exaggerating the potential impact of the new arrivals on a city of nearly 8.8 million people.

Republicans have seized on the discord, putting Democrats on the defensive ahead of next year's presidential elections.

Muzaffar Chishti, a lawyer and senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, said the calls for expedited work authorizations are more about political optics than practical solutions.

"They don't want to tell the electorate there's nothing we can do. No politician wants to say that. So they have kind of become the new squeaky wheel, saying, 'Give us work authorization,'" he said. "Saying that is much easier than getting it. But it's sort of, you know, a good soundbite."

One step that most agree would be helpful is to provide legal assistance to migrants to apply for asylum and work authorization, though that has also proved challenging.

Nationwide, only around 16% of working age migrants enrolled in a U.S. Custom and Border Protection online app have applied for work permits, according to the White House. Since the introduction of the CBP One app in January through the end of July, nearly 200,000 asylum-seeking migrants have used it to sign up for appointments to enter the U.S. at land crossings with Mexico.

Federal officials recently began sending email and text message notifications to remind noncitizens that they are eligible to apply. New York City officials have also begun to survey asylum seekers to determine if they are eligible.

Another option would be to expand the number of nations whose citizens qualify for Temporary Protected Status in the U.S. That designation is most commonly given to places where there is an armed conflict or natural disaster.

The White House, though, might be reluctant to take steps that could be interpreted as incentivizing migrants to come to the U.S.

Arrests from illegal border crossings Mexico topped 177,000 in August, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to discuss unpublished numbers, up nearly 80% from June. Many are released in the U.S. to pursue asylum in immigration court, while an additional 1,450 migrants are permitted into the U.S. daily through CBP One.

Many have gravitated to an underground economy.

Elden Roja, who has been sporadically working landscaping and other odd jobs for about \$15 an hour, lives with his wife and children, 15 and 6, and about 50 others in a police station lobby in Chicago. When a fellow Venezuelan co-worker honked from a car he purchased, Roja laughed and said he would buy his own vehicle soon.

While the bureaucratic hurdles can be substantial, many migrants do make it through the process. Jose Vacca, a Venezuelan, traveled with two of his cousins from Colombia, leaving their families behind to make the journey mostly by foot. Once in Texas, he was given free bus tickets to New York City. The 22-year-old found a job there that paid him \$15 an hour, under the table. After he got his temporary work authorization, his boss gave him an extra dollar per hour.

Associated Press writer Elliot Spagat contributed from Chicago.

In Chile, justice eludes victims of Catholic clergy sex abuse years after the crisis exploded

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Soon after she learned what happened, Helmut Kramer's mother grabbed a pair of scissors and cut the priest out of photographs from her son's baptism.

"She kept the photos after that," said Kramer, who was sexually abused at age 12 in a Jesuit school in Antofagasta, a city in northern Chile.

"My mom is still Catholic, but she never attended Mass again. She says that she will never set foot in a church, and she does not trust the pope or any priest," the 53-year-old Chilean said.

His mother's feelings echo hundreds of Chileans who have distanced themselves from the Catholic Church since 2010, when victims of another priest, Fernando Karadima, raised awareness about clergy sex abuse in the South American country.

The Karadima case shook the Vatican itself and marred Pope Francis' trip to Chile in 2018. Instead of applause, he was greeted with unprecedented protests against a papal visit. The scenario worsened when Francis accused Karadima's victims of slander. He later admitted he made "grave errors" in judgment and invited them to Rome to beg their forgiveness.

According to polling firm Latinobarómetro, the decline in confidence in the Chilean Catholic Church is one of the largest in Latin America. It fell from 77% in 1996 to 31% in 2020. Currently half of Chile's 18 million population identify as Catholic and the number of religiously unaffiliated rose from 18% in 2010 to 35% in 2020.

"This wasn't a crisis, this was a cultural break from the Catholic Church," said Chilean historian Marcial Sánchez. "Chilean society felt cheated by the church."

There has been little justice in cases of clerical abuse. Some offenders were defrocked, but few have received criminal convictions, according to advocates. Some died before receiving any punishment from the church or the courts.

Not long after the pope's visit, Helmut Kramer joined other victims to launch "Red de Sobrevivientes Chile" (Chile's Survivors Network), which widened its scope to support victims abused in foster homes, scout groups and sports clubs.

"We created the first map of abusers in an ecclesiastical context and introduced a political discourse: The problem of abuse is a human rights issue and must be treated accordingly," Kramer said.

Human rights violations are a sensitive topic for Chileans who still mourn the losses of loved ones during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990). Kramer himself grew up during those tough times and now realizes how the political scenario influenced his own abuse experience.

"We were in a context in which everything was quiet. You couldn't speak about anything," Kramer said. And so, for 35 years, he kept silent.

The first time he spoke about his case, Jaime Concha was a 55-year-old doctor watching the news after a long day at the hospital. What he saw on TV shocked him: a report about victims claiming clergy sex abuse at the Marist Brothers' school where he studied from age 10.

It took him a few minutes to turn to his wife and say: "That happened to me as well."

Hoping for understanding and comfort, her reaction left him speechless. "Breaking the silence relieves

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 45 of 79

you, but you also feel responsible for the suffering you share," Concha said. "When I told my partner, it was unbearable for her." She called him an anti-gay slur and accused him of hiding his sexuality from her.

Four decades before that, when he was abused by several Marist Brothers and priests from his school, he wasn't even sure that the abuse had taken place at all.

"The first time it happened, I thought it had been something I had made up," Concha said. "The Marist Brothers were representatives of God. Not just power figures, but our connection to God."

It took him years and endless nights of guilt, self-loathing and mistrust to process that what happened to him was abuse.

"I had every reason to throw myself off the balcony," he said. "Then why am I still alive? Because despite everything, there is a God who loves me."

Now 60 years old, Concha said, "I still believe in a God who has always taken care of me, who has allowed me to be on the brink and has never thrown me off the precipice."

During the four years that he was abused by the priest who was supposed to mentor him, a question circled Javier Molina's mind: If God was supposed to protect me, why did he allow this to happen?

He met his abuser when his family moved to a new district in Santiago and Molina expressed his wish to become a priest. "He showed interest in me from the first day and said that he was going to be my spiritual guide," Molina said.

One Sunday, the priest showed up at his house and told Molina's mother: "I'll take Javier to the beach." Pressured by fear of losing her job as his secretary at the parish, she agreed. Her son was 14. The priest, 48.

"I don't know how long I cried, but I remember that I fell asleep, and I woke up when he banged on the bathroom door," said Molina, explaining what happened at the priest's beach house. "We had breakfast, he celebrated Mass and made me feel guilty. He said that the devil tempted his faithfulness to God."

On the way back from the beach, Molina said, the priest threatened him. If you ever speak about this, the priest told him, I'll tell everyone that you are gay, and I'll make sure your mother never finds another job.

"It was shocking to realize that people doubted my testimony because I was close to him," Molina said. "It's so hard to explain that I had no choice."

Many Chilean victims who became activists to advocate for children's rights share a common thought. For them, what underlies clergy sex abuse is not the Catholic Church or any other institution, but the asymmetrical use of power.

"The Pope himself said that this is a matter of abuse of power in abusive cultures, of cover-ups that ensure impunity," said one of Karadima's victims, José Andrés Murillo, who met with Francis at the Vatican in 2018.

"People have the right to live their faith without being abused," Murillo said.

He, too, wished to become a priest once. When he met Karadima in an upper-class neighborhood in Santiago at age 15, the priest was expected to become a saint.

"I think we are still just seeing the tip of the iceberg of the violence of the churches toward children," Murillo said.

He is now the director of Fundación para la Confianza (the Trust Foundation), which offers free psychological, judicial and emotional support for abuse survivors. Murillo said that new victims reach out to him every single day.

"Traumatic experiences open up a space toward self-destruction, toward the destruction of others or to find a way to fight," he said. "I don't want other people to experience what I experienced."

Though he's not a Catholic and does not believe in God anymore, spirituality plays a key role in his life. To him, love, friendship and beauty transcend people. Pain, suffering and trauma can be transformed into resilience.

"I've had the chance to see the face of evil, and I know what I want to fight against."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 46 of 79

When Helmut Kramer decided to speak up, the priest who abused him was more than 90 years old. A friend called him and said: "If you don't talk now, he's going to die, and no one will know what he did."

Two days after talking to a local journalist, Kramer made the cover of a newspaper. Crying strangers hugged him in the street. A few people from Antofagasta criticized him for "damaging" the public image of his old school.

He also received a message that would change his life. "I am a survivor too and I just want to tell you that you're not alone and we will never keep silent again." The sender was Eneas Espinoza, who went on to co-found Red de Sobrevivientes with Kramer.

Though they've never met in person – Espinoza lives in Argentina – they think of each other as brothers who share the goal of demanding justice and preventing others from facing their fate.

"This is not a battle, and we are not soldiers," Espinoza said. "The Catholic Church is not our enemy. Abusers are not our enemies; they are people who committed crimes and there is an institution that guarantees impunity."

Dozens of activists like them pushed for removing the statute of limitations on sex abuse crimes against children, which ended up happening in 2019 under President Sebastián Piñera. Now Red de Sobrevivientes hopes that President Gabriel Boric keeps his promise to create a Truth, Justice and Reparation Commission.

Every step taken by a sex abuse victim is an attempt to heal. "You carry this survival in your body because the site of the crime is yourself," Espinoza said.

Aside from his activism, and as part of this healing path, Kramer tries to laugh. With a smile across his face, he recalls the day he became an apostate.

On a 2019 afternoon, he headed to the Archdiocese of Santiago and handed in his baptism certificate. When the employee on duty asked why he wanted to renounce Catholicism, he said: "Do you see the name of that priest? He raped me."

When he got out, he started shouting: "I am an apostate!" Kramer joyfully recalls. Celebrations followed. "I bought myself lunch. I took a selfie, and everyone congratulated me," he said.

"It was a feast."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Inside the delicate art of maintaining America's aging nuclear weapons

By TARA COPP Associated Press

KANSAS CITY NATIONAL SECURITY CAMPUS, Mo. (AP) — In an ultra-sterile room at a secure factory in Kansas City, U.S. government technicians refurbish the nation's nuclear warheads. The job is exacting: Each warhead has thousands of springs, gears and copper contacts that must work in conjunction to set off a nuclear explosion.

Eight hundred miles away in New Mexico, workers in a steel-walled vault have an equally delicate task. Wearing radiation monitors, safety goggles and seven layers of gloves, they practice shaping new warhead plutonium cores — by hand.

And at nuclear weapons bases across the country, troops as young as 17 keep 50-year-old warheads working until replacements are ready. A hairline scratch on a warhead's polished black cone could send the bomb off course.

The Associated Press was granted rare access to key parts of the highly classified nuclear supply chain and got to watch technicians and engineers tackle the difficult job of maintaining an aging nuclear arsenal. Those workers are about to get a lot busier. The U.S. will spend more than \$750 billion over the next 10 years replacing almost every component of its nuclear defenses, including new stealth bombers, submarines and ground-based intercontinental ballistic missiles in the country's most ambitious nuclear weapons effort since the Manhattan Project.

It's been almost eight decades since a nuclear weapon has been fired in war. But military leaders warn

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 47 of 79

that such peace may not last. They say the U.S. has entered an uneasy era of global threats that includes a nuclear weapons buildup by China and Russia's repeat threats to use a nuclear bomb in Ukraine. They say that America's aged weapons need to be replaced to ensure they work.

"What we want to do is preserve our way of life without fighting major wars," said Marvin Adams, director of weapons programs for the Department of Energy. "Nothing in our toolbox really works to deter aggressors unless we have that foundation of the nuclear deterrent."

By treaty the U.S. maintains 1,550 active nuclear warheads, and the government plans to modernize them all. At the same time, technicians, scientists and military missile crews must ensure the older weapons keep running until the new ones are installed.

Which means those technicians and troops are about to become much busier.

The project is so ambitious that watchdogs warn that the government may not meet its goals. The program has also drawn criticism from non-proliferation advocates and experts who say the current arsenal, though timeworn, is sufficient to meet U.S. needs. Upgrading it will also be expensive, they say.

"They are going to have extreme difficulty meeting these deadlines," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, a non-partisan group focused on nuclear and conventional weapons control. "And the costs are going to go up."

He cautioned that the sweeping upgrades could also have the undesired effect of pushing Russia and China to improve and expand their arsenals.

WHERE IT BEGINS

The core of every nuclear warhead is a hollow, globe-shaped plutonium pit made by engineers at the Energy Department's lab in Los Alamos, New Mexico, birthplace of the atom bomb. Many of the current pits in use come from the 1970s and 80s. That can be problematic, because there's a lot about plutonium's aging process that scientists still don't understand.

The key radioactive atom in the plutonium pit has a half life of 24,000 years, which is the amount of time it would take roughly half of the radioactive atoms present to decay. That would suggest the weapons should be viable for years to come. But the plutonium decay is still enough to cause concern that it could affect how a pit explodes.

President George H.W. Bush signed an order in the 1990s banning underground nuclear tests, and the U.S. has not detonated pits to update data on their degradation since. When the last tests were performed, they provided data on pits that were at most about two decades old. That generation of pits is now pushing past 50.

Bob Webster, deputy director of weapons at Los Alamos, said scientists have relied on computer models to determine how well such old pits might work, but "everything we're doing is extrapolating," he said.

That uncertainty has pushed the department to restart pit production. The U.S. no longer produces man-made plutonium. Instead, old plutonium is essentially refurbished into new pits.

This task takes place inside PF-4, a highly classified building at Los Alamos that's surrounded by layers of armed guards, heavy steel doors and radiation monitors. Inside, workers handle the plutonium inside steel glove boxes, which allow them to clean and process the plutonium without being exposed to deadly radiation.

In the final production steps, a lone employee in the vault takes the almost-completed pit into both of her gloved hands and shapes it into its final form.

"Things have to fit a certain way, and everything is by touch, by feel," said the Los Alamos employee, who the AP has agreed not to name because she is one of only a handful of people in the U.S., and the only female, who performs this sensitive task.

For about the last 10 years technicians have been practicing on "test" pits that aren't ready for the stockpile. The U.S. is planning to fully recycle its first weapon-ready pit next year — and quickly increase annual production to as many as 80 new pits.

The painstaking and hazardous work has led a government watchdog to express doubts about whether the U.S. government can meet that goal.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 48 of 79

"The United States has not regularly manufactured plutonium pits since 1989," the Government Accountability Office noted in a January 2023 report, adding that the Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration has provided "limited assurance that it would be able to produce sufficient numbers of pits."

Webster has been at Los Alamos since Ronald Reagan was president. He could have retired years ago, but has remained to shepherd the first new plutonium pits through to production. The lab is starting to feel a bit like it did in the 1980s, during the Cold War, he said. Los Alamos scientists are having intense discussions about weapon design — how much each can weigh, its explosive punch, how far it must travel.

"We need our nation to be back making pits," Webster said. "We just have to be able to do that."

THE WARHEAD AND THE WRISTWATCH

Completed pits are protected and detonated by an outer warhead layer that is built at the Energy Department's Kansas City National Security Campus. Inside that three-story windowless factory, workers restore and test those warhead parts, work that a government watchdog said required "a great deal of precision manufacturing to exacting specifications."

There are thousands of tiny parts inside each warhead, so steady hands are key. That's why technicians go through a skills assessment that includes disassembling and assembling a mechanical wristwatch.

"Everything is done under a microscope with tweezers," said Molly Hadfield, a spokeswoman for the Kansas City plant. "And its pass (or) fail. Either the watch works or it doesn't work."

This factory would be busy even if an overhaul wasn't underway. All warheads have regular maintenance requirements. Their plastics age, and metal gears and wiring are weakened by the years and by exposure to radiation.

The factory is also working on warheads for the B-21 Raider, a futuristic stealth bomber, while also supporting the Sentinel, a new intercontinental ballistic missile and on warheads for a new class of submarines.

"There's a huge modernization effort going on," said Eric Wollerman, who manages the Kansas City complex for the Department of Energy through its federal contract with Honeywell. "If you're going to update the delivery systems, you would also then update the warheads in the missiles and the bombs that are with them."

To meet the demand for both maintenance and modernization, the facilities have gone on a hiring spree. The Kansas City plant has 6,700 employees, a 40% jump since 2018, with plans to add several hundred more. The Los Alamos lab has added more than 4,000 employees in that same time frame.

OLD MISSILES, YOUNG TROOPS

The U.S. nuclear arsenal reveals its age each time troops fix a missile. That can occur as often as twice a week, but only if the equally old tools, or the truck carrying the tools, or the truck needed to transport the missile itself isn't also broken down, which is often.

That is why Airman 1st Class Jonathan Marrs was dragging a second 225-pound aluminum tow behind him toward a concrete silo in the midst of vast Montana farmland on a recent hot afternoon.

Marrs, 21, and other airmen used a tow and wrenches the size of human femurs to dislodge silo Bravo-9's 110-ton blast door. Underneath its cement and steel cover was a 70,000-pound nuclear missile; the missile's warhead tip needed to be lifted out and trucked to base for work.

Except the blast door wouldn't budge. The first 225-pound tow, or mule, as the troops call it, couldn't generate the power needed to pull back the door.

After attaching a second mule, Marrs and the other airman succeeded in pulling the door free, releasing scores of mice.

The maintainers next unfastened the warhead from the missile and placed it in a specialized truck. It's then escorted by Air Force security forces back to a heavily guarded hangar at Montana's Malmstrom Air Force Base.

Marrs and the other young airmen — known as maintainers — are closely monitored as they handle nuclear weapons, U.S. Air Force officials said.

"If I under-inflate a basketball at the gym, no one will care," said Chief Master Sgt. Andrew Zahm, the maintenance group senior enlisted leader at F.E. Warren Air Force Base. "If I did something with one of

these weapons, the president would know about it in 45 minutes.”

The workload is already a challenge for these troops, and there aren't many easy ways to relieve it.

While the private-sector managed Los Alamos and Kansas City plants have hired personnel to meet the rising workload, the military has struggled to fill jobs and retain experienced technicians. Instead, the military must do more with fewer maintainers, and for much less money than those troops could make as government contractors.

“Once you start showing a staff sergeant the \$80,000” they could make in the private sector, they are going to take it, Zahm said.

Zahm is a rarity. While many have retired or left for private industry, he's remained to keep serving the military's nuclear mission. With the U.S. so close to its first new weapon, he's driven by a desire to see it through. “In 21 years I've never seen a new thing,” Zahm said. “I want to see the new stuff.”

Copp reported from Los Alamos National Laboratory, New Mexico; the Kansas City National Security Campus, Missouri; Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana and F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming.

The Associated Press receives support for nuclear security coverage from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and Outrider Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content. Del Wilber is the Washington investigations editor for the AP.

Homeowners face rising insurance rates as climate change makes wildfires, storms more common

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A growing number of Americans are finding it difficult to afford insurance on their homes, a problem only expected to worsen because insurers and lawmakers have underestimated the impact of climate change, a new report says.

A report from First Street Foundation released Wednesday says states such as California, Florida and Louisiana, which are prone to wildfires and damaging storms and flooding, are likely to see the most dramatic increases in premiums. But the fire that destroyed the Hawaiian community of Lahaina on Aug. 8, as well as the historic flooding that happened in Vermont and Maine in July, are examples of events that could drive up insurance costs for homeowners in other states.

“If you're not worried, you're not paying attention,” said California Sen. Bill Dodd, whose district includes the wine-country counties devastated by the LNU Complex fires in 2020.

First Street estimates, factoring climate models into the financial risk of properties in its report, that roughly 39 million properties — roughly a quarter of all homes in the country — are being underpriced for the climate risk to insure those properties.

“Some places may be impacted very minimally, but other places could see massive increases in insurance premiums in the coming years,” said Jeremy Porter, head of climate implications at First Street and a co-author of the report.

First Street, a New York-based non-profit, has been a to-go researcher on the financial implications of climate change for years. Their research is used by Fannie Mae, Bank of America, the Treasury Department and others for understanding the potential risks to properties.

There are several signs that climate change is taking its toll on the insurance industry. The U.S. homeowner's insurance industry has had three straight years of underwriting losses, according to credit rating agency AM Best. Losses for the first half of 2023 totaled \$24.5 billion, which is roughly what was lost in all of 2022.

“(Climate change) is a problem that is already here,” said Todd Bevington, a managing director at the insurance broker VIU by HUB. In his 30 years of doing insurance, he said “I've never seen the market turn this quickly or significantly.”

Skyrocketing insurance costs are a serious concern for the small town of Paradise in Northern California,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 50 of 79

which was nearly wiped out by a deadly 2018 wildfire that killed 85 people.

Jen Goodlin moved back to her hometown from Colorado with her family in 2020, determined to help in the town's recovery. They began building on a lot they had purchased, and moved into their new house in October 2022.

In July, she was shocked to receive notice that the family's homeowner insurance premium would be \$11,245 -- up from \$2,500.

"Our insurance agent said, 'Just be thankful we didn't drop you,' and I said, 'You did, you just dropped me,'" she said.

Goodlin, a former dental hygienist who is now executive director of the nonprofit Rebuild Paradise Foundation, said hundreds, if not thousands, of people are being hit by these rate hikes in a town being built with updated fire-safe building codes and little if any fuel to burn. She knows a homeowner whose premium is now \$21,000 for a newly constructed home.

Record numbers of Americans are now insured through state-affiliated "insurers of last resort" like California's FAIR Plan, or Louisiana or Florida's Citizens property insurance companies. These programs were designed to insure properties where private insurance companies have refused to insure or the price for private insurance is too expensive.

Goodlin will soon be one of those homeowners. She said she's in the process of transitioning to the FAIR Plan.

The number of homeowners covered by California's FAIR Plan was 268,321 in 2021, almost double what it was five years before. That figure has almost certainly increased in the last two years, experts say. In Florida, Citizens Property Insurance Corp. now has 1.4 million homeowners' policies in effect, nearly triple in five years.

In some cases, policymakers have bound the hands of insurance companies, leading to an underpricing of risk. For example, the most a California insurance company can raise a homeowner's premium by law each year is 7% without involving a public hearing, a process that most insurers want to avoid. Those policies, along with the increased chance of catastrophic events, have led insurers like State Farm and Allstate to either pull out of the California market or pause underwriting new policies.

As a result, California's FAIR plan, which was created 50 years ago as a temporary stopgap measure for those impacted by riots and brush fires in the 1960s, is now the only option available to homeowners in some ZIP codes.

"We've got to find a way to get insurers to get back into the market, to take people out of the FAIR Plan so that we can reduce the risk there," Dodd said.

Dodd was one of the key lawmakers trying to negotiate a bill in the final weeks of the state's legislative session to address the issue. But all sides failed to reach an agreement.

There are likely to be more insurance market failures in the future, Porter said, as more insurers simply refuse to underwrite policies in certain communities or go property by property. Comparisons to the National Flood Insurance Program, which is now \$22.5 billion in debt, have become common.

Even the backstop programs are buckling under tremendous losses. Louisiana's insurer of last resort, Citizens, raised its rates for 2023 by 63.1% statewide to cover higher costs.

This summer, reinsurance companies such as Swiss Re and Munich Re raised their property catastrophe reinsurance premiums in the U.S. by an average of 20% to 50%. Reinsurance brokerage firm Guy Carpenter & Co. said it was the highest increase for reinsurance rates since the year after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

"It's a global problem. Virtually every geography is seeing a repricing of risk," said Lara Mowery, global head of distribution at Guy Carpenter, in an interview.

Reinsurers step in to help cover losses resulting from a catastrophe, so regular insurance companies do not take on all of the risk. In one example of a typical reinsurance contract, a \$20 million contract could require the insurance company to cover the first \$10 million in claims and the reinsurer to pick up the other \$10 million.

Mowery added that many reinsurance firms now have resources dedicated to studying the impact of climate change on how to price catastrophes.

There have been other factors impacting the insurance industry as well. Inflation has made the cost of repairing homes pricier and home prices remain near record levels. A labor shortage means getting damaged homes repaired may take longer, requiring insurers to pay for temporary housing for policyholders longer.

In short, an industry whose business model is calculating risk based on what happened in the past is increasingly unable to do so.

"You can no longer rely on 100 years of wildfire data to price risk when the unprecedented has happened," Mowery said.

While the intensity of wildfires, floods and storms can vary from year to year, the trend lines in these models point to more wildfire activity as well as more intense storms, all likely to result in more catastrophic amounts of damage that insurance companies will have to cover.

Factoring in climate models and acres estimated to be burned, First Street estimates that by 2050, roughly 34,000 homes will burn down because of wildfires every year. That's roughly the equivalent of losing the city of Asheland, N.C., every year.

Going forward, it may become more necessary for potential homebuyers to look at the cost of insuring the property they are looking at before locking in a mortgage rate, due to the potential for significant rate hikes in the future.

"It used to be homeowner's insurance was an afterthought when you are looking at buying a property. Now you'll really need to do your research into what risks there may be in that property in the coming years," Bevington said.

Reporter Adam Beam contributed to this report from Sacramento, Calif., and reporter Janie Har contributed from San Francisco.

India expels Canadian diplomat, escalating tensions after Trudeau accuses India in Sikh's killing

By KRUTIKA PATHI and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India expelled one of Canada's top diplomats Tuesday, ramping up a confrontation between the two countries over Canadian accusations that India may have been involved in the killing of a Sikh separatist leader in suburban Vancouver.

India, which has dismissed the accusations as absurd, said the expulsion came amid "growing concern at the interference of Canadian diplomats in our internal matters and their involvement in anti-India activities," according to a statement from its Ministry of External Affairs.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appeared to try to calm the diplomatic clash Tuesday, telling reporters that Canada is "not looking to provoke or escalate."

"We are simply laying out the facts as we understand them and we want to work with the government of India to lay everything clear and to ensure there are proper processes," he said. "India and the government of India needs to take this matter with the utmost seriousness."

On Monday, Trudeau said there were "credible allegations" of Indian involvement in the slaying of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a 45-year-old Sikh leader who was killed by masked gunmen in June in Surrey, outside Vancouver. For years, India has said Nijjar, a Canadian citizen born in India, has links to terrorism, an allegation Nijjar denied.

A U.S. official said Trudeau was in contact with President Joe Biden's administration about Canada's findings before raising them publicly. The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Trudeau's willingness to speak out about the matter was taken by the White House as an indication of the Canadian leader's certainty about what had been found.

Canada has yet to provide any evidence of Indian involvement, but if true it would mark a major shift for India, whose security and intelligence branches have long been significant players in South Asia, and

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 52 of 79

are suspected in a number of killings in Pakistan. But arranging the killing of a Canadian citizen in Canada, home to nearly 2 million people of Indian descent, would be unprecedented.

India, though, has accused Canada for years of giving free rein to Sikh separatists, including Nijjar.

The dueling expulsions have escalated tensions between Canada and India. Trudeau had frosty encounters with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during this month's Group of 20 meeting in New Delhi, and a few days later Canada canceled a trade mission to India planned for the fall.

Nijjar, a plumber, was also a leader in what remains of a once-strong movement to create an independent Sikh homeland, known as Khalistan. A bloody decadelong Sikh insurgency shook north India in the 1970s and 1980s, until it was crushed in a government crackdown in which thousands of people were killed, including prominent Sikh leaders.

Violence spilled across years and continents. In 1984, former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was killed by two of her Sikh bodyguards after she ordered an army operation to flush out heavily armed Sikh separatists barricaded inside Sikhism's holiest shrine. Her killing led to riots that left more than 2,000 Sikhs dead.

The next year, an Air India jetliner flying from Toronto to New Delhi was destroyed by a bomb over the Irish coast, killing 329 people. Officials blamed Sikh separatists.

The Khalistan movement has lost much of its political power but still has supporters in the Indian state of Punjab, as well as in the sizable overseas Sikh diaspora. While the active insurgency ended years ago, the Indian government has warned repeatedly that Sikh separatists were trying to make a comeback.

Nijjar was wanted by Indian authorities, who had offered a reward for information leading to his arrest. At the time of his killing he was working with the group Sikhs For Justice, organizing an unofficial Sikh diaspora referendum on independence from India.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a lawyer and spokesperson for Sikhs For Justice, has said Nijjar was warned by Canadian intelligence officials about being targeted for assassination by "mercenaries."

Nijjar had recently been meeting "once or twice a week" with Canadian Security Intelligence Service officers, including a day or two before the shooting, said his son Balraj Singh Nijjar.

He said his father had received hundreds of threatening messages telling him to stop his advocacy for Sikh independence. The threats were always passed to authorities.

"We weren't worried about safety because we weren't doing anything wrong," he said. "We were just using freedom of speech."

He said the family was relieved by Canada's actions.

"From day 1 we kind of had this idea and knowledge that if anything would happen to him, the Indian government would be involved," he said. "It was just a matter of time for when the truth would come out. It's finally coming to the public eyes that the Indian government is involved in this."

On Monday, Trudeau told Parliament that Canadian security agencies were investigating "credible allegations of a potential link between agents of the government of India" and Nijjar's killing.

"Any involvement of a foreign government in the killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil is an unacceptable violation of our sovereignty," he said.

India's foreign ministry dismissed the allegation as "absurd" and accused Canada of harboring "terrorists and extremists."

"Such unsubstantiated allegations seek to shift the focus from Khalistani terrorists and extremists, who have been provided shelter in Canada and continue to threaten India's sovereignty and territorial integrity," it said in a statement Tuesday.

India has long demanded that Canada take action against the Sikh independence movement, which is banned in India. Canada has a Sikh population of more than 770,000, about 2% of its population.

In March, Modi's government summoned the Canadian high commissioner in New Delhi, the top diplomat in the country, to complain about Sikh independence protests in Canada. In 2020, India's foreign ministry also summoned the top diplomat over Trudeau's comments about an agricultural protest movement associated with the state of Punjab, where many Sikhs live.

Critics accuse Modi's Hindu nationalist government of seeking to suppress dissent using sedition laws and other legal weapons. Some critics of his administration have been arrested, creating what Modi's opponents say is a culture of intimidation.

Trudeau said Monday he brought up Nijjar's slaying with Modi last week at the G20 meeting in New Delhi, and told him any Indian government involvement would be unacceptable and he asked for cooperation in the investigation.

Modi, for his part, expressed "strong concerns" over Canada's handling of the Sikh independence movement at that meeting, India's statement said.

While in New Delhi, Trudeau skipped a dinner hosted by the Indian president, and local media reports said he was snubbed by Modi when he got a quick "pull aside" instead of a bilateral meeting.

The statement called on Canada to work with India on what New Delhi said is a threat to the Indian diaspora, and accused the Sikh movement of "promoting secessionism and inciting violence" against Indian diplomats.

Earlier this year, Sikh protesters pulled down the Indian flag at India's high commission in London and smashed the building's window after India arrested a popular Sikh preacher. Protesters also smashed windows at the Indian Consulate in San Francisco and skirmished with consulate workers.

The British government, meanwhile, said Tuesday there were no plans to reinvestigate the death of a U.K.-based Sikh activist in the wake of Canada's claim India might have been behind the slaying of Nijjar.

Avtar Singh Khanda, who played a prominent role in protests for an independent Sikh homeland, died in June in the English city of Birmingham after falling ill. Supporters alleged he might have been poisoned, but Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman, Max Blain, said police found nothing suspicious.

The Trudeau government's allegations are awkward for the U.K., which is a close ally of Canada in the "Five Eyes" intelligence-sharing alliance that also includes the U.S., Australia and New Zealand, and is also seeking a free trade deal with India.

"These are serious allegations. It is right that the Canadian authorities should be looking into them," Blain said, adding it would be inappropriate to comment further while the investigation is underway.

Gillies reported from Toronto. Aamer Madhani in New York; Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi; and Jill Lawless in London, contributed to this report.

United Auto Workers threaten to expand targeted strike if there is no substantive progress by Friday

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

The United Auto Workers union is stepping up pressure on Detroit's Big Three by threatening to expand its strike unless it sees major progress in contract negotiations by Friday.

In a video statement late Monday, UAW President Shawn Fain said workers at more factories will join those who are now in the fifth day of a strike at three plants.

"We're not going to keep waiting around forever while they drag this out ... and we're not messing around," Fain said in announcing the noon Eastern time Friday deadline for escalating the strike unless there is "serious progress" in the talks. The union plans to disclose the locations of new strikes during an online presentation to members that morning.

Ford, General Motors and Stellantis said they want to settle the strike, and they held back from directly criticizing the escalation threat.

Mark Stewart, the North American chief operating officer of Stellantis, the successor to Fiat Chrysler, said the company is still looking for common ground with the UAW.

"I hope that we're able to do that by Friday," Stewart said on CNBC.

GM said in a statement, "We're continuing to bargain in good faith with the union to reach an agreement as quickly as possible for the benefit of our team members, customers, suppliers and communities across the U.S."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 54 of 79

A Ford spokeswoman said Tuesday that negotiations were continuing, but provided no additional details. Late Tuesday, Canadian union Unifor said it reached a tentative agreement with Ford to avert a midnight strike by 5,600 workers at several plants in Canada. The union did not immediately disclose terms of the deal, which it said was endorsed unanimously by its bargaining committee.

Unifor opened negotiations with the Detroit Three on Aug. 10 before narrowing discussions to Ford as the target company on Aug. 29. The union will seek to use the Ford deal as a pattern for thousands of GM and Stellantis workers in Canada.

In Washington, the Biden administration reversed a plan to send acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and senior adviser Gene Sperling to Detroit this week to meet with both sides, according to a White House official. Last week, President Joe Biden publicly backed the UAW and said the officials could play a positive role.

The White House now believes that since negotiations are taking place, "it is most productive for Sperling and Su to continue their discussions from Washington and allow talks to move forward," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private plans.

Fain had discounted the need for help from Washington, saying "This battle is not about the president," and some Democrats opposed the White House involvement.

"I do not believe that the president himself should intervene as he did in the railroad strike in these talks. He should not be at that table," said Rep. Debbie Dingell, whose congressional district includes part of southeast Michigan.

So far the strike is limited to about 13,000 workers at a Ford assembly plant in Wayne, Michigan, a GM factory in Wentzville, Missouri, and a Stellantis plant in Toledo, Ohio.

However, layoffs are starting to occur at other locations as the strike crimps the industry's supply chain.

In Toledo, 12 different shops that supply the Jeep plant where UAW is striking have laid off more than 1,600 workers, according to Bruce Baumhower, president of the union local in northeast Ohio. More than half will get state unemployment benefits, while workers at two companies located inside the Jeep plant have been approved for payments from the union strike fund, "but they can't picket because they're not on strike," he said.

GM warned Monday that the strike in Wentzville, near St. Louis, could force the company to idle an assembly plant in Kansas City early this week. On Tuesday, the company said that it expected to keep production going in Kansas City for at least one more day.

The automakers normally provide supplemental or partial pay to workers who are idled because of supply chain problems, but Ford and GM have said they will not do that this time because the shutdowns are caused by a strike. The union argues that layoffs are a choice by management, but the union's ability to challenge the change in policy is unclear.

United States Steel Corp. said it was temporarily idling one of its blast furnaces in Granite City, Illinois, an indication that the company expects the strike to reduce demand for steel. There are about 1,450 workers at the site — most of them represented by the United Steelworkers, but the company said many workers won't be affected by the furnace shutdown.

The area's congresswoman, Democrat Nikki Budzinski, said U.S. Steel was using the strike as an excuse to idle the furnace. "Their effort to blame this announcement on the United Auto Workers strike is a shameful attempt to pit working people against one another," she said.

A parts supplier, CIE Newcor, told Michigan officials that it expects a one-month closure of four plants in the state to start Oct. 2 and idle nearly 300 workers.

Jose Munoz, president and chief operating officer of South Korean car maker Hyundai Motor Corp., told reporters Tuesday in Atlanta that auto-parts makers would be disrupted by a long strike. Those problems could hurt production at nonunion automakers, not just the Big Three, he said.

"The way the supply chain works today, everything is interconnected," Munoz said. "It is very difficult to have one supplier that is working only with one (auto manufacturer). So in a way or another, we will see disruptions in the supply chain which may impact companies over time."

The UAW is seeking wage increases of more than 30% over four years and other sweeteners. The union

says workers deserve a bigger share of record profits that the companies posted as prices rose sharply on strong consumer demand and a limited supply of vehicles because of chip shortages and other issues.

The companies say they can't afford to meet the UAW's demands because they must invest those profits to help them make the transition to electric vehicles.

Associated Press writers Seung Min Kim in Washington, Jeff Amy in Atlanta and Joey Cappelletti in Lansing, Michigan, contributed to this report.

Mexican railway operator halts trains because so many migrants are climbing aboard and getting hurt

By FERNANDA PESCE Associated Press

HUEHUETOCA, Mexico (AP) — A Mexican railway operator announced Tuesday it is temporarily suspending train runs in the northern part of the country because so many migrants are climbing aboard freight cars and getting hurt in the process.

Ferromex said it has temporarily ordered a halt to 60 trains carrying cargo that would fill 1,800 tractor trailers. It said some international trade would be affected by the stoppage.

In recent days, there have been about a "half-dozen regrettable cases of injuries or deaths" among migrants hopping freight cars, the company said in a statement.

The company, owned by conglomerate Grupo Mexico, said some migrants even hopped on moving freight cars "despite the grave danger that represents."

"There has been a significant increase in the number of migrants in recent days," Ferromex said in the statement, adding that it was stopping the trains "to protect the physical safety of the migrants," while it awaited action by authorities to solve the problem.

But the word had yet to trickle down to the migrants themselves, hundreds of whom waited on the tracks and alongside them at a railway yard in Huehuetoca, on the northern outskirts of Mexico City.

Pavel Aguilar Flores, a migrant from Venezuela, was hoping to hop a freight train to Matamoros, a dangerous Mexican border city across from Brownsville, Texas.

"We haven't heard any news," Aguilar Flores said. "We are going to continue on our journey, and in fact we're waiting for a train."

"I have heard there have been accidents, but not so many as people say," he said. "You have to be careful and get on the train when it's stopped, not when it's moving."

In fact, trains were still running through the railyard at Huehuetoca Tuesday evening, but they weren't heading where the migrants wanted to go.

According to Ferromex, the worst problems appeared to be further north.

The company said there were about 1,500 people gathered at a rail yard in the city of Torreon, in the northern border state of Coahuila. The company also reported about 800 migrants waiting at the freight yards in Irapuato, in the north-central state of Guanajuato.

About 1,000 people were reported to be riding freight cars on the train line that connects the city of Chihuahua and the northern border city of Ciudad Juarez.

Ferromex is Mexico's largest concessionary rail operator and the impact of the train stoppage will be "very important," said Ana Bertha Gutiérrez, the international trade coordinator for the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness.

She noted the measure could hit industrial states like Nuevo Leon, Baja California and Chihuahua hard, given their links to the U.S. market.

Migrants have long used the trains, known collectively as "The Beast," to hitch rides from as far south as Oaxaca state to the U.S. border. About a decade ago, the Mexican government briefly staged raids on the trains to discourage the practice, but later largely abandoned the effort.

The announcement comes as migrants are increasingly desperate to reach the U.S. border.

On Monday, migrants mostly from Haiti burst into an asylum office in southern Mexico city of Tapachula.

Throng of migrants knocked over metal barricades and pushed past National Guard officers and police stationed at the office. Some of the migrants were trampled by their colleagues in the rush.

Authorities later convinced many to leave, and no injuries were reported.

Crowds of frustrated migrants, including many from Cuba and Honduras, say they have had to wait for weeks in some cases for an appointment at the office in Tapachula, near the border with Guatemala.

At the office, run by the Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid, migrants can file claims for asylum in Mexico. Most, however, intend to use the papers to travel more safely and easily to the U.S. border.

Mexico is on track to receive more asylum applications this year than ever before as the flow of migrants threatens to overwhelm governments of several Latin American countries along the migratory route.

Andrés Ramírez Silva, the director of Mexico's refugee agency, said last week that the number of asylum applications his agency receives this year could reach 150,000, well above the 129,000 record set in 2021.

Follow AP's global migration coverage at: <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

Saudi Arabia praises 'positive results' after Yemen's Houthi rebels visit kingdom for peace talks

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia on Wednesday praised the “positive results” of negotiations with Yemen's Houthi rebels after they visited the kingdom for peace talks, though Riyadh released few details on their discussions to end the war tearing at the Arab world's poorest nation.

The five days of talks, which represented the highest-level, public negotiations with the Houthis in the kingdom, come as Saudi Arabia tries a renewed bid to end the yearslong coalition war it launched on Yemen. That conflict had become enmeshed in a wider regional proxy war the kingdom faced against its longtime regional rival Iran, with which it reached a *détente* earlier this year.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry in a statement early Wednesday marking the end of the Houthis' trip “welcomed the positive results of the serious discussions regarding reaching a road map to support the peace path in Yemen.”

“The kingdom continues to stand with Yemen and its brotherly people and ... encourages the Yemeni parties to sit at the negotiating table to reach a comprehensive and lasting political solution in Yemen under the supervision of the United Nations,” the statement read.

The Houthi delegation even met with Saudi Arabia's defense minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, the brother of the powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, during their visit. In a social media post, Prince Khalid referred to those visiting him as the “Sanaa delegation,” not using either the Houthis nor the rebel group's formal name, Ansar Allah.

“I emphasized the kingdom's support for Yemen and reaffirmed our commitment to promoting dialogue among all parties to reach a comprehensive political solution under U.N. supervision,” Prince Khalid said.

Mohammed Abdul-Salam, the chief Houthi negotiator, wrote online that the rebels “held extensive meetings with the Saudi side in which we discussed some options and alternatives to overcome disagreements that previous rounds touched upon.”

“We will submit them to the leadership for consultation and in a way that will help in speeding up the disbursement of salaries and addressing the issues of the humanitarian situation that our Yemeni people are suffering from, leading to a just, comprehensive and sustainable solution,” Abdul-Salam said.

The Houthis long have demanded the Saudi-led coalition pay salaries of all state employees under its control — including its military forces — from Yemen's oil and gas revenues, as well as open all airports and ports under Houthi control as part of any peace deal.

The rebel-controlled SABA news agency acknowledged the delegation's return to Sanaa, without elaborating on the talks.

Officials at the United Nations, which is now hosting the annual General Assembly in New York drawing world leaders, did not immediately comment on the Saudi remarks. A joint statement issued by the United States and the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council, a six-nation Gulf Arab bloc led by Riyadh,

commended "Saudi Arabia's sustained efforts to encourage Yemeni-Yemeni dialogue."

"The ministers also emphasized their support for an inclusive, Yemeni-Yemeni political process under U.N. auspices that durably resolves the conflict," that statement read.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken also met with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on ending the war on the sidelines of the U.N. summit.

"We are, in our judgment, in a moment of opportunity, opportunity to help the people of Yemen chart a path toward a durable peace and durable security," Blinken said.

Yemen's conflict began in 2014 when the Houthis seized Sanaa and much of the country's north. The internationally recognized government fled to the south and then into exile in Saudi Arabia.

The Houthi takeover prompted a Saudi-led coalition to intervene months later and the conflict turned into a regional proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with the United States long involved on the periphery, providing intelligence assistance to the kingdom.

However, international criticism over Saudi airstrikes killing civilians saw the U.S. pull back its support. But the U.S. is suspected of still carrying out drone strikes targeting suspected members of Yemen's local al-Qaida branch.

The war has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more. A cease-fire that expired last October largely has held in the time since, however. Saudi Arabia, its local allies and the Houthis conducted a prisoner exchange in April as part of peace talk efforts.

Prince William, billionaires Gates and Bloomberg say innovation provides climate hope

By SETH BORENSTEIN and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With deadly extreme weather hitting all over the globe, rising temperatures peaking during the hottest summer on record and carbon pollution levels that keep climbing, Britain's Prince William and wealthy entrepreneurs Bill Gates and Michael Bloomberg promised a warming world a degree of hope.

That comes in the form of innovation, creativity and technology, the trio and others said at a summit Tuesday in the posh Plaza Hotel. They announced finalists for William's third annual Earthshot Prize that offers five awards of 1 million pounds (\$1.2 million) to companies and groups that come up with new ways to save the planet.

"We've got to hang onto optimism and hope because it is the biggest driver of change, the biggest driver of innovation," William told the crowd of movers and shakers, after mentioning that he'd slipped away for a morning jog in New York's Central Park.

While a healthy dose of realistic pessimism about Earth's climate is important, the heir to the British throne said he wants people to believe "there is hope; there are people out there doing incredible things that will have massive impacts on our futures."

William's summit highlighted 15 different finalists from around the world, including efforts to reduce London air pollution from vehicle tires, reduce livestock methane emissions by new types of seaweed feedstock and use DNA technology to make more sustainable textile dyes.

DIFFERING VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Days after protesters in the street, many of them under 30, talked of robbed futures, speakers at the Earthshot summit — named because it was inspired by President John F. Kennedy's moonshot effort in the 1960s — saw a different world developing, mainly because of changes in technology.

"There's a lot of climate exaggeration," said Gates, who founded Microsoft and is now a philanthropist. "The climate is not the end of the planet. So the planet is going to be fine."

The world will not be able to meet its agreed-upon goal to limit future warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial temperatures, but it won't hit the 3-degree Celsius mark either, said Gates, who is not a climate scientist.

Gates cited a reason for thinking it won't be as bad as it once looked: Since 2015, until last year, the world went on a "gigantic" innovation binge in efforts that could help curb climate change.

Gates promoted a winner from last year who tries to use rock-like resources to safely store carbon dioxide sucked from the atmosphere, speeding up a natural process by 100,000 times. If that company can get the price of storing carbon dioxide down to \$50 a ton it "brings in this additional tool that reduces the temperature rise."

AVOIDING INVESTMENT IN HEAT-TRAPPING GASES

Later, at the same hotel, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen talked about more down-to-Earth financial issues — how powerful companies could have what's called net-zero investments, which is not funding industries and firms that emit heat-trapping gases.

"The climate crisis has propelled a massive economic shift," Yellen said.

She introduced a series of best practices for these financial institutions to carry out their net-zero commitments called "Principles for Net-Zero Financing and Investment." They include encouraging banks and other institutions to finance clients pursuing decarbonization in high-polluting industries and investing in clean energy projects. Some financial institutions could supplement emissions reduction measures with the voluntary purchase of carbon credits, according to a handout.

She said the goal is to affirm "the importance of credible net-zero commitments and to encourage financial institutions that make them to take consistent approaches to implementation."

Yellen also announced that a group of philanthropic organizations — including Bezos Earth Fund, Bloomberg Philanthropies and others — would pledge \$340 million to help financial institutions "develop and execute robust, voluntary net-zero commitments," she said.

In a statement, David Arkush, director of Public Citizen's Climate Program, said the new Treasury commitments, "suffer from major shortcomings."

"Offsets are a loophole large enough to drive most carbon pollution through," he said.

Afterward, Prince William headed toward ground zero, where he visited with firefighters at FDNY Ten House, the station that was the first on the scene at the World Trade Center after the 9/11 attacks. He then greeted scores of people lined up behind metal barricades across the street. The Prince shook outstretched hands and chatted briefly with people.

Hussein reported from Washington. Bobby Caina Calvin contributed from New York. Follow AP's climate and environment coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment> and follow Seth Borenstein at <http://twitter.com/borenbears> and Fatima Hussein at <http://twitter.com/fatimathefatima>

AP climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Democrats retain narrow control of Pennsylvania House after special election

By BROOKE SCHULTZ Associated Press/Report for America

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Democrats will retain their one-vote majority in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives after voters in Pittsburgh on Tuesday elected former congressional aide Lindsay Powell.

Powell's victory gives Democrats a 102-101 majority in the House. Republicans have a 28-22 majority in the Senate, creating a divided Legislature that has kept Democrats from passing priorities such as broadened protections for LGBTQ+ people and gun control measures and Republicans from wins on issues including school vouchers.

The divided Legislature has also meant Republican senators have been unable to take to voters proposed constitutional amendments limiting the governor's power and implementing voter ID.

Most recently the division has mired the state in a two-month budget stalemate after negotiations soured

over education funding, in part because of the voucher debate.

Powell identified affordable and dignified housing, a strong local economy and community assets such as robust recreation centers, libraries and strong infrastructure as top issues. Housing, she said, was a particular concern. People feel displaced by rising costs and seniors want to stay in their homes.

"I'm grateful. As someone who's been a lifelong public servant, this is the highest honor of my life, and I am so excited to be able to work on behalf of every single one of us," she said in an interview Tuesday night.

Powell, 32, is the director of workforce strategies for InnovatePGH, a public-private partnership aimed at making the city a leading tech hub. She previously worked in Washington, D.C., for U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Hakeem Jeffries.

"I joke, but truly I've had the honor of holding every job in government except this one," she said previously.

Powell will fill the vacancy left by progressive Democrat Sara Innamorato, who resigned in July to pursue local office in Allegheny County. She defeated Republican Erin Connolly Autenreith in the heavily Democratic district.

Autenreith said in a phone interview Tuesday night that she hopes the Legislature tackles her top priorities — funding for police, improvements in education and increasing jobs in Allegheny County. She hopes to continue working with Republican candidates in her role as Republican committee chair in Shaler.

The House is due back at the Capitol next week to resume work on a long-overdue state budget, though Powell's victory may not be certified until early October, a spokesperson for the county said.

Majority Leader Rep. Matt Bradford said fellow Democratic lawmakers welcomed Powell to the House and "we look forward to continuing our work as the majority to move our commonwealth forward."

Texas prisoner accused of killing 22 older women is slain by cellmate while serving life sentence

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — A Texas prisoner accused of killing 22 older women over two years, preying on them so he could steal jewelry and other valuables, was slain Tuesday by his cellmate while serving a life sentence, prison officials said.

Billy Chemirmir, 50, who was convicted last year in the slayings of two women, was found dead in his cell at a prison in rural East Texas, Texas Department of Criminal Justice spokesperson Hannah Haney said. He was killed by his cellmate who was also serving a prison sentence for murder, according to Haney.

Chemirmir's death comes about two weeks after Texas' 100 prisons were placed on a rare statewide lockdown because of a rise in the number of killings inside the facilities, which prisons officials have said were related to drugs.

Haney did not release the name of the cellmate, how Chemirmir was killed or what may have led to the slaying.

Family members of those he was accused of killing expressed shock and relief at the news.

"My mother died in fear. This man did not have a peaceful passing. There's some relief in feeling that he didn't get off easily," Shannon Dion, whose 92-year-old mother, Doris Gleason, was among those Chemirmir was charged with killing, said at a news conference.

Time after time, the deaths in Dallas and nearby cities were initially determined to be from natural causes, even as family members raised alarm about missing jewelry.

Chemirmir was caught after a 91-year-old woman survived a 2018 attack and told police a man had forced his way into her apartment at an independent living community for seniors, tried to smother her with a pillow and took her jewelry.

Police said they found Chemirmir the following day in the parking lot of his apartment complex holding jewelry and cash, having just thrown away a large red jewelry box. Documents in the jewelry box led them to the home of Lu Thi Harris, 81, who was dead in her bedroom.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 60 of 79

After Chemirmir's arrest, police across the area reexamined deaths, and the charges against him grew. Many of the victims' children have said they were left perplexed by the deaths at the time, as their mothers, though older, were still healthy and active.

The first capital murder trial of Chemirmir for the slaying of Harris ended in mistrial in Dallas County. He was later convicted in a retrial for Harris' death and was then convicted of a second killing in the death of Mary Brooks, 87.

Following his second conviction, family members of those Chemirmir was accused of killing gathered in a Dallas courtroom to face him. Ellen French House showed Chemirmir two photos of her mother: one of Norma French alive, the other after the 85-year-old was killed.

"This is my beautiful mother," House said as she displayed the first photo. "This is my mother after you pried her wedding ring off of her finger that she couldn't even get off."

Most of the victims lived in apartments at independent living communities for older people. One woman who lived in a private home was the widow of a man Chemirmir cared for while working as an at-home caregiver.

Chemirmir had been indicted on 22 capital murder charges. Thirteen of the charges were in Dallas County, while nine were in neighboring Collin County. Following the two convictions in Dallas County, prosecutors dismissed the remaining 11 charges there. They did not seek the death penalty. Last month, Collin County prosecutors said they also would not seek the death penalty.

Chemirmir, who maintained his innocence, was serving two sentences of life without the possibility of parole. He was imprisoned at the Coffield Unit in Tennessee Colony, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) southeast of Dallas.

Chemirmir's attorney, Phillip Hayes, said his death is "just a horrible tragedy."

"Nobody deserves to be killed at any point, especially when you are in a place you're being held against your will," Hayes said.

Earlier this month, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice said it was implementing lockdown measures in response to "a rise in dangerous contraband and drug-related inmate homicides." At the time of that Sept. 6 announcement, the department said there had been 16 inmate-on-inmate homicides so far this year. In 2021, there were nine such killings; in 2022, there were seven.

With the lockdown, the prisons limited inmates' movement and their contact with outsiders. In addition, inmates and staff were undergoing intensified searches. A heightened drug testing protocol was also implemented.

Department spokesperson Amanda Hernandez said that as comprehensive searches were completed, units have been resuming normal operations. She said that as of Tuesday, the lockdown had been lifted at 75 units. The Coffield Unit, where Chemirmir was imprisoned, was among 25 units still under lockdown.

Haney said the Office of Inspector General is investigating his death.

This story has been corrected to show that Chemirmir was indicted in the deaths of 22 women, not 18 women.

Sacramento prosecutor sues California's capital city over failure to clean up homeless encampments

By TRÂN NGUYỄN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Sacramento's top prosecutor is suing the city's leaders over failure to cleanup homeless encampments, escalating a monthslong dispute with leaders in California's capital city.

County District Attorney Thien Ho announced the lawsuit Tuesday during a news conference in Sacramento, saying the city is seeing a "collapse into chaos" that he said reflects the "erosion of everyday life." A group of residents and business owners also filed a companion lawsuit against the city.

Ho said his office had asked the city to enforce local laws around sidewalk obstruction and to create

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 61 of 79

additional professionally operated camping sites, but that the city did not.

The lawsuit includes accounts from dozens of city residents living around 14 encampments. Some homeowners recounted being threatened with firearms at their front door and having their properties broken into and vandalized — which has driven some from their homes. Local business owners said they have spent thousands of dollars to upgrade their security systems after their workers were assaulted by homeless people, while calls to city officials seeking help have gone unanswered, the lawsuit said.

“This is a model for the people to stand up and hold their government accountable,” Ho said in an interview Tuesday. “All I’m asking is the city do its job.”

Sacramento County had nearly 9,300 homeless people in 2022, based on data from the annual Point in Time count. That was up 67% from 2019. Roughly three-quarters of the county’s homeless population is unsheltered, and the majority of that group are living on Sacramento streets.

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg said Ho was politicizing the issue. The city has added 1,200 emergency shelter beds, passed ordinances to protect sidewalks and schools and has created more affordable housing, Steinberg said in a statement.

The city is trying to avoid “the futile trap of just moving people endlessly from one block to the next,” Steinberg said. People’s frustrations are “absolutely justified” but Ho’s actions are a “performative distraction,” he said.

“The city needs real partnership from the region’s leaders, not politics and lawsuits,” he said.

Homeless tent encampments have grown visibly in cities across the U.S. but especially in California, which is home to nearly one-third of unhoused people in the country.

Ho had threatened in August to file charges against city officials if they didn’t implement changes within 30 days. In a letter to the city, Ho demanded that Sacramento implement a daytime camping ban where homeless people have to put their belongings in storage between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m., among other rules.

City Attorney Susana Alcalá Wood’s office has also repeatedly urged Ho to work with the city to address the issue, she said.

“It sadly appears the DA would rather point fingers and cast blame than partner to achieve meaningful solutions for our community,” Alcalá Wood said in a statement.

Ho, elected in 2022 after vowing on the campaign trail to address the city’s homelessness crisis, said he’s asked the city to share real-time data about available shelter beds with law enforcement. He anticipates the lawsuit will go to trial and hopes a jury will agree with what he has proposed.

“This is a rare opportunity — a rare opportunity — for us to effectuate meaningful, efficient means of getting the critically, chronically unhoused off the streets,” Ho said.

Ho said he supports a variety of solutions including enforcing laws and establishing new programs to provide services to people facing addiction or mental health issues. He said he supports a statewide bond measure that would go toward building more treatment facilities. Voters will weigh in on that measure next year. He also backs the proposed changes in the state’s conservatorship system that would make it easier for authorities to mandate treatment for those with alcohol and drug use disorders.

The dispute between the district attorney and the city was further complicated by a lawsuit filed by a homeless advocacy group earlier this year that resulted in an order from a federal judge temporarily banning the city from clearing homeless encampments during extreme heat. That order is now lifted but the group wants to see it extended.

The attorney for the homeless coalition also filed a complaint with the state bar this month, saying Ho abused his power by pushing the city to clear encampments when the order was in place.

Ho’s news conference included testimony from residents who say the city is not providing resources to deal with homelessness. Emily Webb said people living an encampment near her home have trespassed on her property, blocked her driveway and threatened her family, but city officials have done little to clear the camp.

“We’re losing sleep and exhausted from this stress,” she said Tuesday. “We are beyond frustrated and no longer feel comfortable or safe in our home.”

Critics have said encampments are unsanitary and lawless, and block children, older residents and dis-

abled people from using public space such as sidewalks. They say allowing people to deteriorate outdoors is neither humane nor compassionate.

But advocates for homeless people say they can't alleviate the crisis without more investment in affordable housing and services, and that camping bans and encampment sweeps unnecessarily traumatize homeless people.

Colombia announces cease-fire with a group that split off from the FARC rebels

By MANUEL RUEDA undefined

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombia's government and one of the nation's last remaining rebel groups announced Tuesday that they will start peace talks next month, and enter a 10-month cease-fire that is expected to decrease violence against civilians.

The agreement between the Colombian government and the rebel group known as FARC-EMC comes as President Gustavo Petro tries to bolster his plans to pacify rural areas of Colombia by negotiating simultaneously with all of the nation's remaining rebel factions, under his "total peace" strategy.

In August the Petro administration brokered a six-month cease-fire with the National Liberation Army, the nation's largest remaining rebel group, and also set up a committee that will decide how community groups will participate in peace talks with that group.

The FARC-EMC are a splinter group of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. The splinter group refused to join a 2016 peace deal between the main FARC group and the government, in which more than 12,000 fighters laid down their guns.

The group is believed to have around 3,000 fighters and has recently been active in southwest Colombia, as well as in the provinces of Arauca and North Santander, on the nation's eastern border with Venezuela.

Talks between the government and FARC-EMC will begin on Oct. 8 in Tibu, a municipality on Colombia's eastern border that has long been affected by fighting between the government, drug cartels, and rebel groups.

FARC-EMC negotiators said Tuesday that their group will not interfere in municipal elections that will be held across the country at the end of October, and invited citizens in areas under the group's influence to participate "freely" in the vote.

The government and the rebel group also issued a joint statement which said that the peace talks will seek to "dignify" the living conditions of Colombians who have "been victims social inequalities and armed confrontation."

This will be the second cease-fire between the government and the FARC-EMC in less than a year. A previous ceasefire began in December of last year, but broke down in May after the rebel group executed four indigenous teenagers who had escaped from one of the group's camps in southern Colombia, after they were forcibly recruited.

Follow AP's coverage of Latin America and the Caribbean at <https://apnews.com/hub/latin-america>

Deion Sanders condemns death threats against player whose late hit left Hunter with lacerated liver

By PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writer

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Deion Sanders stood up for Henry Blackburn on Tuesday after the Colorado State safety received death threats for a late hit that sent Colorado's two-way star Travis Hunter to the hospital with a lacerated liver.

"That's absurd for people to be threatened," the Colorado coach said at his weekly news conference. "I don't mind getting death threats. I get them every week. But a kid, it's not good. ... He does not deserve a death threat over a game. At the end of the day, this is a game — someone must win, someone must

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 63 of 79

lose. Everybody continues their life the next day. Very unfortunate.”

Blackburn delivered a late blow to Hunter’s midsection on an incomplete pass in the first quarter of the Rocky Mountain Showdown last weekend. The Rams’ senior drew a flag for unnecessary roughness, one of 17 penalties the Rams committed in the 43-35 double-overtime loss to the Buffaloes. Hunter went to the hospital for further evaluation.

Sanders said he has forgiven Blackburn and so has Hunter, who doesn’t have a definitive timeline for a return. Sanders said there is no place for the threats directed toward Blackburn and his family.

“Henry Blackburn is a good player who played a phenomenal game,” said Sanders, whose 19th-ranked Buffaloes (3-0) travel to No. 10 Oregon on Saturday before hosting No. 5 Southern Cal next week. “He made a tremendous hit on Travis on the sideline. You could call it dirty, you could call it he was just playing the game of football. But whatever it was, it does not constitute that he should be receiving death threats.”

Colorado State coach Jay Norvell said Monday that Blackburn, who’s from Boulder, and his family had their address posted on social media. Norvell also added that police were involved given the nature of the comments.

“I’m saddened if there’s any of our fans, that’s on the other side of those threats,” Sanders said. “I would hope and pray not, but that kid was just playing (to) the best of his ability. And he made a mistake. ... Let’s move on. That kid does not deserve that.”

In his online streaming show, Hunter said of Blackburn’s hit: “He did what he was supposed to do. It’s football. Something bad is going to happen on the field sooner or later. You’ve got to get up and fight again.”

Buff’s safety Shilo Sanders isn’t quite over the hit. Hunter is one of his good friends and they trade off ordering food for each other before games.

“I really wanted to whoop that dude that did that to him, for real, after the game or something,” he said. “If I see him just around here somewhere, he got to watch out. But that really made me mad, just seeing him try to play dirty like that. That was crazy.”

Hunter rarely came off the field for the Buffaloes in wins over TCU and Nebraska. He has an interception and nine tackles on defense. He’s also caught 16 passes for 213 yards from quarterback Shedeur Sanders.

“I absolutely hate that for Travis. He’s a dynamic kid,” Oregon coach Dan Lanning said. “He’s got a special personality and obviously is tremendous on the football field. He certainly gave them an edge. I hope he gets healthy soon. I hate to not get to see him play in this game because he’s meant for a stage like this, the stage that we’re going to have this Saturday.”

As for who may replace Hunter, Deion Sanders said that’s a difficult assignment.

“No one in the country that can fill Travis Hunter’s shoes,” Sanders said. “You’ve got to understand, he’s a unique player. He’s one of a kind. He’s the best player on offense, the best player on defense. That’s just who he is — in the country, not just on his team.

“So having guys step up, they’ve just got to step up and do the job we’re asking them to do.”

Notes: The Buffaloes sold out their Nov. 11 game against Arizona. It’s the first time in school history the team has sold out all six home games. Colorado’s game against Colorado State that ended early Sunday in most parts of the nation drew 9.3 million viewers. It was the most-watched late-night college football game ever on ESPN, the network said. “This is incredible,” Sanders said. “The kids are getting eyeballs, they’re getting viewers.” ... Colorado safety Shilo Sanders was the Pac-12 defensive player of the week for returning an interception 80 yards for a score and forcing a fumble.

AP Sports Writer Anne M. Peterson contributed to this report.

AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-football-poll>

Russia has turned food, energy and even children into weapons against Ukraine, Zelenskyy says at UN

By JENNIFER PELTZ and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that Russia is “weaponizing” everything from food and energy to abducted children in its war against Ukraine — and he warned world leaders that the same could happen to them.

“When hatred is weaponized against one nation, it never stops there,” he said at the U.N. General Assembly’s annual top-level meeting. “The goal of the present war against Ukraine is to turn our land, our people, our lives, our resources into weapons against you — against the international rules-based order.”

The war in Ukraine has deepened major global supply disruptions caused by the pandemic, driving a huge spike in food and energy prices, jolting the global economy and increasing hardship in many developing countries.

Decades-old energy supply channels to Europe from Russia, a major oil and gas producer, were halted or severely disrupted by the war due to sanctions, trade disputes, pipeline shutoffs and a major push by Western countries to find alternative sources. Both Russia and Ukraine also are major grain exporters, and Russia withdrew this past summer from a deal that allowed shipments of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.

Zelenskyy pointed to the food and fuel crunches, and he highlighted what Ukraine says were kidnappings of at least tens of thousands of children taken from Ukraine after Moscow’s invasion: “What will happen to them?”

“Those children in Russia are taught to hate Ukraine, and all ties with their families are broken. And this is clearly a genocide,” Zelenskyy said in remarks that ran 15 minutes — the meeting’s often-disregarded time limit.

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant in March for Russian President Vladimir Putin and another official, accusing them of abducting children from Ukraine. Russian officials have denied any forced transfers of children, saying some Ukrainian youngsters are in foster care.

Russia gets its chance to address the General Assembly on Saturday. Deputy U.N. Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky sat in Russia’s seat during Zelenskyy’s address.

“Did he speak?” Polyansky said with a wry smile when an Associated Press reporter asked about his reaction to the address. “I didn’t notice he was speaking. I was on my phone.”

Zelenskyy took to the world stage at a sensitive point in his country’s campaign to maintain international support for its fight. Nearly 19 months after Moscow launched a full-scale invasion, Ukrainian forces are three months into a counteroffensive that has not gone as fast or as well as initially hoped.

Ukraine and its allies cast the country’s cause as a battle for the rule of international law, for the sovereignty of every country with a powerful and potentially expansionist neighbor, and for the stability of global food and energy supplies.

“We must stand up to this naked aggression today and deter other would-be aggressors tomorrow,” U.S. President Joe Biden told the assembly Tuesday in his own speech. As he pledged support to Ukraine, there was a round of applause, including from Zelenskyy.

Russia insists its war is justified, claiming that it is defending Russian speakers in Ukraine from a hostile government and protecting Russian interests against NATO encroachment, and more.

The war has raged longer and losses have been greater than Russia hoped, and the fighting has spurred widespread international condemnation against Moscow.

But the Kremlin also has influential friends that haven’t joined the chorus of censure: China and India, for instance, have staked out neutral positions. So have many Middle Eastern and African nations. Many Latin American and Caribbean countries prefer to focus world attention on other global issues, including climate change and conflict in Africa.

Moscow is keen to display its global influence and its relationship with China and insists that it cannot be internationally isolated by the U.S. and its European allies.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 65 of 79

Meanwhile, Ukraine is concerned that backing from its allies may be ebbing. They have supplied billions of dollars' worth of arms but fear that their stockpiles are shrinking and that defense contractors are struggling to boost production lines.

Hours before Zelenskyy spoke at the U.N., allied defense leaders convened at a U.S. military base in Germany to discuss next steps. Some nations pledged further money and weapons. But a key sticking point is whether to supply longer-range missiles that Kyiv insists it needs.

The U.S. Congress is weighing Biden's request to provide as much as \$24 billion more in military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, amid a growing partisan divide over spending on the conflict. Zelenskyy is scheduled to spend time Thursday on Capitol Hill and to meet with Biden at the White House.

After landing Monday in New York, Zelenskyy suggested that the U.N. needs to answer for allowing his country's invader a seat at the tables of power.

If there is still "a place for Russian terrorists" in the United Nations, "it's a question to all the members of the United Nations," Zelenskyy said after visiting wounded Ukrainian service members at Staten Island University Hospital.

Russia is a permanent, veto-wielding member of the U.N. Security Council, which is entrusted with maintaining international peace and security.

Zelenskyy took the United Nations to task even before the war. In one memorable example, he lamented at the General Assembly in 2021 that the U.N. was "a retired superhero who's long forgotten how great they once were."

A former comedian and actor who took office in 2019, Zelenskyy later became a wartime leader, wearing military fatigues, rallying citizens at home and appearing virtually and in person before numerous international bodies.

At the Staten Island hospital, he awarded medals to military members who had lost limbs. With help from a New Jersey-based charity called Kind Deeds, 18 troops have been fitted for prostheses and are undergoing outpatient physical therapy, hospital leaders said.

"We all will be waiting for you back home," Zelenskyy told those he met. "We absolutely need every one of you."

Gatopoulos reported from Athens. Associated Press writer Edith M. Lederer contributed from the United Nations.

Russian drone attack on a city in western Ukraine sparks an inferno at a warehouse and kills 1

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched a massive drone attack on the western city of Lviv early Tuesday, burning down a warehouse said to house humanitarian supplies and killing one man, Ukrainian authorities said. It was one of at least three deadly attacks in different cities.

Ukraine intercepted most of the 30 Shahed drones overnight, the country's air force said. But drones that got through air defense systems sparked an inferno at the industrial storage facility, Gov. Maksym Kozytsky said.

The U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine condemned the drone strikes and said they had burned down a charity's warehouse that contained vital relief supplies. Denise Brown said the attack violated international humanitarian law that protects workers, facilities and supplies.

"Attacks impacting humanitarian assets have escalated throughout the year and ultimately impact those who are suffering the horrific consequences of the war," Brown said.

In other Russian attacks, a guided aerial bomb killed three civilians in Kupyansk, a city in the eastern Kharkiv region, and an artillery strike in Kherson in the south struck a bus, killing a police sergeant and wounding two men, Ukrainian officials said. That strike also torched a warehouse.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February last year. Troops from both sides are currently engaged in fierce

battles in the country's east, where Ukrainian forces are making slow but steady advances as part of a grinding counteroffensive.

On Tuesday, Russia blamed Ukraine for an explosion that struck a market in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region two weeks ago, killing at least 16 people and injuring more than 30 others.

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Ukraine had fired the missile from a Buk surface-to-air missile system which struck the city of Kostiantynivka on Sept. 6. In her Telegram post, she pointed to a New York Times investigation published Monday, which cited evidence suggesting it was an errant Ukrainian missile that exploded over the market.

"Even if the action wasn't premeditated, it's obvious to everyone that a complete demilitarization of the Kyiv regime isn't merely a demand but an acute necessity," Zakharova declared.

Ukraine's SBU state security service rejected the findings of the New York Times report, saying that an ongoing investigation so far showed the attack was carried out by Russia. Missile fragments found at the scene were identified as a S-300 surface-to-air missile, it said.

Doubts have emerged about the origin of the strike after the NYT report, which cited evidence — including missile fragments, satellite imagery and witnesses — that suggested Ukraine had fired an air defense missile that failed to hit its intended target.

Kyiv blamed Russia for the attack at the time, with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy calling it a "deliberate" strike at a civilian area. The White House also blamed Russia for the attack, one of the deadliest bombardments of civilians in the 18-month-old war.

Throughout the war, Russian officials have repeatedly claimed without offering evidence that strikes on apartment buildings and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine came from the Ukrainian forces. It was the case again with the Sept. 6 strike on Kostyantynivka, when Russian officials quickly pointed the finger at Ukraine.

Speaking at the United Nations after the attack, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the West of covering up what he described as a "horrible crime and a terrible provocation by Ukraine."

Zelenskyy meanwhile was in New York preparing to address the U.N. General Assembly and the Security Council before traveling to Washington on Thursday to meet with lawmakers and President Joe Biden.

Zelenskyy has continued to drum up funding and support for new weapons as the counteroffensive Ukraine launched in June approaches what could be its final weeks before wet weather slows progress. Ukraine has made small advances but no major breakthroughs.

Other allies pledged money and weapons at a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group in Germany.

Associated Press writers James Heintz in Tallinn, Estonia and Brian Melley in London contributed to this report.

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

Florida jury pool could give Trump an advantage in classified documents case

By ERIC TUCKER and ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The classified documents indictment of Donald Trump would seem, on paper at least, to be the most straightforward of the four criminal cases the former president is facing.

Reams of classified files were stashed in Trump's office and storage room and he boastfully showed off to guests one such document he acknowledged was "secret," federal prosecutors have alleged. His own lawyer is quoted in the indictment as saying Trump encouraged him to mislead investigators who demanded the documents back, and prosecutors have since secured the cooperation of a Mar-a-Lago staffer who says the ex-president asked about deleting surveillance footage at the Palm Beach property.

But that doesn't make the path to conviction easy, particularly with the case set for trial in a Florida courthouse expected to draw its jury pool from a conservative-leaning region of the state that supported Trump in the 2020 election. Those built-in demographics may be a challenge for prosecutors despite the

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 67 of 79

evidence at their disposal, underscoring the impossibility of untangling the law from politics in an election-year trial involving a former president who is seeking to return to the White House.

"The more conservative the counties, the highest chance he has to find jurors that would be sympathetic with him," said Richard Kibbey, a criminal defense attorney in Stuart, Florida, part of the Fort Pierce district where the jury pool is expected to be taken from.

When it comes to finding truly impartial jurors, he added, "It's going to be very difficult given the political climate across the country. Jurors will bring their own biases into the court room."

Unless the trial location is moved or its date pushed back, it will take place starting next May in Fort Pierce before U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee who drew scrutiny last year for granting a Trump team request to appoint an independent arbiter to review the classified documents seized from Mar-a-Lago. That decision was reversed by a unanimous three-judge appeals panel.

For months, a grand jury in Washington had been hearing testimony in the case, leading to expectations that any charges against Trump would be brought there. Instead, the indictment wound up being filed in the Southern District of Florida, enabling special counsel Jack Smith's team to avoid any protracted fights with Trump's lawyers over the appropriate venue for the case but creating the potential for a less desirable jury pool, at least politically.

The jury selection process is meant to weed out personal or partisan bias that could taint the case, with jurors instructed to make decisions solely on the basis of the evidence they hear. But in a federal court system where convictions overwhelmingly outnumber acquittals, defense lawyers — and prosecutors, for that matter — could nonetheless look to jury selection as a way to elicit an edge.

"Picking a jury is an art. It's not a science. And whether you're a prosecutor or a defense attorney, you use everything in your arsenal to seat the best jury you can get for your case," said Michael Sherwin, a former federal prosecutor in Miami who served during the Trump administration as acting U.S. Attorney in Washington.

"You want to ensure that you have the best people in that jury box that are going to be receptive to your message. So from that perspective, if I'm DOJ, I'd much rather have a Miami jury pool than a Fort Pierce jury pool," he added.

Given its sprawling geographic size, the district has five courthouses — in Key West, Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Fort Pierce. The indictment itself was filed in West Palm, the city with the closest courthouse to Mar-a-Lago.

It was then randomly assigned to Cannon, who despite sitting in Fort Pierce also hears cases in West Palm, the clerk's office said in an email to The Associated Press.

But such a blockbuster trial, with a deluge of media, could test the resources of a courthouse and region far less accustomed to headline-generating events than is, for instance, Miami.

"The bigger issue is going to become, can the Fort Pierce courtroom handle this case? And if it can't, where are they going to send it?" said David Weinstein, a Florida lawyer and former federal prosecutor. "And if they send it to Miami, how are they going to get the jurors there because technically it's not a Miami case."

Jurors for Fort Pierce trials are drawn from five counties, according to the written jury plan for the Southern District of Florida: St. Lucie, Martin, Indian River, Okeechobee and Highlands.

Trump won each of those counties. His victory margin was particularly wide in Okeechobee, where he won with 71.8% of the votes. In St. Lucie, home to Fort Pierce, he won by only 50.4%, but Republicans have continued to gain ground there, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis was reelected last year with more than 59% of the vote there.

That dynamic stands apart from the more heavily Democratic cities — New York, Washington and Atlanta — where Trump also faces charges. Trump lawyers tried unsuccessfully to force the recusal of the judge in the New York case and have turned to the same tactic in Washington, saying that judge, Tanya Chutkan, has made public comments that cast doubt on her ability to be fair. The request is pending.

Lawyers in the Washington case have attacked the indictment as novel and laden with complicated constitutional questions, suggesting they'll invoke arguments involving the First Amendment and presidential

immunity. The Florida defense team, which was reorganized after the indictment, has not publicly detailed its defenses yet.

But despite the importance of jury selection and the fact that both sides will look to jury selection to pick the best possible panel for their respective cases, the outcome may still come down to which team has the best evidence and arguments.

"It's a high-profile defendant, but I suspect that when push comes to shove, most people don't make all of their important decisions based on politics," said Richard Serafini, a Florida defense lawyer and former Justice Department official.

Tucker reported from Washington.

Ray Epps, ex-Marine targeted by a Jan. 6 conspiracy theory, is charged with a misdemeanor in riot

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Ray Epps, a former Marine who became the target of a Jan. 6, 2021, conspiracy theory, has been charged with a misdemeanor offense in connection with the U.S. Capitol riot and is expected to plead guilty, according to court papers filed Tuesday.

Epps, who claimed in a lawsuit filed this year that Fox News Channel made him a scapegoat for the Capitol riot, is charged with disorderly or disruptive conduct on restricted grounds, court records show.

Epps' attorney, Edward J. Ungvarsky, said in an email that the case was filed with an anticipation that Epps would plead guilty to the charge. The judge has scheduled a plea agreement hearing for Wednesday.

Epps, a one-time supporter of President Donald Trump who has said he went to Washington to protest the 2020 election Trump lost to Joe Biden, was falsely accused by Fox of being a government agent who was whipping up trouble that would be blamed on Trump supporters, his lawsuit claims.

FBI Director Christopher Wray, in an appearance before the House Judiciary Committee in July, denied having any knowledge of Epps being a "secret government agent."

"I will say this notion that somehow the violence at the Capitol on January 6 was part of some operation orchestrated by FBI sources and agents is ludicrous," Wray told lawmakers.

In an interview that aired earlier this year with CBS' "60 Minutes," Epps, of Mesa, Arizona, described being "on the run," after death threats forced him and his wife to sell their home. At the time of the interview, they were living in a recreational vehicle in the Rocky Mountains, according to "60 Minutes."

"I had to do the necessary things to keep my family safe," Epps said.

Although Epps' lawsuit mentions Fox's Laura Ingraham and Will Cain, former Fox host Tucker Carlson is cited as the leader in promoting the theory. Epps was featured in more than two dozen segments on Carlson's prime-time show, the lawsuit said. Messages seeking comment were sent Tuesday to Fox News and a lawyer for Carlson.

Epps' lawsuit against Fox says the Justice Department told him in May that he faces criminal charges for his actions on Jan. 6 and blames that on "the relentless attacks by Fox and Mr. Carlson and the resulting political pressure."

The lawsuit includes threatening messages Epps says he received, including one that reads, "Epps, sleep with one eye open."

During his January 2022 interview with the Jan. 6 House Committee, Epps, who worked as a roofer after serving four years as infantry in the U.S. Marine Corps, told investigators that he never worked for the FBI.

"The only time I've been involved with the government was when I was a Marine in the United States Marine Corps," Epps said.

Epps was a previously member of the far-right Oath Keepers extremist group, serving as an Arizona chapter leader before parting ways with the anti-government group a few years before the Jan. 6 attack, he said. He said the Oath Keepers were "too radical" for him. Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes and other members were convicted of seditious conspiracy in the Jan. 6 attack.

Asked if he had any insight as to why he hadn't been charged with a crime for his role in the riot, Epps told House investigators that he was "trying to stop the violence, trying to keep people from getting themselves in more trouble."

Epps said he was getting death threats and his grandchildren were "being picked on at school because of what their grandad did."

More than 1,100 people have been charged with federal crimes stemming from the Jan. 6 riot, and authorities continue to regularly bring new cases nearly three years later. Roughly 670 defendants have pleaded guilty to charges, and of those, more than 480 pleaded guilty to misdemeanors only, according to an Associated Press analysis of court records.

Richer reported from Boston. Associated Press reporters David Bauder contributed from New York.

Biden exhorts world leaders at the UN to stand up to Russia, warns not to let Ukraine 'be carved up'

By AAMER MADHANI and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — President Joe Biden made his case before the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday that the world must remain united in defending Ukraine against Russian aggression, warning that no nation can be secure if "we allow Ukraine to be carved up" as he tries to rally support for Kyiv's effort to repel a nearly 19-month-old Russian invasion that has no end in sight.

The U.S. president called on world leaders to not let support for Ukraine diminish, arguing that Russia is counting on countries to grow tired of prolonged conflict in Kyiv which will "allow it to brutalize Ukraine without consequence." Russia alone is standing in the way of a resolution, Biden argued, saying that Moscow's price for peace was "Ukraine's capitulation, Ukraine's territory and Ukraine's children."

"I ask you this: If we abandon the core principles of the United States to appease an aggressor, can any member state in this body feel confident that they are protected?" Biden said in his address. "If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure?"

He continued: "I'd respectfully suggest the answer is no."

The president's forceful rhetoric on Ukraine appeared aimed not just for a global audience but for Washington, where an increasingly isolationist strain of the Republican Party is jeopardizing the prospects of the U.S. successfully replenishing the steady flow of aid that has gone to Kyiv since the war began in February 2022.

The Biden administration has asked Congress to greenlight an additional \$24 billion in security and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but Republicans who control the House have all but ignored that request as lawmakers scramble to ensure government funding remains flowing beyond the end of September. Animated by the views of former President Donald Trump, a vocal faction of House Republicans remain steadfastly opposed to more Ukraine aid, even as other GOP lawmakers, primarily in the Senate, continue to advocate support for Kyiv to dissuade Russia from spreading its attacks beyond Ukraine's borders.

"We have to stand up to this naked aggression today and deter other would-be aggressors tomorrow," Biden said in his U.N. address. "That's why the United States - together with our allies and partners around the world — will continue to stand with the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity and their freedom."

Other senior members of the Biden administration were making their case on Tuesday, as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin pushed allied defense leaders in remarks at Ramstein Air Base in Germany to "dig deep" and provide more air defense systems for Ukraine to help the country wage its counteroffensive.

Indeed, the broader message is intended to resonate beyond Moscow and even Capitol Hill. Washington remains on guard against Chinese aggression in the South China Sea, where competing territorial claims have caused tension in the region. Beijing also wants to reunite the mainland with the self-governing island of Taiwan, a goal that raises the prospect of another war.

During his address, Biden described the partnerships that the U.S. government was fostering around

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 70 of 79

the globe — from Africa to the Indo-Pacific — that he said were creating economic, security and other advancements, even as he stressed that those relationships were not about “containing any country” — a clear reference to Beijing.

“When it comes to China, let me be clear and consistent,” Biden said. “We seek to responsibly manage competition between our countries so it does not tip into conflict. I’ve said we are for de-risking — not decoupling — with China.”

Biden emphasized that Beijing and Washington need to cooperate on climate, and referenced recent natural disasters — devastating heat waves, droughts and floods around the globe — as part of a “snapshot” that tells the “urgent story of what awaits us if we fail to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and begin to climate-proof the world.”

Despite his own emphasis on climate as a priority, Biden does not plan to attend a special summit on climate that U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres will host on Wednesday, where countries are encouraged to bring new ideas and proposals on how to further cut emissions and combat climate change. Officials played down Biden’s absence at the climate summit, and said John Kerry, the U.S. climate envoy, will attend in Biden’s place.

In his 30-minute address, Biden also repeatedly emphasized the value of institutions such as the United Nations and international coalitions that has helped the world confront significant challenges such as poverty and disease, as well as echoing his defense of democracy, a common theme of his presidency.

“We will not retreat from the values that make us strong,” Biden said. “We will defend democracy — our best tool to meet the challenges that we face around the world. And we’re working to show how democracy can deliver in ways that matter to people’s lives.”

The annual forum was a chance for Biden to showcase to other world leaders — and the 2024 U.S. electorate — that he’s reestablished U.S. leadership on the world stage that he says was diminished under Trump.

There were some notable absences as Biden addressed the General Assembly: British Prime Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Putin — the leaders of the other permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — are all skipping the gathering. U.S. officials downplayed that fact and instead emphasized the importance that Biden attaches to showing up at the annual diplomatic forum.

For Biden, the more important audience for Tuesday’s speech could be closer to home as he looks to make the case to voters that he’s skillfully handled a complicated foreign policy agenda and that the experience that comes with age has proved to be an asset. It’s an argument that the 80-year-old Biden is likely to continue to make to counter skepticism — even in his own Democratic Party — among voters who are concerned about his age.

After the speech, Biden sat down with Guterres, and later Tuesday met with leaders from the so-called C5 group of Central Asian nations, which include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Saying the cooperation among the nations is at “new heights,” Biden outlined several areas of collaboration including on critical minerals and disability rights.

Xi has stepped up his own courting of those countries. During his own summit in May with the Central Asian leaders, Xi promised to build more railway and other trade links with the region and proposed jointly developing oil and gas sources.

“We are stronger, and I genuinely believe the world is safer, when we stand together, our five nations,” Biden said following the closed-door meeting with the leaders.

Biden is scheduled to host talks Thursday at the White House with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Kim reported from Washington.

House Republicans set first Biden impeachment inquiry hearing for Sept. 28

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans plan to hold their first hearing next week in their impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden.

The hearing — scheduled for Sept. 28 — is expected to focus on “constitutional and legal questions” that surround the allegations of Biden’s involvement in his son Hunter’s overseas businesses, according to a spokesperson for the House Oversight Committee.

Republicans — led by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy — have contended in recent weeks that Biden’s actions from his time as vice president show a “culture of corruption,” and that his son used the “Biden brand” to advance his business with foreign clients.

The spokesperson also said Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., chairman of Oversight, plans to issue subpoenas for the personal and business bank records of Hunter Biden and the president’s brother James Biden “as early as this week.” McCarthy appointed Comer to lead the inquiry in coordination with Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan and Ways & Means Chairman Jason Smith.

The White House has called the effort by House Republicans in the midst of the presidential campaign “extreme politics at its worst.”

“Staging a political stunt hearing in the waning days before they may shut down the government reveals their true priorities: To them, baseless personal attacks on President Biden are more important than preventing a government shutdown and the pain it would inflict on American families,” Ian Sams, a White House spokesman, said in a statement Tuesday.

McCarthy announced the impeachment inquiry last week after facing mounting pressure from his right flank to take action against Biden or risk being ousted from his leadership job. At the same time, the speaker is struggling to pass legislation needed to avoid a federal government shutdown at the end of the month.

The California lawmaker launched the inquiry without a House vote, and it’s unclear if he would have enough support to approve it from his slim GOP majority. Some lawmakers have criticized the evidence so far as not reaching the Constitution’s bar of “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

An inquiry is a step closer to an impeachment of the president, a constitutional tool which until recently was rare in Congress.

But McCarthy and other Republicans have been facing months of direct challenges from Trump — who is now the Republican front-runner to challenge Biden in next year’s election — to move forward with proceedings against his opponent. The action also is seen as an effort to distract attention from the indicted former president’s legal challenges and turn a negative spotlight on Biden.

The impeachment inquiry is expected to build upon the work that Comer and others have done since gaining the House majority in January. There are several investigative lanes but Comer has been tasked with following the money that went through Biden’s son’s and brother’s various businesses accounts.

The chairman has claimed repeatedly that the Biden family engaged in an influence-peddling scheme, but has yet to directly tie any of that to the president himself.

Republicans have focused much attention on an unverified tip to the FBI that alleged a bribery scheme involving Biden when he was vice president. The bribery claim, which emerged in 2019 and was part of Trump’s first impeachment, relates to the allegation that Biden pressured Ukraine to fire its top prosecutor in order to stop an investigation into Burisma, the oil-and-gas company where Hunter Biden was on the board.

Democrats have countered that the Justice Department investigated the Burisma claim when Trump was president and closed the matter after eight months, finding insufficient evidence to pursue it further. Other countries were also pushing for the firing of the Ukrainian official, viewing him as corrupt. And a former business partner of Hunter Biden’s has testified to Congress that the bribery allegation is untrue.

The UN chief summons world leaders to action. But, he says, they seem 'incapable of coming together'

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Insisting that international cooperation is critical, the United Nations chief delivered a dire warning to leaders from across the world Tuesday, declaring that the planet is becoming unhinged with mounting global challenges and geopolitical tensions — and warning that “we seem incapable of coming together to respond.”

Addressing presidents and prime ministers, monarchs and ministers at the opening of the U.N. General Assembly’s high-level meeting, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres ticked off a list of “existential threats” the world is facing, from climate change to disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence.

“Our world is becoming unhinged. Geopolitical tensions are rising. Global challenges are mounting. And we seem incapable of coming together to respond,” Guterres told the people who run the world’s nations. He said that the United Nations — and the ways that countries cooperate — must evolve to meet the era.

“The world has changed. Our institutions have not,” Guterres said before the opening of the U.N. General Assembly’s General Debate. “We cannot effectively address problems as they are if institutions don’t reflect the world as it is. Instead of solving problems, they risk becoming part of the problem.”

All this is taking place. Guterres said, as the world is making a “chaotic transition” and rapidly moving from a brief period of “unipolarity” — domination by a single power, the United States — toward a multipolar world with many power centers. That is, he said, positive in many ways.

ADVOCATING AN EFFECTIVE ‘MULTIPOLAR’ WORLD

Guterres said a multipolar world needs strong, effective multilateral institutions where all countries work together to solve the world’s challenges. But the current institutions formed on the ashes of World War II, including the United Nations and its powerful Security Council and key global financial institutions, have not changed enough.

If these institutions are not reformed to reflect the world today, Guterres said the alternative is not maintaining the status quo; it is “further fragmentation.” He added: “It’s reform or rupture.”

Guterres warned that divides are deepening, among economic and military powers, between countries in the developed North and developing South, and between the global West and East.

“We are inching ever closed to a Great Fracture in economic and financial systems and trade relations,” he said, “one that threatens a single, open internet. (One) with diverging strategies on technology and artificial intelligence, and potentially clashing security frameworks.”

He said the world needs action now — not merely more words — and compromise to tackle the world’s challenges and adopt needed reforms.

LOTS OF LEADERS, BUT KEY ONES MISSING

This year’s week-long high-level U.N. gathering, the first full-on meeting of world leaders since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted travel, has 145 leaders scheduled to speak. It’s a large number that reflects the multitude of crises and conflicts.

But for the first time in years, U.S. President Joe Biden, who spoke soon after Guterres, is be the only leader from the five powerful veto-wielding nations on the U.N. Security Council to address the 193-member assembly.

China’s Xi Jinping, Russia’s Vladimir Putin, France’s Emmanuel Macron and Britain’s Rishi Sunak are all skipping the U.N. this year. That should put the spotlight on Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who will be making his first appearance at the assembly’s podium later Tuesday, and on Biden, who will be watched especially for his views on China, Russia and Ukraine.

Guterres sharply criticized Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, telling world leaders it is “Exhibit A” of countries breaking their pledge to uphold the U.N. Charter’s pledge for peace — and the mandate to guarantee the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all member nations.

Later, Biden echoed the sentiment. “I ask you this: If we abandon the core principles of the United States to appease an aggressor, can any member state in this body feel confident that they are protected?”

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 73 of 79

Biden said in his address. "If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure? He continued: "I'd respectfully suggest the answer is no."

This year's week-long session, the first full-on meeting of world leaders since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted travel, has 145 leaders scheduled to speak. It's a large number that reflects the multitude of crises and conflicts.

The absence of leaders from the four Security Council powers has caused grumbling from developing countries who want major global players to listen to their demands – including for money to start closing the growing gap between the world's haves and have-nots.

The G77, the major U.N. group of developing countries that now has 134 members including China, lobbied hard to make this year's global gathering focus on the 17 U.N. goals adopted by world leaders in 2015. Those are badly lagging at the halfway point to their 2030 due date.

At a two-day summit to kick-start action to achieve the goals, Guterres pointed to grim findings in a U.N. report in July. He said 15% of some 140 specific targets to achieve the 17 goals are on track. Many are going in the wrong direction, and not a single one is expected to be achieved in the next seven years.

HE TOLD OF A 'SAD SNAPSHOT' OF THE WORLD

Guterres opened his state-of-the-world address using the massive rainfall and dam collapses in the Libyan city of Derna as "a sad snapshot of the state of our world." Thousands of people lost their lives -- victims of years of conflict, climate chaos, leaders near and far who failed to restore peace, and all that "indifference."

He said the world needs to deal with the worsening climate emergency, escalating conflicts, "dramatic technological disruptions" and a global cost-of-living crisis that is increasing hunger and poverty.

At a two-day summit to kick-start action to achieve the goals, Guterres pointed to grim findings in a U.N. report in July. He said 15% of some 140 specific targets to achieve the United Nations' 17 "Sustainable Development Goals" are on track. Many are going in the wrong direction, and not a single one is expected to be achieved in the next seven years.

The wide-ranging goals include end extreme poverty and hunger, ensure every child gets a quality secondary education, achieve gender equality and make significant inroads in tackling climate change — all by 2030.

At the current rate, the report said, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty and 84 million children won't even be going to elementary school in 2030 – and it will take 286 years to reach equality between men and women.

Leaders from the 193 U.N. member nations adopted by consensus a political declaration that recognizes the goals are "in peril." But it reaffirms more than a dozen times, in different ways, leaders' commitment to achieve the goals, reiterating their individual importance.

The declaration is short on specifics, but Guterres said he was "deeply encouraged" by its commitment to improving developing countries' access to "the fuel required for SDG progress: finance." He pointed to its support for a stimulus of at least \$500 billion a year to boost the goals, aimed at offsetting challenging market conditions faced by developing countries.

Edith M. Lederer, chief U.N. correspondent for the AP, has been covering international affairs for more than 50 years.

For filmmakers, 'Oppenheimer's' \$900M-plus haul is an important moment for Hollywood and theaters

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Hopes were always high for Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer." The studio knew the film was great, and commercial. But no one in the industry expected that a long, talky, R-rated drama released at the height of the summer movie season would earn over \$900 million at the box office.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 74 of 79

After an early screening, "Dune" filmmaker Denis Villeneuve said he knew he'd just seen "a masterpiece." He even remembered saying that it would be a big success.

"But where it is right now has blown the roof off of my projection," Villeneuve told The Associated Press. "It's a three-hour movie about people talking about nuclear physics."

As of Monday, "Oppenheimer's" global total was nearly \$913 million, making it Nolan's third highest grossing film, trailing only the "Dark Knight" sequels. It's also the third biggest film of the year behind "Barbie" and "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" and the most successful biopic ever, surpassing "Bohemian Rhapsody." It's a staggering sum that has been driven by audiences of all ages and an enthusiasm for film and large format screenings.

"When you make a film, you hope that you're going to connect with an audience in some form or another," "Oppenheimer" producer Emma Thomas told the AP. "But, particularly with a three-hour film that has a serious subject and is challenging in many ways, this sort of success is beyond our wildest imaginings."

Even after nine weeks in theaters, 11 of the 25 screens capable of projecting the coveted IMAX 70mm prints (Nolan's preferred format) continued to play the film on some of the busiest screens, like the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles and the AMC Lincoln Square in New York.

"The reason we're still in those theaters is because the audience is demanding it," Thomas said. "This is not something that we can impose — I wish we could, but it's genuine."

Thomas, who is married to Nolan, has produced all of his films going back to his short "Doodlebug." From "Memento" and "The Prestige" to "Inception," "Interstellar" and "Dunkirk," their original films have often defied conventional box-office logic. With "Oppenheimer," they felt good about what they'd made but also know that the marketplace, and box-office tracking, has been a little unpredictable since the pandemic.

"Chris has always made films that challenge audiences," Thomas said. "He has faith in his audiences and, generally, they've met him where he is."

Their "pipe dream," she said, was that it would beat "Dunkirk's" opening weekend. Instead, it nearly doubled it. Now, "Oppenheimer" has many in the industry looking at the Universal Pictures release as a gratifying affirmation that projection and format aren't just the domain of a few. Mass audiences are interested too.

"When a filmmaker as strong as Chris is pointing a finger at you and telling you where to go...you listen... and audiences have been rewarded for it," filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson wrote in an email. "I know some film buffs who drove from El Paso to Dallas to see the film properly. That's about 18 hours round trip."

Twenty-four of the 25 top earning theaters showing "Oppenheimer" played it in IMAX 70mm or 70mm. Domestically, the 25 IMAX 70mm screens have grossed some \$20 million; standard 70mm locations accounted for over \$14 million. And this a decade after production of Kodak motion picture film stock nearly ceased.

"I don't think there's anyone who could disagree - seeing 'Oppenheimer' on film is superior in every single way," Anderson said. "Not to mention, people are tired of asking, 'Why would I go to a movie theater to watch TV?' Good question...you don't have to anymore."

Theaters rallied around "Oppenheimer" from the beginning. The historic TCL Chinese Theatre even brought a film projector back into operation and built a custom booth. It was an effort that was richly rewarded: "Oppenheimer" is the highest grossing film in its 97-year history with \$2.3 million and counting, passing the previous record holder, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," which grossed \$1.5 million in 15 weeks, after just four.

The highest grossing theater overall, though, is AMC Lincoln Square, where every IMAX 70mm showing was sold out for over four weeks. Both locations are among the 10 that will continue to present the film in IMAX 70mm in its 10th weekend. By contrast, "Dunkirk" finished its IMAX 70mm run in week eight.

What to make of theaters projecting movies on film often outgrossing the digital projection?

"I would call this is nature's way of healing," Anderson said.

Nolan, and other influential film enthusiasts like Anderson, Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino have been beating the drum for celluloid for years, but Thomas said it feels like, "This is a moment where ev-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 75 of 79

everyone else is sort of catching that bug.

"Chris has always talked a lot about the formats and wanting people to see the best version possible, as far as the way that he intended the film to be seen. ... Now I'm hearing that there are other studios who are interested in putting their films out on those film screens," she said. "It's not that we think that film is the only way. Every every project is different and requires a different toolkit. We've always just wanted filmmakers to have that option."

And it's not exclusively film that's succeeding either. IMAX overall has seen some of its biggest profits ever from "Oppenheimer," with over \$179 million globally.

"The future of cinema is IMAX and the large formats," Villeneuve said. "The audience wants to see something that they cannot have at home, that they cannot have on streaming. They want to experience an event."

About a month into "Oppenheimer's" run, Thomas took her kids to see a matinee of "Theater Camp" and peeked into the auditorium where their movie was playing "just to see how it was doing.

"It was packed, like it was 7pm, Friday night, opening weekend," she said. "But what was fantastic was seeing the broad range of people in that screening. It was younger people, it was older people. That excitement in theaters is why we make movies."

Thomas has found it especially gratifying that the film has reached younger audiences and teenagers, whom she was told time and time again don't have the attention span for a film like "Oppenheimer."

"We have teenagers and everyone's sort of dismissing them as potential audiences," Thomas said. "They think they're just not into longform storytelling or big ideas and that's complete nonsense. ... It's just been incredibly touching, honestly, to hear people talk about the film and hear about young people going to see it multiple times."

"Oppenheimer" is also continuing to play exclusively in theaters into the fall, in a time when even the biggest movies are often released in homes after just 45 days. Though its opening weekend companion, "Barbie," is newly on video-on-demand, "Oppenheimer" won't be available to watch at home until late November, Thomas said.

As far as what happens to the 600lb, 11-mile-long IMAX 70mm prints, Thomas laughed that after nine weeks of use, some are probably going to need a bit of a rest. But she hopes that there will be opportunities for re-releases with the ones that are in good shape.

"We've been incredibly lucky in our careers. We've had some really great moments before. We've had some very successful films that have allowed us to continue making films," she said. "But I would argue that this one is the most successful when you look at what the film was and then how it's played out."

For filmmakers, its import extends beyond a single movie.

"There's this notion that movies, in some people's minds, became content instead of an art form. I hate that word, 'content,'" Villeneuve said. "That movies like 'Oppenheimer' are released on the big screen and become an event brings back a spotlight on the idea that it's a tremendous art form that needs to be experienced in theaters."

Americans released by Iran arrive home, tearfully embrace their loved ones and declare: 'Freedom!'

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, JON GAMBRELL and LUJAIN JO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans detained for years in Iran arrived home Tuesday, tearfully hugged their loved ones and declared "Freedom!" after being let go as part of a politically risky deal that saw President Joe Biden agree to the release of nearly \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets.

The prisoners landed at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, with clapping and cheers heard in the predawn hours. Siamak Namazi, the first off the jet, paused for a moment, closed his eyes and took a deep breath before leaving the plane. Loved ones, some holding small American flags, enveloped them in hugs and exchanged greetings in English and Farsi, the main language of Iran.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 76 of 79

"The nightmare is finally over," Namazi's brother, Babak, said at the airport.

"We haven't had this moment in over eight years," he added, his arm around his brother and his formerly detained father, Baquer, who had been earlier released by Iran. "It's unbelievable."

One of the other freed Americans, Emad Sharghi, received from his sister, Neda, a U.S. flag and a stuffed animal that she had given to their father 30 years ago when he had bypass surgery, a family representative said.

The former prisoners, who flew on the Gulfstream 5 that brought WNBA star Brittney Griner home after her detention in Russia, later posed for a group photograph with their families, calling out: "Freedom!"

The successful negotiations for the Americans' freedom brought Biden profuse thanks from their families but heat from Republican presidential rivals and other opponents for the monetary arrangement with one of America's top adversaries.

"Today, five innocent Americans who were imprisoned in Iran are finally coming home," the Democratic president said in a statement released as the plane carrying the group from Tehran initially landed in Doha, Qatar, on Monday.

Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, on hand for the United Nations General Assembly in New York, suggested the exchange could be "a step in the direction of a humanitarian action between us and America."

"It can definitely help in building trust," Raisi told journalists.

Iran aired footage of the two prisoners who returned to the Islamic Republic as part of the swap, while two will remain in the U.S. and a fifth will go to a third country. The two who returned hugged their families and criticized the U.S. for their sentences.

"The U.S. government accused me of having the will to jeopardize U.S. interests through disregarding the sanctions. I wonder how the U.S. government can accuse someone of a crime by reading his mind?" Reza Sarhangpour Kafrani told Iranian state television.

Kafrani was indicted in 2021. charged with unlawfully exporting laboratory equipment to Iran and money laundering, though his case had not yet moved to trial.

Also released, according to Nour News, was Mehrdad Ansari, an Iranian sentenced by the U.S. to 63 months in prison in 2021 for obtaining equipment that could be used in missiles, electronic warfare, nuclear weapons and other military gear.

Tensions are almost certain to remain high between the U.S. and Iran, which are locked in disputes over Tehran's nuclear program and other matters. Iran says the program is peaceful, but it now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

The prisoner release unfolded amid a major American military buildup in the Persian Gulf, with the possibility of U.S. troops boarding and guarding commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of all oil shipments pass.

When the Americans initially stopped in Doha after their release from Iran, three of them — Namazi, Sharghi and Morad Tahbaz — emerged. They hugged the U.S. ambassador to Qatar, Timmy Davis, and others. The three then threw their arms over one another's shoulders and walked off toward the airport.

In a statement issued on his behalf, Namazi said: "I would not be free today, if it wasn't for all of you who didn't allow the world to forget me."

"Thank you for being my voice when I could not speak for myself and for making sure I was heard when I mustered the strength to scream from behind the impenetrable walls of Evin Prison," he said.

The United States did not immediately identify the other two freed Americans. All were released in exchange for five Iranians in U.S. custody and for the deal over the frozen Iranian assets owed by South Korea. The Biden administration said the five freed Iranians pose no threat to U.S. national security.

Two of the imprisoned Americans' family members, Effie Namazi and Vida Tahbaz, who had been under travel bans in Iran, also were on the plane.

The \$5.9 billion in cash released to Iran represents money South Korea owed Iran — but had not yet paid — for oil purchased before the U.S. imposed sanctions on such transactions in 2019.

The U.S. maintains that, once in Qatar, the money will be held in restricted accounts to be used only for

humanitarian goods, such as medicine and food. Those transactions are currently allowed under American sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic over its advancing nuclear program.

Iranian government officials have largely concurred, though some hard-liners have insisted, without evidence, that there would be no restrictions on how Tehran spends the money.

The deal has already opened Biden to fresh criticism from Republicans and others who say the administration is helping boost the Iranian economy at a time when Iran poses a growing threat to American troops and Mideast allies. That could have implications in his re-election campaign.

Former President Donald Trump, the early front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, called it an "absolutely ridiculous" deal on the Truth Social social media site. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell accused Biden of "rewarding and incentivizing Tehran's bad behavior."

Biden held what the White House described as an emotional phone call with the families of the freed Americans after their release.

In his statement, Biden demanded more information on what happened to Bob Levinson, an American who went missing years ago. The Biden administration also announced fresh sanctions on former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence.

The U.S. government, the prisoners' families and activists have denounced the charges against the five Americans as baseless.

The Americans included Namazi, who was detained in 2015 and later sentenced to 10 years in prison on spying charges; Sharghi, a venture capitalist sentenced to 10 years; and Tahbaz, a British-American conservationist of Iranian descent who was arrested in 2018 and also received a 10-year sentence.

Iran and the U.S. have a history of prisoner swaps dating back to the 1979 U.S. Embassy takeover and hostage crisis following the Islamic Revolution.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Jo from Doha, Qatar. Associated Press writers Nasser Karimi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Matthew Lee, Paul Haven, Aamer Madhani and Michelle Phillips in New York; and Eric Tucker and Farnoush Amiri in Washington contributed to this report.

Libyan leader says flooded city has been divided to create buffers in case of disease outbreaks

DERNA, Libya (AP) — Authorities have divided Libya's flood-stricken city of Derna into four sections to create buffers in case of disease outbreaks, the prime minister of Libya's eastern administration said Tuesday, a day after thousands of angry protesters demanded the city's rapid reconstruction.

Last week, two dams collapsed during Mediterranean storm Daniel, sending a wall of water gushing through Derna. Government officials and aid agencies have given death tolls ranging from about 4,000 to 11,000, with thousands more missing.

"Now the affected areas are completely isolated, the armed forces and the government have begun creating a buffer out of fear of the spread of diseases or epidemics," Prime Minister Ossama Hamad said in a telephone interview with Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV. No further details were given.

According to local media, the internet went down in the east of the country on Tuesday morning.

The United Nations had warned on Monday that a disease outbreak could create "a second devastating crisis."

Libyan protesters gathered in central Derna on Monday in the first mass demonstration since the flood. Outside the city's al-Shabana mosque thousands called for a rapid investigation into the disaster, the urgent reconstruction of the city and other demands. On Monday evening, the former mayor of the city, Abdel-Moneim al-Gaithi, said his home was set on fire by protesters.

Public prosecutors opened an investigation on Saturday into the collapse of the two dams, built in the 1970s, as well as the allocation of maintenance funds for them. That same day al-Gaithi was suspended pending the investigation.

Many of the city's residents see politicians as the architects of the crisis. The country has been divided

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 78 of 79

between rival administrations since 2014. Both are backed by international patrons and armed militias whose influence in the country has ballooned since a NATO-backed Arab Spring uprising toppled autocratic ruler Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

Both authorities have deployed humanitarian teams to the city but have struggled to respond to the large-scale disaster. The recovery operation, with help from international teams, has been poorly coordinated, and residents say aid distribution has been uneven.

Conflicting death tolls and statistics have been released by various official bodies.

Bashir Omar, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said Tuesday search and rescue teams were still retrieving bodies from under the rubble of wrecked buildings and from the sea. He told The Associated Press that the fatalities are "in the thousands," but didn't give a specific toll for retrieved bodies, explaining that there are many groups involved in collecting them.

Libya's Red Crescent had said last week that at least 11,300 people have been killed and an additional 10,000 are missing. After earlier reporting the same death toll, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is now citing far lower numbers, about 4,000 people killed and 9,000 missing.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres began his address to the General Assembly on Tuesday by evoking the tragedy in Libya. "Just nine days ago, many of the world's challenges coalesced in an awful hellscape," he said. "Thousands of people in Derna, Libya lost their lives in epic, unprecedented flooding."

Associated Press writer Jack Jeffery in London and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed to this report.

Today in History: September 20,

Billie Jean King beats Bobby Riggs in tennis 'battle of the sexes'

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Sept. 20, the 263rd day of 2023. There are 102 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 20, 1973, in their so-called "battle of the sexes," tennis star Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in straight sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, at the Houston Astrodome.

On this date:

In 1519, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew set out from Spain on five ships to find a western passage to the Spice Islands. (Magellan was killed enroute, but one of his ships eventually circled the world.)

In 1881, Chester A. Arthur was sworn in as the 21st president of the United States, succeeding the assassinated James A. Garfield.

In 1946, the first Cannes Film Festival, lasting 16 days, opened in France.

In 1962, James Meredith, a Black student, was blocked from enrolling at the University of Mississippi by Democratic Gov. Ross R. Barnett.

In 1964, The Beatles concluded their first full-fledged U.S. tour by performing in a charity concert at the Paramount Theater in New York.

In 1967, the Cunard liner RMS Queen Elizabeth 2 was christened by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in Clydebank, Scotland.

In 1973, singer-songwriter Jim Croce died in a plane crash near Natchitoches, Louisiana at age 30.

In 1995, in a move that stunned Wall Street, AT&T Corporation announced it was splitting into three companies.

In 2000, Independent Counsel Robert Ray announced the end of the Whitewater investigation, saying there was insufficient evidence to warrant charges against Bill and Hillary Clinton.

In 2001, during an address to a joint session of Congress, President George W. Bush announced the new Cabinet-level Dept. of Homeland Security and named Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge its director.

In 2011, repeal of the U.S. military's 18-year-old "don't ask, don't tell" compromise took effect, allowing

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 088 ~ 79 of 79

gay and lesbian service members to serve openly.

In 2012, Space Shuttle Endeavour, riding atop a Boeing 747, landed at a California Air Force base en route to its eventual retirement home, the California Science Center in Los Angeles.

In 2017, Hurricane Maria, the strongest storm to hit Puerto Rico in more than 80 years, struck the island, wiping out as much as 75 percent of power distribution lines and causing an island-wide blackout.

In 2018, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was re-elected as head of his ruling Liberal Democratic party in a landslide. (Abe would be assassinated after leaving office in 2022.)

In 2019, Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, the 1979 site of the nation's worst commercial nuclear power accident, was shut down by its owner after producing electricity for 45 years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Sophia Loren is 89. Rock musician Chuck Panozzo is 75. Actor Tony Denison is 74. Actor Debbi Morgan is 72. Jazz musician Peter White is 69. Actor Betsy Brantley is 68. Actor Gary Cole is 67. TV news correspondent Deborah Roberts is 63. Country-rock musician Joseph Shreve (Flynnville Train) is 62. Rock musician Randy Bradbury (Pennywise) is 59. Actor Kristen Johnston is 56. Rock singers Gunnar and Matthew Nelson are 56. Rock musician Ben Shepherd is 55. Actor Erika Okuma is 51. Actor-model Moon Bloodgood is 48. Actor Jon Bernthal is 47. Singer The-Dream is 46. Actor Charlie Weber is 45. Rock musician Rick Woolstenhulme (WOOL'-sten-hyoolm) (Lifehouse) is 44. Rapper Yung Joc is 43. Actor Crystle Stewart is 42. Actor Aldis Hodge is 37. Rock drummer Jack Lawless is 36. Actor Malachi (MAL'-ah-ky) Kirby is 34.