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Wednesday, April 17

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, Oriental blend vegetables, cinnamon apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: tacos.

FCCLA Banquet at GHS Arena Lobby 6 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran: Pastor at Rosewood Court; Confirmation. 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

United Methodist: Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Thursday, April 18

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic toast, fudge cake squares, fruit.

School Breakfast: pop tarts.

School Lunch: Corndogs, baked beans.

Girls Golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

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1440

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House Republicans sent two articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to the Senate yesterday in a ceremonial walk across the Capitol, forcing the upper chamber to kick off a trial.

The US Supreme Court heard arguments yesterday over the validity of the obstruction law used to prosecute over 300 people involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, storming of the US Capitol. Justices appeared divided, with several questioning whether the government's interpretation of the law might unconstitutionally apply to conduct protected under the First Amendment.

A fire ripped through Denmark's historic Borsen, destroying nearly half of the 400-year-old former stock exchange building yesterday. The historic Copenhagen landmark, currently housing the Danish Chamber of Commerce, was undergoing renovations when the fire started around 8:30 am local time. The cause of the fire remains unknown and no deaths or injuries have been reported.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Music by ABBA, Notorious BIG, and Green Day among 25 recordings added to the Library of Congress' National Recording Registry.

Whitey Herzog, Baseball Hall of Famer and influential manager, dies at age 92. Carl Erskine, last surviving member of iconic Brooklyn Dodgers' "Boys of Summer," dies at age 97.

The 2024 Paris Olympics flame lit in Greece as 3,000-mile torch relay begins. Team USA men's basketball roster headlined by LeBron James and Steph Curry.

Science & Technology

NASA scraps current plans to return rocks collected by the Perseverance Mars rover to Earth, citing cost and complexity; agency to seek new proposals for the mission.

Meta Oversight Board to review policies governing the spread of sexualized deepfake images on Facebook and Instagram following two high-profile incidents involving female celebrities.

Researchers develop new pigment chemistry to produce a range of magentas for use in energy-efficient coatings; discovery was inspired by lunar minerals and similar pigment formulation used by ancient Egyptians.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow +0.2%, Nasdaq -0.1%) after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell says inflation remains stubborn, reducing expectations for any imminent interest rate cuts.

China's economy expands more than expected with 5.3% growth year-over-year in first quarter, driven by increased exports. International Monetary Fund raises US economic forecast to 2.7% growth this year, outpacing Europe; anticipates global growth of 3.2%.

Morgan Stanley beats first quarter earnings and revenue expectations, with profit up 14% year-over-year, sending stock up 3% on the news; all three divisions (wealth management, trading, and investment banking) saw a jump.

Politics & World Affairs

Bob Graham, former Democratic US senator and two-term Florida governor, dies at age 87; Graham chaired the Senate Intelligence Committee during and after the 2001 terrorist attacks and opposed the Iraq war.

Columbia University President Minouche Shafik to testify about antisemitism today before House committee following December hearing with since-resigned University of Pennsylvania and Harvard presidents. University of Southern California bars pro-Palestinian valedictorian from speaking at commencement, citing safety concerns.

Oman flooding leaves at least 18 people dead with others missing. Dubai International Airport—second busiest in the world—partially underwater as United Arab Emirates receives a year's worth of rainfall in a single day.

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Sky Warn Spotter Training Class

The National Weather Service – Aberdeen Office and Brown County Emergency Management office is hosting Sky Warn Spotter Training:

Monday April 29th, 2024.

K.O. Lee Aberdeen Public Library.

5:30pm – 7:30pm

This training is FREE and open to the public. No registration needed.

This class will cover topics discussing severe thunderstorms that produce damaging winds, large hail, tornadoes, and flash floods. Other types of severe weather and lightning safety will also be discussed.

For more information or questions please call the Brown County Emergency Management office at 605-626-7122.

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Groton City lineman Landon Johnson evaluates the piece of metal that had flown into a secondary service and then proceeds to remove it safely.

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 Special School Board Meeting April 17, 2024 – 4:30 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Executive session pursuant to SDCL1-25-2(4) for negotiations.

ADJOURN

*Open House
Bridal Shower
honoring
Jessica Bjerke*

*Saturday, April 20, 2024
1:00pm - 3:00pm
Olive Grove Golf Course
Registered at Target and Amazon*

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Large pine trees were no match for the strong wind that went through Groton Tuesday morning. A wind gust of 51 mph was recorded at 4:45 a.m. The wind, coupled with wet soil and a shallow root system, toppled these plus three other evergreen trees in Groton. (Above photo by Paul Kosel, below photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #21 Results

Team Standings: Coyotes – 19, Shihtzus – 18, Chipmunks – 17, Cheetahs – 14, Jackelopes – 11, Foxes – 5
Men's High Games: John Sippel – 244, Lance Frohling – 223, Brad Waage – 210
Women's High Games: Vicki Walter – 165, Michelle Johnson – 157, Emily Sternhagen & Alexa Schuring – 156
Men's High Series: John Sippel – 595, Brad Waage & Lance Frohling – 533, Mike Siegler – 531
Women's High Series: Vicki Walter – 465, Sue Stanley – 424, Hayley Merkel – 422
April 17th - BOWL OFF between 1st third winner: Jackelopes, 2nd third winner: Shihtzus, 3rd third winner: Coyotes
April 24th - FUN NIGHT! Bring a snack and we will bowl one last time for the season!

Groton tentatively continues contract with Coca-Cola

Groton residents will continue to be able to grab a bottle of Coca-Cola at the park, a PowerAde at the baseball field and a Tum-E Yum-E at the swimming pool.

The City Council gave preliminary approval of a three-year contract for concession drinks to Coca-Cola. However, that approval is dependent on what Chuck Padfield with the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation thinks of the company's service through the last three years.

Coca-Cola has been the concessions drink supplier for several years. The company not only supplies drinks, but also two vending machines, two coolers at the baseball complex concession stand and one cooler at the swimming pool concession stand. That equipment is owned and maintained by Coca-Cola.

Two bids were submitted for the soda supply contract, from Coca-Cola Bottling Company High Country in Aberdeen and Pepsi Beverages Company.

Councilwoman Karyn Babcock discussed tabling the contract until the city discusses it with those at the baseball complex. However, Councilman Kevin Nehls said it shouldn't be an issue as the contract and payments go through the city.

The Coca-Cola proposal includes

- \$32.50 for a 24 count-case of 20-ounce carbonated soda drink bottles
- \$30 for a 24-count case of 20-ounce PowerAde bottles
- \$23 for a 24-count case of 20-ounce Dasani Water bottles
- \$21.50 for a 12-count case of 18.5-ounce Gold Peak Tea bottles
- \$20 for a 12-count case of 16-ounce Body Armor bottles
- \$11 for a 12-count case of 10.1-ounce Tum-E Yum-E bottles

The contract would also include a \$4 rebate for every 24-count case and a \$2 rebate for every 12-count cases sold. The city would be able to set the price at the concession stands for drinks sold, but the recommendation would be \$3 for each bottle of carbonated soda drinks and PowerAde, \$3.50 for each bottle of Gold Peak Tea and Body Armor, and \$1.50 for each bottle of Tum-E Yum-E.

The Pepsi proposal includes two options, one if the city uses vending machines and another if the city doesn't have vending machines. The vending price totals

- \$2.50 for each 20-ounce soda, Gatorade and Aquafina bottle (sold in cases of 24)
- \$3 for each 16-ounce Rockstar Energy can (sold in cases of 12)

The city would make a 26 percent commission on drinks sold.

The non-vending price totals

- \$27.50 for each 24-count case of 20-ounce soda, Gatorade and Aquafina bottles
- \$25 for each 12-count case of 12-ounce Celsius Energy cans
- \$18 for each 12-count case of 16-ounce Rockstar Energy cans

The city would receive a \$5.50 rebate for each case of soda, Gatorade and Aquafina, and \$2.75 for each case of Celsius Energy and Rockstar Energy.

Both bids also include a marketing support budget that the city can use for signs and event banners.

Councilman Nehls said it makes the most sense to have the concession manager's opinion. Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich said he thinks Chuck Padfield is pretty pleased with the Coca-Cola service, but Heinrich would confirm that "before we lock something in."

Councilman Brian Bahr added, "I don't think we rock the boat then."

Councilman Nehls agreed, saying "I think as long as Chuck is OK with it, I think Cokes a better option right now. I think we should talk to him because he does all the ordering and everything."

After the vote, Councilwoman Babcock asked the Coca-Cola sales manager at the meeting if there are ever special event pricing.

There are some additional support that Coca-Cola offers, said Shannon Broderson, district sales manager at Coca-Cola Bottling Company High Country in Aberdeen. Coca-Cola of Aberdeen provides two five-gallon PowerAde jugs for the baseball teams to use, as well as cases of PowerAde powder.

"If there is something else and you want water, don't hesitate to ask," she added. "We always try to do our best and support our customers the best we can."

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Friendly Fellows & Daisies 4-H Club

The Friendly Fellows and Daisies 4-H Club met April 7, 2024 at the Meathouse in Andover, SD. The meeting was called to order by Logan Warrington. The American flag pledge was led by Halee Harder, and the 4-H flag pledge was led by Haden Harder. The roll call topic for the meeting was favorite flower. There were no communications to report. The Treasurer's report was read by Hudson Eichler. Parker Zoellner made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report and it was seconded by Halee Harder and the motion carried. The Secretary's report was read by Hailey Pauli. Hudson Eichler made a motion to approve the Secretary's report and it was seconded by Parker Zoellner and the motion carried. There was no old business discussed. New Business was discussing the Newshound, Enrollments, and the upcoming MeatHouse tour. Parker Zoellner made a motion to approve the new business, Hailey Pauli seconded the motion, and it was approved by the members. Haden Harder made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Grayson Warrington seconded it. A talk was given by Paxton Eichler who gave a demonstration on launching potatoes with a potato launcher. The members then toured the Meathouse owned by the Morehouse family. Lunch was served by the Frey family.

Submitted by: Parker Zoellner, Club Reporter



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Tourism Impacts All Corners of South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. – A recent detailed analysis of visitor spending in every county in South Dakota shows that visitor spending is 21% higher than pre-pandemic levels (2019) and 4.9% higher than 2022 numbers.

Minnehaha County (29.3%) and Pennington County (19.3%) make up the largest share of visitor spending in South Dakota. Both the Southeast and Black Hills and Badlands regions are nearing \$2 billion in visitor spending annually, with each exceeding \$1.9 billion in 2023.

“People visit South Dakota from all over to enjoy our Freedom, experience the beauty of our open prairies, explore our parks, fish our waters, hunt our fields, and stand in awe at our monuments,” said Governor Kristi Noem. “Tourism is our second largest industry. And when tourism thrives, it helps our communities, businesses, and families succeed and flourish.”

The Black Hills and Badlands region experienced the strongest year-over-year visitor spending growth, exceeding 2022 visitor spending levels by 5.8%, an increase of more than \$104 million. Custer, Lawrence, Haakon, and Jackson counties all exceeded 10% growth for the year.

The Southeast region also experienced strong visitor spending growth with a 5.2% increase, exceeding 2022 levels by nearly \$100 million.

The Glacial Lakes and Prairies region grew visitor spending by 2.9% to reach just under \$700 million and increasing over the prior year by almost \$20 million. Brown County made up 29% of the spending for this region at almost \$200 million.

The Missouri River region led all regions in growth compared to 2019 spending levels, with visitor spending growing by 24%. The region also experienced a 3% increase when compared to 2022, exceeding the prior year’s visitor spending by \$11.2 million. Hughes County experienced the most visitor spending activity in the region, reaching \$97 million and making up 25% of the region’s total.

In 2023, visitor spending in South Dakota reached a record high of \$4.96 billion, a 4.9% increase over 2022.

“Our industry has so much to be proud of,” said Hagen. “This industry supported more than 57,000 jobs and provided 2.2 billion dollars in household income to South Dakota families. These visitors and their dollars support diners, marinas, hotels and attractions in communities large and small in South Dakota.”

Outage last night

The block between Garfield Street and Madison Street and Second and Third Avenue West experienced an outage last night. Residents in the city may have noticed a few micro blinks as the issue was being worked on. It is the same area that has been plaguing the city with an occasional outage during the past six months. It is now believed that there is an underground fault feeding the one transformer. The bad wire was bypassed and power was restored.

The Life of Daniel Johnson

Daniel Johnson, 65, of Groton passed away April 9, 2024 surrounded by family at his home. A private celebration will be held later. Inurnment will take place in Union Cemetery, Groton under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Daniel David was born on April 17, 1958 in Aberdeen to William Donald and Elsie (Carlson) Johnson. He attended school in Groton, graduating in 1977. Dan built grain bins for several years following high school and later began working for the City of Groton. He was City Manager for many years before his retirement in 2000. Dan served as a board member on the Web Water Board. He was also an Apiarist and showed many people how to care for bees and harvest honey. Dan was an outdoor enthusiast and he cared for nature, he made his home a sanctuary for wildlife and beauty. He encouraged many to come and enjoy is outdoor creation and he loved meeting and inviting people to enjoy his home. He was an avid angler and hunter and loved being outdoors. He was also an amazing wood artisan.

Dan was a strong believer in AA and had proudly reached 44 years of sobriety.

He was united in marriage with Kathryn Ann Sieh on August 6, 1977 and together they were blessed with two children.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Kathy, children, Zelos (Cheri) Johnson of Groton, Chanda (Logan) Nilsson of Bath, and grandchildren, Bennett Shabazz, Seric Shabazz, Darien Shabazz, Oaklyn Nilsson and Westin Nilsson. Dan is also survived by his siblings, Mary Lou Erickson of Fortuna, CA, William (Darlene) Johnson of Stratford, Eunice (Ken) Wagner of Ferndale, CA, Marty (Leticia) Johnson of Bayside CA and Allen (Brenda) Johnson of Columbia.

Preceding him in death were his parents and his sister, Olena.

Memorials may be directed to Alcoholics Anonymous, 519 South Arch Street, Aberdeen, SD 57401





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Bureau of Indian Affairs will support South Dakota tribal police academy summer session

Recruits sought for June class from tribe-level police agencies

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 16, 2024 5:37 PM

The Bureau of Indian Affairs will send trainers to South Dakota to help finalize the certifications for any tribal trainees who take part in a special summer basic training course in Pierre.

That means they won't have to finish their training at a BIA facility in New Mexico.

Division of Criminal Investigation Director Dan Satterlee made the announcement during Tuesday's meeting of the Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission in Deadwood.

The deadline for tribal law enforcement agencies to commit recruits is Friday; the deadline for those recruits to submit applications is May 1.

The special session for tribal law enforcement would offer space for up to 48 recruits. Satterlee told the commission that the DCI has heard from several possible recruits since last week's announcement of the session. If there aren't enough recruits by Friday, he said, he and Attorney General Marty Jackley will "go visit some folks and get some more participation."

Course follows controversial statements from Noem

The law enforcement commission oversees the rules, eligibility requirements and other administrative procedures for the Pierre-based basic officer certification course.

Jackley and Gov. Kristi Noem announced last Thursday that the state would hold the additional basic training class, starting in June, specifically for tribal law enforcement.

Noem has made several comments over the past two months about law enforcement on tribal land. She's said that Mexican drug cartels have a foothold on reservations, and has claimed without offering evidence that some South Dakota tribal leaders are "personally benefiting from the cartels." Four tribes have since voted to bar Noem from their reservations.

In a letter announcing the additional training course – which will be paid for out of the governor's budget – Noem characterized the move as an olive branch, extended in the interest of public safety.

Training covers tribe-level officers

Tribes can use federal Bureau of Indian Affairs funding to operate their own law enforcement agencies under what are known as 638 agreements. Six of South Dakota's nine tribes have such agreements, but many have struggled to recruit officers.

The scheduling and location of training has been part of the problem with recruitment.

BIA officers are required to attend a 13-week training course at the Indian Police Academy in New Mexico. Tribally employed law enforcement officers can train at the South Dakota academy, however, and become certified through the BIA to work for the tribes with an additional two-week course in New Mexico.

Space in South Dakota's basic training courses is limited, though. The state sometimes cuts tribal recruits if they're accepted to the basic training course in New Mexico, Yankton Sioux Tribal Police Chief Alvin Young told South Dakota Searchlight last week, and offers those slots to state or local officers who wouldn't have another training option.

The Noem-funded training class set for June would be solely for tribal recruits.

In Deadwood on Thursday, Satterlee told the commission that the BIA has agreed to send trainers to Pierre to allow the June cohort's graduates to complete their last-step certification.

The on-site training would take less than two days, Satterlee said, instead of two weeks.

That should stand as a further enticement for potential tribal recruits, he said, as it means they'd be able to complete all their training close to home.

"It's just good to see all these partnerships coming together to make this happen," the DCI director said. "Hopefully we get a robust class size."

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

Mellette County sheriff stripped of police powers by law enforcement commission

Sheriff was dating probationer, let her drink alcohol

BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 16, 2024 5:36 PM

The South Dakota Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission voted to revoke the certification of a West River sheriff on Tuesday during a meeting in Deadwood.

Mellette County Sheriff Mike Blom took his then-girlfriend out drinking last fall, even though she was on probation and was thus forbidden from consuming alcohol.

Blom also witnessed an assault during the same outing and failed to take action.

In November, the 59-year-old sheriff and 22-year-old woman went on a double date that involved multiple stops and alcohol consumption.

Not visiting bars or using alcohol is a standard condition for probationers. But Blom testified that he didn't realize that his then-girlfriend wasn't allowed to use alcohol until he spoke with her probation officer.

He's accustomed to dealing with people who have bond conditions for release from jail, he said. In those cases, people typically appear for 24/7 sobriety program testing, an operation run by county sheriffs.

He wasn't as familiar with standard conditions for those who've already been convicted or pleaded guilty. "By the time they're dealing with probation officers, we don't have much contact with them ... I certainly wouldn't have taken her out drinking if I'd known," he said.

During a trial on an unrelated matter that took place after the November outing, however, the sheriff said from the witness stand that he hadn't been honest with DCI – something commissioners asked him about multiple times during Tuesday's hearing.

Blom maintained that he'd misunderstood the situation in his first conversation about the matter with the DCI, but corrected himself in a later interview.

Commissioners also questioned whether Blom's relationship with a young felon may have hurt his reputation in the community, and pushed him to explain why he hadn't turned in his friend's wife for domestic violence, as the assault during the double date got severe enough to draw blood.

Blom said he didn't have jurisdiction in Jackson County, which is where the assault took place, but commissioners said he should have reached out to the sheriff in that county.

After about an hour in executive session, the commission voted unanimously to strip Blom of his certification for conduct unbecoming a law enforcement officer.

The vote does not remove him from office (sheriffs are elected officials), but does strip him of his police powers. He can appeal the decision to circuit court.

Other actions from commissioners

Prior to Blom's hearing, commissioners voted to reopen training eligibility for a handful of officers who

let their certifications lapse, to certify several canine teams and to accept voluntary de-certifications from three officers who'd violated South Dakota's conduct standards.

Officers who voluntarily give up their certifications don't face public commission hearings on the details of their conduct, though brief summaries are read. On Tuesday, for example, the commission accepted de-certifications from a former Vermillion police officer who'd been untruthful in an unspecified manner, a former Lincoln County sheriff's deputy who'd taken inappropriate photos in his patrol vehicle and a former Spink County sheriff's deputy who took property from the sheriff's department.

The commission also discussed the details of – and rejected – a disciplinary consent agreement with Bennett County Sheriff's Deputy Kevin Curtis for his behavior in two separate occasions.

Curtis, according to DCI Investigator Guy DiBenedetto, had done a "piss poor" job dealing with two domestic violence incidents. The first came in 2018, when the deputy failed to investigate an incident beyond speaking with the male occupant of the home from which an emergency call was placed. The second happened in 2021, when Curtis did not follow through on a call in which the perpetrator was a co-worker. The co-worker was later charged with aggravated assault after a report to the Philip Police Department and an investigation by the state DCI.

Curtis has not had any complaints or disciplinary issues since 2021.

The commission nevertheless voted to reject a proposed settlement agreement that would have leveled a seven-day suspension for Curtis. Commissioners made the unanimous vote after discussing the matter in executive session, and Curtis' situation is now set to be addressed during future commission meetings.

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

Changed forest and market factors share blame for sawmill troubles, forest supervisor says

Top Black Hills official responds to company's criticism

BY: SETH TUPPER - APRIL 16, 2024 4:52 PM

Changed forest conditions and market forces likely contributed to layoffs at a Spearfish sawmill, according to the U.S. Forest Service's top official in the Black Hills.

Last week, the owner of the sawmill blamed logging reductions in the Black Hills National Forest for the layoffs.

The forest's supervisor is Shawn Cochran. He said this week that the Forest Service was saddened to hear about the laid-off employees, and the agency is concerned about the economic health of sawmills.

"The mills here in South Dakota and across the West are facing what appear to be some tough times," Cochran said. "It's not necessarily tied to just the timber supply chain, because we're seeing the same things happen all throughout the West with mill closures."

South Dakota Searchlight confirmed about 1,700 job losses at sawmills across the country since September, based on news reports about mill closures or layoffs in Florida, Montana, West Virginia, Oregon and Arkansas.

Companies cited outdated facilities, labor and housing shortages, rising costs, and plummeting lumber prices. One measure of those prices, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' producer price index for softwood lumber, has fallen by 56% since a peak in 2021. The "softwood" description includes the Black Hills' predominant tree species, ponderosa pine.

Wyoming-based Neiman Enterprises announced 50 layoffs Thursday at Spearfish Forest Products, the company's mill in South Dakota's northern Black Hills.

Neiman said the layoffs were "the direct result of reductions to the Black Hills National Forest timber sale program." The company made similar comments in 2021 when it closed its other South Dakota mill

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in Hill City.

A year prior to that closure, Forest Service researchers said severe wildfires and a pine beetle epidemic had drastically reduced the number of trees big enough for logging in the Black Hills. Those trees, called sawtimber, measure at least 9 inches in diameter at a point 4.5 feet above the ground. The forest had only half the sawtimber-size trees needed to sustain the level of timber sales allowed in the forest plan, the researchers said.

Some members of the timber industry disputed the research. Neiman's Thursday news release included a statement from Ben Wudtke, executive director of a timber industry trade group called the Black Hills Forest Resource Association. Wudtke said "we have more timber now than in the '70s and '80s when the Black Hills National Forest was selling twice the amount of timber."

The Forest Service initially declined to respond; then, on Monday, the Forest Service offered interviews with Cochran to several media outlets.

In his interview with Searchlight, Cochran defended the Forest Service research.

"The forest is very much in a changed condition," he said.

There are many young trees in the forest, he added, which have sprouted in the wake of the pine beetle epidemic and severe wildfires. But those are not sawtimber size.

"More volume than ever?" he said, responding to a question about Wudtke's statement. "I'd say, yes, we have a tremendous amount of volume that's 9 inches and below. However, 9 and above, that has dramatically declined."

Cochran said the Forest Service has spent \$70 million during the last 10 years to help the Black Hills timber industry weather changing forest conditions. He did not provide a full breakdown of costs but said the amount includes stewardship sales. In those sales, the Forest Service covers some of the high costs that timber companies encounter in difficult logging areas, such as steep slopes.

There are more steep-slope areas to harvest, Cochran said, but logging those areas would come at great cost to the Forest Service, since companies need help to make steep-slope logging profitable. Cochran said the Forest Service's cost to continue a full program of steep-slope logging on the forest could be up to \$20 million.

"There is a need to do that, but there are also other needs on the forest," Cochran said.

The Forest Service also spent \$3 million on a pilot project to transport timber by train from other parts of the country to Neiman's mill in Hulett, Wyoming.

"The last thing we want to do is see additional mill closures, and that's why the Forest Service is investing heavily in the timber industry," Cochran said.

Yet the changed conditions in the forest and the high costs of steep-slope logging remain "driving factors" for timber sales, Cochran added.

The Forest Service measures timber volume in a unit called "CCF," with 1 CCF equaling 100 cubic feet. The agency plans to sell 63,000 CCF of timber in the Black Hills National Forest this fiscal year. That continues several years of reductions and is about a third of the allowable sale quantity of 181,000 CCF in the forest plan.

Sawmill layoffs and closures

Some recent sawmill layoffs and closures around the country:

April 11, 2024: Neiman Enterprises says it will lay off 50 employees at Spearfish Forest Products.

March 29, 2024: A company spokesperson confirms the closure of the West Fraser Sawmill in Perry, Florida, affecting 126 workers.

March 20, 2024: Roseburg announces the closure of its particleboard plant in Missoula, Montana, and the layoffs of 150 employees.

March 14, 2024: Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake, Montana, announces its plan to wind down operations and close, affecting 100 employees.

Feb. 25, 2024: West Virginia state officials confirm that Allegheny Wood Products will shut down, elimi-

nating jobs for 850 employees and contractors.

Feb. 16, 2024: A Canadian company, Interfor, says it will shut down its Philomath, Oregon, sawmill, and cut 100 jobs.

Feb. 9, 2024: Resboro Co. confirms the closure of a mill in Springfield, Oregon, and the layoffs of 25 workers.

Jan. 10, 2024: Hampton Lumber says its sawmill in Banks, Oregon, will shut down indefinitely, leaving 58 employees without work.

Jan. 9, 2024: West Fraser Timber Co. announces the closure of its sawmill in Maxville, Florida, affecting 80 employees, and also announces a plan to "indefinitely curtail" operations at its sawmill in Huttig, Arkansas, affecting 140 employees.

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

U.S. House Republicans deliver impeachment articles against DHS Chief Mayorkas

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 16, 2024 4:20 PM

WASHINGTON — Eleven U.S. House Republicans serving as impeachment managers delivered two articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to the U.S. Senate on Tuesday.

The ceremonial delivery of the articles of impeachment, which charge Mayorkas with a "willful and systemic refusal to comply" with federal immigration law and breaking the public trust, is an escalation in a years-long clash between congressional Republicans and the Biden administration over its handling of immigration. The issue has taken center stage in the leadup to November's elections.

Senate Democrats have indicated that they plan to move quickly to dismiss the impeachment process.

"We want to address this issue as expeditiously as possible," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on the Senate floor Tuesday. "Impeachment should never be used to settle a policy disagreement."

Schumer, a New York Democrat, can make a motion to dismiss or table the articles, which would succeed with a simple majority. Democrats and independents who vote with them for the purposes of organizing the chamber hold a 51-49 majority.

The partisan makeup of the Senate and the two-thirds majority needed for conviction mean it's unlikely that Mayorkas would be convicted and removed from his role.

Push for trial

However, Republicans are still pushing for a trial.

"We expect and we demand that all 100 senators listen to the arguments of the House impeachment managers," House Speaker Mike Johnson said during a Tuesday press conference. "If Sen. Schumer cares at all about the suffering of Americans and the disaster that Mayorkas has wrought at the border, then he will hold a full and public trial."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky made similar remarks.

"It would be beneath the Senate's dignity to shrug off our clear responsibility and fail to give the charges we'll hear today the thorough consideration they deserve," McConnell said on the Senate floor Tuesday.

Washington state Democratic Sen. Patty Murray, who is presiding over the proceedings, announced that the Senate will inform the House when senators are ready to proceed with a trial.

The Senate Sergeant of Arms introduced the impeachment managers: Mark Green of Tennessee, Michael McCaul of Texas, Andy Biggs of Arizona, Ben Cline of Virginia, Andrew Garbarino of New York, Michael Guest of Mississippi, Harriet Hageman of Wyoming, Clay Higgins of Louisiana, Laurel Lee of Florida, August Pfluger of Texas and Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia.

Green of Tennessee, lead impeachment manager and chair of the Homeland Security Committee that handled impeachment proceedings for Mayorkas, read the two articles of impeachment to senators after

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delivering them Tuesday afternoon.

The impeachment managers then went back to the House.

"The Senate has a responsibility to conduct a full trial, hear the evidence, and render a verdict," Green said in a statement after delivering the articles of impeachment. "Refusing to do so would mark the first time the Senate has refused to hold an impeachment trial when it had the opportunity to do so."

Schumer said that senators would be sworn in as jurors Wednesday at 1 p.m. Eastern.

If a trial proceeds, it will be the first time that a sitting Cabinet member has gone through an impeachment trial. The last Cabinet official who was impeached, William Belknap in 1876, resigned before the House and Senate could vote to impeach him and remove him from his post as secretary of War.

Impeachment articles

Mere hours before House impeachment managers ceremoniously walked over the two articles of impeachment to the Senate, Mayorkas appeared before the same committee that moved forward with his impeachment—Homeland Security. At the morning hearing, Mayorkas answered questions about the budget request for his department for fiscal 2025.

During the hearing, questions about the impeachment arose.

Republicans grilled Mayorkas on migration at the southern border, while Democrats said that the move to impeach Mayorkas fell short of the "high crimes and misdemeanors" threshold needed for impeachment and was more about policy differences between Republicans and the White House.

The same committee advanced the articles of impeachment in January. It took House Republicans two attempts to vote to approve the articles of impeachment on the House floor.

The first article of impeachment cites sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act that Republicans say Mayorkas did not follow. The article accuses Mayorkas of failing to follow detention and removal requirements under the law, ignoring the requirement for expedited removals and abusing the administration's humanitarian parole authority.

The White House has had parole authority since the 1950s, and the Biden administration has created temporary protections for certain nationals from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela and other countries to allow them to temporarily work and reside in the country.

The second article of impeachment argues that Mayorkas breached public trust by making several statements in congressional testimony that Republicans argue are false. Specifically Mayorkas told lawmakers that the southern border is "secure."

Conservative unrest

Johnson said that impeaching Mayorkas is a focus for House Republicans.

Johnson is also facing a challenge to remove him from his role as speaker, with one of the impeachment managers, Greene of Georgia, leading the effort.

The Georgia Republican released a scathing five-page letter on April 9 that threatened to oust Johnson from his role and made the case to her Republican colleagues to support his removal. Greene also filed a motion to vacate in late March, but has not forced a vote on it.

Kentucky Republican Thomas Massie joined Greene's cause Tuesday, giving his support to removing Johnson as speaker.

Johnson tried to quell the dissent in the hard-right faction of his party with a show of unity with presumed Republican presidential nominee Donald J. Trump in Palm Beach, Florida, last week. During that visit, Johnson promoted an unreleased bill related to noncitizens voting in federal elections.

Greene, who first introduced articles of impeachment in September, months before the House Homeland Security Committee began impeachment proceedings, has for a long time pursued the impeachment of Mayorkas.

Johnson originally planned for the impeachment managers to deliver the articles of impeachment last week, but delayed at the request of Senate Republicans.

Those Senate Republicans requested a delay in order to avoid the start of an impeachment trial on the same day that senators were scheduled to dash out of Washington and head home.

"You don't want members trying to get out of town so quickly that they are influenced by the jet fumes," Utah's Sen. Mike Lee said last week.

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

People without lawyers are an early focus of new state court access group

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 16, 2024 4:07 PM

Three out of every five people who go to civil court in the U.S. do so without a lawyer.

That figure comes from the Self-Reported Litigation Network. While the South Dakota Unified Judicial System hasn't studied how often that happens in the state, South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen said there are plenty of examples.

Those cases are called "pro se," meaning people are representing themselves — often because they can't find or afford a lawyer. The problem is a concern in South Dakota because of a dearth of lawyers in rural communities, something the state is trying to address through a rural lawyer recruitment program and a statewide public defender office.

"The reality is these numbers aren't decreasing," Jensen said. "In fact, we used to think about this as an issue with low-income individuals, but I think more and more we're seeing middle-income individuals who struggle to afford and hire counsel in cases. Ask any judge, clerk or any lawyer who worked on the other side of the pro se individual — that creates challenges."

Jensen spoke Tuesday to a group of UJS staff, circuit court and magistrate judges, legal aid representatives, clerks of courts and private practice attorneys — all part of the newly formed Commission on Access to Our Courts. The state Supreme Court created the group in February to promote equal access to the courts and "inspire a high level of trust and confidence" in the system.

The commission is separate from the state Commission on Equal Access to Our Courts, created in 2008 to provide grants to nonprofit entities delivering legal services to low-income South Dakotans.

Despite the potentially broad nature of the new commission's work, its first discussion focused primarily on pro se individuals and concerns about how to meet their needs and navigate the court system.

Denise Langley is vice chair of the commission and executive director of Access to Justice in Pierre, a nonprofit that provides legal services to low-income South Dakotans. Legal aid organizations in the state struggle to serve many South Dakotans because of limited resources, Langley said, and many end up representing themselves.

Access to Justice accepts about 100 to 150 cases a year but turns down up to 600 applicants annually, Langley said. About 80% of pro se cases in some regions of the state are family law, such as divorce, guardianship, visitation and protection orders, according to a 2022 statewide legal needs assessment.

East River Legal Services, another legal aid nonprofit, has had 882 applications already this year seeking help for civil cases. Half are family law, followed by housing cases involving evictions, said Lea Wroblewski, executive director.

A family law attorney in Sioux Falls charges \$300-350 an hour, which "quickly prices most people out of being able to retain an attorney," said Jon Sogn, a Second Circuit Court judge and chair of the commission.

"This commission has an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of many people, the trust people have in our court system, the people who have to work with the front line and pro se litigants," Sogn said.

The commission plans to work with an out-of-state facilitator next to decide what to tackle first. Options include addressing legal aid resources, creating a navigator program for pro se cases, or making it easier

for attorneys to volunteer with legal aid organizations.

Greg Sattizahn, state court administrator with the Unified Judicial System, also suggested addressing remote hearings, technology improvements, language barriers and disability access.

"The landscape is wide open," Sattizahn said.

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.

U.S. Rep. Massie joins move to oust Speaker Johnson, who vows: 'I am not resigning'

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 16, 2024 11:49 AM

WASHINGTON — Republican Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky called on U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson to resign during a closed-door meeting of GOP lawmakers on Tuesday, throwing more uncertainty into that chamber just months before the November elections.

Massie told reporters after the meeting and just before a Johnson press conference he believed the votes exist to remove Johnson as speaker when a vote is called. He didn't say when that would happen or who he thinks could secure the votes needed to become speaker.

"The motion will get called," Massie said, referring to a floor vote on Johnson. "And then he's going to lose more votes than Kevin McCarthy. And I have told him this in private, like weeks ago."

Johnson, a Louisiana Republican who was unanimously elected to the leadership post in October after a small group of GOP lawmakers ousted former Speaker McCarthy, rejected Massie's call to quit, as did several Republicans.

"I am not resigning. And it is, in my view, an absurd notion that someone would bring a vacate motion," Johnson said "We're simply here trying to do our job."

Removing Johnson from the leadership position less than six months into his tenure comes shortly after the House passed two government funding packages on broadly bipartisan votes in March and just as the House prepares to vote on emergency aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan later this week.

Israel is engaged in a war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip and was attacked by Iran over the weekend, while Ukraine continues to defend itself from a Russian invasion.

Johnson, speaking at a press conference during which he only took one question, said removing him as speaker would throw a wrench into a chamber that needs "steady hands at the wheel" to address domestic and global issues.

"Look, I regard myself as a wartime speaker. I mean, in a literal sense," Johnson said. "I knew that when I took the gavel. I didn't anticipate that this would be an easy path."

Johnson repeated comments from former GOP House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who he said posted on his social media that "this is the hardest challenge that's faced a speaker probably in the history of the country."

"He said, arguably, maybe comparable to the Civil War, but maybe worse," Johnson said, referring to the period between 1861 and 1865 when Southern states seceded from the United States in an attempt to preserve slavery of Black people. The death toll from the war is estimated at 620,000.

Johnson then spoke about the narrow margin that GOP leaders have in the House, which currently holds 218 Republicans and 213 Democrats.

"A single-vote margin at a difficult time when the nation is terribly divided," Johnson said. "The way we get through that is we show unity and we explain how we have answers to all these great challenges."

Former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee for president this fall, is on trial in a New York state criminal courtroom facing charges of falsifying business records. Trump would oppose President Joe Biden this fall in what has been so far a bitter campaign.

Johnson appeared with Trump at Florida's Mar-a-Lago on Friday and appeared to get the backing of the

former president, possibly insulating him from efforts to remove him as speaker.

Greene motion to vacate

Georgia Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene filed a motion to vacate the speaker post in March, just before the House left on a two-week break.

Unlike the motion to vacate that Florida GOP Rep. Matt Gaetz filed against McCarthy last fall, this one was not intended to be "privileged," meaning that it didn't force a vote within two days. Greene has not said when she may push for a floor vote.

Massie said that Johnson's actions as speaker, including advancing bipartisan bills that have been able to move through the Democratically controlled Senate and garner Biden's signature, are key reasons he wants to remove him from power.

Massie said that Johnson should publicly announce that he would resign once the conference decides on a successor, or that he should announce a future date for his resignation. That would allow the House GOP Conference to have a smooth transition without the weeks of stalemate and drama that marked the that followed the ousting of McCarthy.

Border security demands from GOP

South Carolina GOP Rep. Ralph Norman said following the House Republican meeting that he respects Massie, but disagrees with his actions.

"The last thing this country needs is to throw a speaker out, even though I disagree with what he's done," Norman said. "I wouldn't put the country through that, so I'm against that."

Numerous House Republican lawmakers in the meeting, Norman said, made it clear to Johnson that something must be done to address border security.

Louisiana Republican Rep. Garret Graves said following the meeting he doesn't believe a floor vote on the motion to vacate Johnson from the speaker's office is imminent.

"I don't think that the threat is really real at this point just because you don't have an alternative," Graves said. "You have a loosely affiliated coalition government at this point. You're not going to get a majority of votes for any new person. And for that reason, I don't think they're going to go through with it at this point."

House Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole, an Oklahoma Republican, said he's "not too worried about Speaker Johnson," despite Massie's calls for resignation.

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.

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe purchases foster village

Facility meant to divert Native children from state foster care, encourage cultural connections

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - APRIL 16, 2024 7:00 AM

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe purchased the Simply Smiles Children's Village last month, allowing the tribe to reopen one of the few foster care villages in the state meant to serve Indigenous children.

Some Cheyenne River tribally enrolled children are placed in foster homes outside of the reservation, which can make it more difficult for the children to stay in touch with their cultural heritage and retain familial and community relationships. About 40% of state licensed foster homes in South Dakota are located in the Sioux Falls area. As of September 2023, 165 Cheyenne River-enrolled children were in state custody.

That's a form of "cultural genocide," said Colt Combellick, who served as clinical coordinator for the village and is discussing returning to the village when it reopens under tribal ownership.

"If 11% of foster homes in South Dakota are Native American and there are 800 Native American children who need placement, that need isn't being met," Combellick told South Dakota Searchlight. "So why not

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the tribe run that and try to meet that need?"

In 2009, the tribe partnered with Simply Smiles, a nonprofit organization, to reduce the growing number of foster children being placed off-reservation. The nonprofit eventually built the 8-acre village in La Plant, allowing children to live in a family setting in houses with a licensed foster parent while using resources found in more institutional settings.

The village closed in March 2023. The hope is to reopen the village this year, said Madonna Thunder Hawk, a Lakota activist and member of a Cheyenne River grandmothers group.

"It's a step forward," Thunder Hawk said. "It's important that we have child welfare within our tribal society — we need control over that. ... We'll open the doors to the children's village and hopefully stop the flow of children into the South Dakota foster system."

This purchase makes Cheyenne River one of the few tribal nations in the state and nation with a tribally run foster care village.

With ownership under the tribe, the village can be more reflective of the cultural needs of the families and children who live there, Combellick said. Some ideas include housing homeless elders inside the village and partnering with the school to house a tutoring operation.

The village can house up to 18 children and three caretakers, along with space for therapy, offices and other living spaces. Combellick added that the tribe hopes to build two more houses.

MarShondria Adams also is interested in returning as a foster parent and helping prepare potential foster parents for their role at the village. South Dakota historically has struggled to recruit Native American foster parents. The tribally owned foster village could remove that barrier.

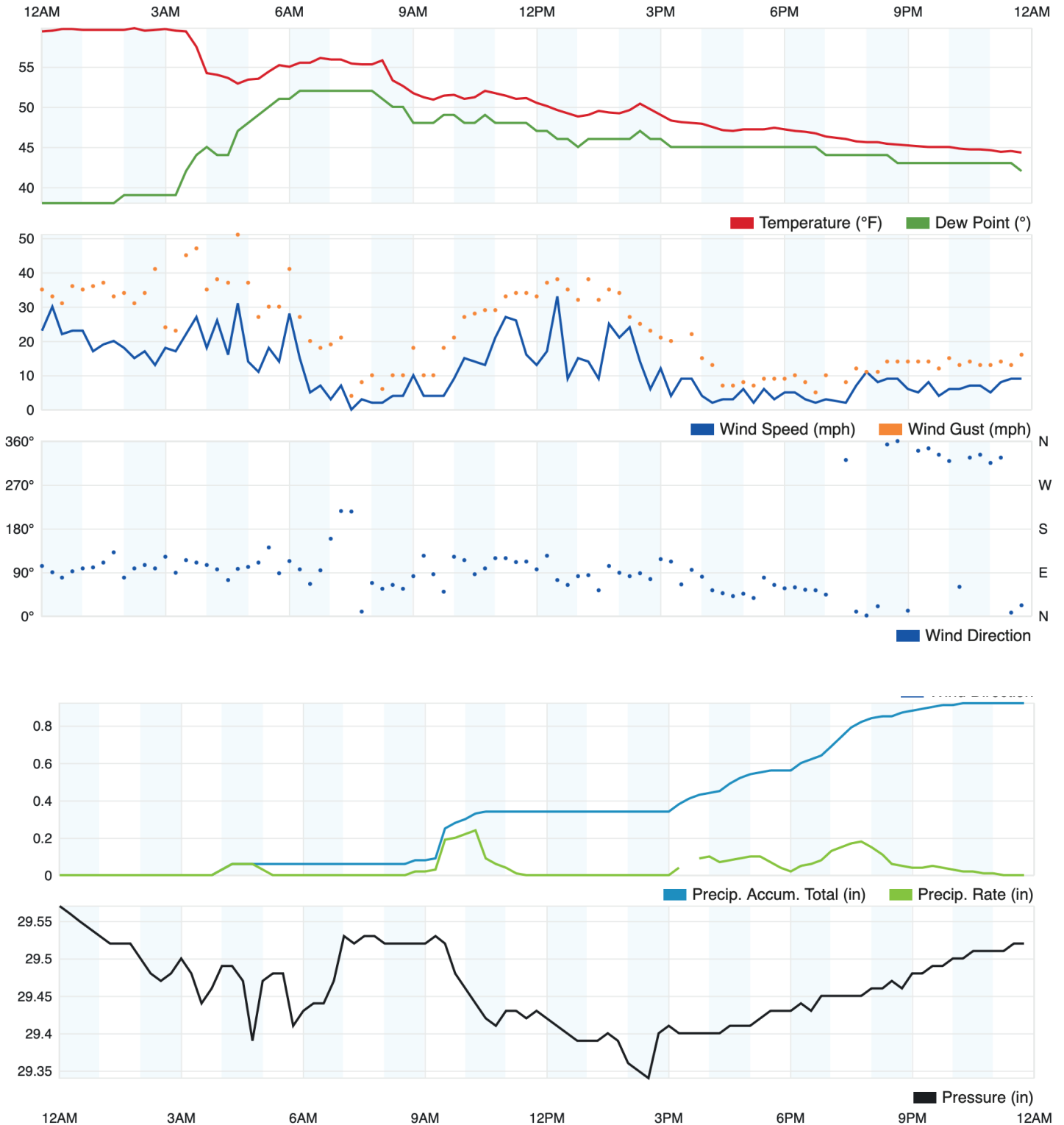
"Opening with the tribe will be more culturally efficient and focus on the ways of life people already adhere to and want to see for both their children and elders," Adams said. "The sacredness has been vocalized, seen, felt and heard."

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.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Gradual Clearing and Breezy

High: 59 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 33 °F

Thursday



Increasing Clouds and Breezy

High: 47 °F

Thursday Night



Partly Cloudy and Blustery then Mostly Clear

Low: 27 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny and Breezy

High: 43 °F

Today



Light Rain ending over northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota this morning.

Clouds clearing over central South Dakota, shifting to the James River Valley midday, and expanding to eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota this afternoon.



Highs: near 60°

Thursday



Increasing Clouds during the day. **Breezy.** Winds out of the northwest 25-35 mph with higher gusts. Highs: 45 to 50°

Friday



Increasing Clouds during the day. **Breezy.** Winds out of the northwest 25-35 mph with higher gusts. Highs: 40 to 47°

Saturday



Highs: 45 to 50°

Sunday



Highs: near 60°



Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/aberdeem

Drier weather will return this afternoon through the weekend. After highs in the 40s to around 50 degrees Thursday through Saturday, temperatures will rebound to near 60 degrees again Sunday.

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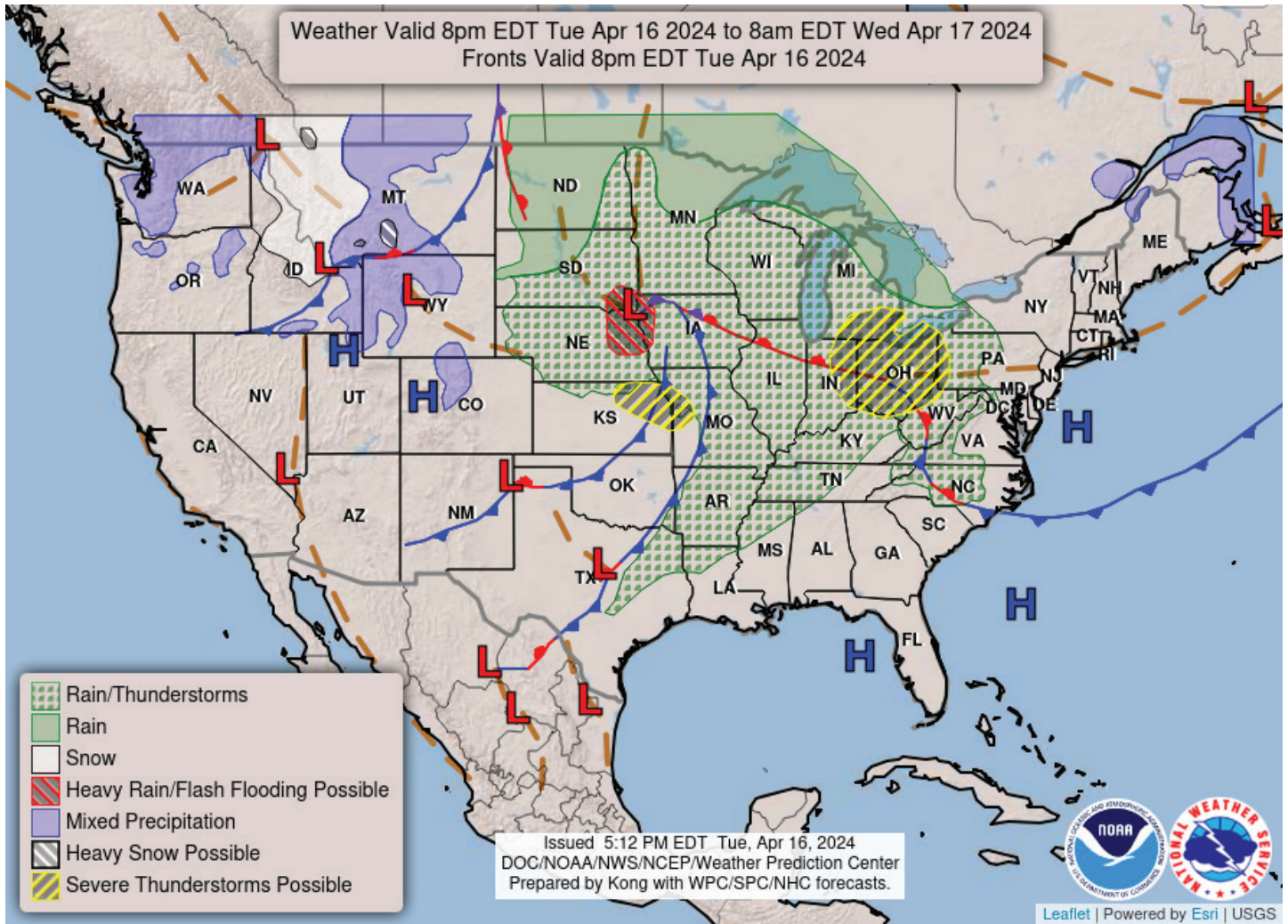
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 60 °F at 2:41 AM
Low Temp: 44 °F at 11:11 PM
Wind: 54 mph at 3:35 AM
Precip: : Total: 1.15

Day length: 13 hours, 42 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1913
Record Low: 10 in 1953
Average High: 59
Average Low: 32
Average Precip in April.: 0.85
Precip to date in April: 2.34
Average Precip to date: 2.91
Precip Year to Date: 3.29
Sunset Tonight: 8:23:12 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:38:38 am



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Today in Weather History

April 17, 2006: A strong spring storm moved across the Northern and Central Plains, bringing precipitation and stiff northwest winds. Sustained winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts around 70 mph, were felt across a good portion of western South Dakota for more than 24 hours as the storm slowly crossed the region.

1922: Southern Illinois and Western Indiana saw two rounds of severe weather, including tornadoes. The first significant tornado occurred just before midnight on the 16 near Oakdale, Illinois. This tornado killed 4 and injured 22 others. Five additional tornadoes took place between midnight and 3 AM on the 17. During the mid-morning and early afternoon hours, two estimated F4 tornadoes caused devastation in Hedrick and near Orestes in Indiana. A postcard from one farm near Orestes was dropped near Mt. Cory, Ohio, 124 miles away.

1922 - A family of at least six tornadoes caused death and destruction along parts of a 210 mile path from north of Ogden IL to Allen County OH, killing sixteen persons. A post card, picked up in Madison County IN, was found 124 miles away near Mount Cory OH. (The Weather Channel)

1942: West Palm Beach, FL was soaked by 8.35 inches of rain in just two hours.

1953 - One of the few severe hailstorms accompanied by snow, sleet, glaze, and rain, pelted parts of Kay, Osage, Creek, Tulsa, Washington, and Rogers Counties in northeastern Oklahoma late in the day. Nearly 10,000 insurance claims were filed. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - The Mississippi River reached a flood crest at Saint Paul MN four feet higher than any previous mark. During the next two weeks record levels were reached along the Mississippi between Saint Paul and Hannibal MO. Flooding caused more than 100 million dollars damage, but timely warnings kept the death toll down to just twelve persons. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Twenty-two cities in the central U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. Temperatures warmed into the 70s and 80s from the High Plains Region to the Mississippi Valley, with readings in the low 90s reported in the Southern Plains Region. Tulsa OK hit 92 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Heavy snow blanketed northern Arizona. Snowfall totals ranged up to 16 inches at Pinetop, with 10 inches reported at Flagstaff. Afternoon thunderstorms spawned a couple of tornadoes in Idaho. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Arctic cold invaded the north central U.S. Missoula MT was blanketed with four inches of snow, and Glasgow MT reported a record cold morning low of 14 degrees above zero. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - High winds in northern Utah, gusting to 90 mph in Weber County, blew a trampoline through a living room window, and strong winds associated with a cold front crossing the Middle Atlantic Coast Region gusted to 75 mph in the Chesapeake Bay area of Virginia. Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Valentine NE was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of 10 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002: The heat wave continued across the east as high pressure off the Carolina blocked a frontal boundary across the Plains. Records for the date included:

Newark, New Jersey: 97

NYC Central Park: 96

Hartford, Connecticut: 95

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 95

Reagan National Airport, DC: 95 (Tied monthly high)

Lynchburg, Virginia: 94

Atlantic City, New Jersey: 94

Norfolk, Virginia: 93

Providence, Rhode Island: 93

Boston, Massachusetts: 93

Portland, Maine: 80

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

“LET’S TURN IT ON!”

Thomas Edison worked many years to develop the light bulb. The day finally arrived when his first one was ready to be tested. He turned to his lab technician and said, “Take this downstairs and let’s turn it on!”

The technician was filled with excitement as he left the laboratory. As he ran down the stairs, he slipped, fell and broke the bulb.

Discouraged but not defeated, Edison went on to make his second bulb. When it was finished, he turned to the same technician and said, “Take this downstairs and let’s turn it on!” With the same amount of excitement, but more cautious, he carefully took the bulb downstairs, and the experiment was completed successfully.

More often than not, it is easy to give up when things do not turn out as we expect them to. In a moment of despair, we find it easier to turn our backs on projects that fail or goals that crumble. But even though we may make a mess of things, God has not nor ever will give up on us. The Lord, speaking through Joshua, said, “Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go!”

What a gracious promise of His presence and power!

Prayer: Lord, may we always work with You to turn every tragedy into triumph and every disaster into a delight that honors You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go! Joshua 1:1-9



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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.16.24

21 26 36 44 59 2

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$178,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 46 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.24

2 12 18 23 52 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,900,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 1 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.16.24

20 22 28 41 45 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.13.24

11 16 23 29 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$58,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.24

3 25 52 60 64 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.15.24

7 16 41 56 61 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$78,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Man gets 37-year sentence for kidnapping FBI employee in South Dakota

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — One of three people convicted of carjacking and kidnapping an FBI employee in South Dakota has been sentenced to 37 years in prison.

Juan Alvarez-Sorto, 25, was sentenced Friday in federal court, the Rapid City Journal reported. Alvarez-Sorto and Deyvin Morales, 29, were found guilty in January. Alvarez-Sorto also was convicted of unlawfully entering the U.S. after being deported to his home country, El Salvador.

A third suspect, 29-year-old Karla Lopez-Gutierrez, pleaded guilty in August. Morales and Lopez-Gutierrez are both scheduled for sentencing April 26.

Prosecutors said the trio left Greeley, Colorado, on May 5, 2022, and were on a “drug trafficking trip” to South Dakota in a Ford Expedition. Nearly out of gas at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Morales told the others they needed to “take over” a new vehicle, Lopez-Gutierrez testified in January.

A short time later, the FBI employee speeding in his Dodge Durango saw the Expedition and pulled over, believing it was a tribal officer. Prosecutors said the suspects took the Durango at gunpoint and forced the victim to go along.

“I’m still haunted by the trauma you inflicted upon me,” the victim told Alvarez-Sorto at the sentencing hearing. He said Alvarez-Sorto threatened his family and held a gun to the back of his head as he was face-down in the Badlands.

When the group stopped to buy gas and zip ties in the town of Hermosa, South Dakota, the victim managed to escape.

Morales and Alvarez-Sorto were arrested in Greeley a week later. Lopez-Gutierrez was arrested in August 2022 in Loveland, Colorado.

Alvarez-Sorto’s attorney, Alecia Fuller, said his client was remorseful and noted that relatives had abused Alvarez-Sorto as a child.

Columbia University’s president will testify in Congress on college conflicts over Israel-Hamas war

By ANNIE MA Associated Press

Four months after a contentious congressional hearing led to the resignations of two Ivy League presidents, Columbia University’s president is set to appear before the same committee over questions of antisemitism and the school’s response to conflicts on campus over the Israel-Hamas war.

Nemat Shafik, Columbia’s leader, was originally asked to testify at the House Education and Workforce Committee’s hearing in December, but she declined, citing scheduling conflicts.

The December hearing instead featured the presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, whose lawyerly responses drew fierce backlash and fueled weeks of controversy. The presidents of Penn and Harvard have since resigned.

During a heated line of questioning at the December hearing, Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., asked the university leaders to answer whether “calling for the genocide of Jews” would violate each university’s code of conduct.

Liz Magill, the then-president of Penn, and Claudine Gay, then-president of Harvard, both said it would depend on the details of the situation. MIT president Sally Kornbluth said that she had not heard a calling for the genocide of Jews on MIT’s campus, and that speech “targeted at individuals, not making public statements,” would be considered harassment.

Almost immediately, the careful responses from the university presidents drew criticism from donors,

alumni and politicians. Magill resigned shortly after the hearing. Gay stepped down in January, following an extended campaign that accused her of plagiarism.

Shafik is expected to testify Wednesday along with Columbia University board members. Tensions and accusations of hate and bias have roiled Columbia, like at its sibling colleges, but Shafik has the benefit of hindsight in preparing her remarks. In an op-ed published in the Wall Street Journal Tuesday, Shafik emphasized the delicate balance between protecting free speech and fostering a safe environment for students on campus.

"Calling for the genocide of a people — whether they are Israelis or Palestinians, Jews, Muslims or anyone else — has no place in a university community," Shafik wrote. "Such words are outside the bounds of legitimate debate and unimaginably harmful."

Since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, tensions have run high on university campuses. Jewish students have said that their schools are not doing enough to address instances of antisemitism. Meanwhile, students who have organized in support of Palestinian rights say they have been disproportionately targeted and censored by campus administrations.

Columbia, along with many other colleges and school districts, is the subject of a series of Department of Education investigations into antisemitism and Islamophobia on campuses. It has also been targeted by lawsuits from both sides. The New York Civil Liberties Union sued over whether the university singled out two pro-Palestinian student organizations when it suspended them from campus over protests in the fall. Groups of Jewish students have also filed suit, saying antisemitism on campus violates their civil rights.

Senate will convene the Mayorkas impeachment trial as Democrats plot a quick dismissal

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats could end the impeachment trial of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on Wednesday before arguments even begin.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is expected to call votes to dismiss two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas after senators are sworn in as jurors midday, a move that could scuttle the trial and frustrate Republicans who have demanded that House prosecutors be able to make their case. Democrats appear to be united in opposition to moving forward.

The House narrowly voted in February to impeach Mayorkas for his handling of the U.S.-Mexico border, arguing in the two articles that he "willfully and systematically" refused to enforce immigration laws. House impeachment managers appointed by Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., delivered the charges to the Senate on Tuesday, standing in the well of the Senate and reading the them aloud to a captive audience of senators.

The entire process could be done within hours on Wednesday. Majority Democrats have said the GOP case against Mayorkas doesn't rise to the "high crimes and misdemeanors" laid out as a bar for impeachment in the Constitution, and Schumer probably has enough votes to end the trial immediately if he decides to do so.

Schumer has said he wants to "address this issue as expeditiously as possible."

"Impeachment should never be used to settle a policy disagreement," Schumer said. "That would set a horrible precedent for the Congress."

As Johnson signed the articles Monday in preparation for sending them across the Capitol, he said Schumer should convene a trial to "hold those who engineered this crisis to full account."

Schumer "is the only impediment to delivering accountability for the American people," Johnson said. "Pursuant to the Constitution, the House demands a trial."

Once the senators are sworn in on Wednesday, the chamber will turn into the court of impeachment, with Democratic Sen. Patty Murray of Washington presiding. Murray is the president pro tempore of the Senate, or the senior-most member of the majority party who sits in for the vice president.

Exactly how Democrats will proceed on Wednesday is still unclear. Impeachment rules generally allow the Senate majority to decide how to manage the trial, and Schumer has not said exactly what he will do.

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Senate Republicans are likely to try to raise a series of objections if Schumer calls votes to dismiss or table. But ultimately they cannot block a dismissal if majority Democrats have the votes.

In any case, Republicans would not be able to win the support of the two-thirds of the Senate that is needed to convict and remove Mayorkas from office — Democrats control the Senate, 51-49, and they appear to be united against the impeachment effort. Not one House Democrat supported it, either.

While most Republicans oppose quick dismissal, some have hinted they could vote with Democrats.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said last week he wasn't sure what he would do if there were a move to dismiss the trial. "I think it's virtually certain that there will not be the conviction of someone when the constitutional test has not been met," he said.

At the same time, Romney said he wants to at least express his view that "Mayorkas has done a terrible job, but he's following the direction of the president and has not met the constitutional test of a high crime or misdemeanor."

The two articles argue that Mayorkas not only refused to enforce existing law but also breached the public trust by lying to Congress and saying the border was secure. The House vote was the first time in nearly 150 years a Cabinet secretary was impeached.

Since then, Johnson has delayed sending the articles to the Senate for weeks while both chambers finished work on government funding legislation and took a two-week recess. Johnson had said he would send them to the Senate last week, but he punted again after Senate Republicans said they wanted more time to prepare.

House impeachment managers previewed some of their arguments at a hearing with Mayorkas on Tuesday morning about President Joe Biden's budget request for the department.

Tennessee Rep. Mark Green, the chairman of the House Homeland Security panel, told the secretary that he has a duty under the law to control and guard U.S. borders, and "during your three years as secretary, you have failed to fulfill this oath. You have refused to comply with the laws passed by Congress, and you have breached the public trust."

Mayorkas defended the department's efforts but said the nation's immigration system is "fundamentally broken, and only Congress can fix it."

Other impeachment managers are Michael McCaul of Texas, Andy Biggs of Arizona, Ben Cline of Virginia, Andrew Garbarino of New York, Michael Guest of Mississippi, Harriet Hageman of Wyoming, Clay Higgins of Louisiana, Laurel Lee of Florida, August Pfluger of Texas and Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia.

At a press conference with a group of Republican senators after the articles were delivered, the impeachment managers demanded that Schumer move forward with their case.

"The voice of the people is very clear," said McCaul, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "Secure the border and impeach this man, this criminal."

If Democrats are unable to dismiss or table the articles, they could follow the precedent of several impeachment trials for federal judges over the last century and hold a vote to create a trial committee that would investigate the charges. While there is sufficient precedent for this approach, Democrats may prefer to end the process completely, especially in a presidential election year when immigration and border security are top issues.

If the Senate were to proceed to an impeachment trial, it would be the third in five years. Democrats impeached President Donald Trump twice, once over his dealings with Ukraine and a second time in the days after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Trump was acquitted by the Senate both times.

At a trial, senators would be forced to sit in their seats for the duration, maybe weeks, while the House impeachment managers and lawyers representing Mayorkas make their cases. The Senate is allowed to call witnesses, as well, if it so decides, and it can ask questions of both sides after the opening arguments are finished.

First 7 jurors are chosen for Trump's hush money criminal trial, with 11 more still needed

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The first seven jurors for Donald Trump's hush money trial were seated Tuesday after lawyers grilled the jury pool about their social media posts, political views and personal lives to decide who can sit in fair judgment of the former president.

The panelists who were selected are an information technology worker, an English teacher, an oncology nurse, a sales professional, a software engineer and two lawyers.

Eleven more people still must be sworn in before opening statements begin as early as next week in the first criminal trial of a former commander in chief. It's a moment of reckoning for Trump, who has tried to put off his prosecutions until after the November election and casts himself as the victim of a politically motivated justice system.

The trial puts Trump's legal problems at the center of his closely contested race against President Joe Biden. It's the first of Trump's four criminal cases to reach trial, and it may be the only one to return a verdict before voters decide whether to elect the presumptive GOP presidential nominee.

The methodical process unfolding in the Manhattan courtroom highlights the challenge of finding people who can fairly judge the polarizing defendant in the city where he built his real estate empire before being elected president in 2016. Even so, jury selection moved quicker than expected Tuesday afternoon. It was set to resume Thursday.

On his way out of the courthouse, Trump stopped in the hallway to rail against the case to reporters, accusing Judge Juan Merchan of "rushing" the trial. He has denied any wrongdoing.

"We are going to continue our fight against this judge," said Trump, who pushed unsuccessfully to have Merchan removed from the case.

During an appearance later Tuesday at a bodega in Harlem, Trump was asked what he thought of the jurors he had seen. He said it was "a little bit early to see," adding, "We'll see what happens."

Over two days, dozens of potential jurors have been excused after saying they could not be impartial or because they had other commitments. Trump's lawyers challenged a handful of people over social media posts, and one person was dismissed over a 2017 post about Trump that said "Lock him up!"

Several would-be jurors told the judge they believed they could decide the case fairly, no matter their feelings about Trump or his policies as president.

Trump looked on in the courtroom as potential jurors — whose names are known only to prosecutors, Trump and their legal teams — shared details of their lives and impressions of him. The judge admonished Trump at one point after he spoke loudly and gestured while the judge questioned one woman about a social media post.

"I don't know what he was uttering, but it was audible and he was gesturing. And he was speaking in the direction of the juror," Merchan said. "I won't tolerate that. I will not tolerate any jurors being intimidated in this courtroom."

Prosecutor Joshua Steinglass took Trump's notoriety head-on, telling the jury pool that attorneys were not looking for people who had been "living under a rock for the past eight years." They just needed to keep an open mind.

"This case has nothing to do with your personal politics ... it's not a referendum on the Trump presidency or a popularity contest or who you're going to vote for in November. We don't care. This case is about whether this man broke the law," he said.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records as part of an alleged effort to keep salacious — and, he says, bogus — stories about his sex life from emerging during his 2016 campaign.

With the trial expected to last for six weeks or more, several jury pool members brought up plans they have for Memorial Day and beyond.

One man was excused after saying he feared his ability to be impartial could be compromised by “unconscious bias” from growing up in Texas and working in finance with people who “intellectually tend to slant Republican.”

“I’m not sure that I can say beyond a reasonable doubt that I can be fair,” another person told the judge. “I can try. But I’m not 100% sure I can be fair.” She was also dismissed.

One person chosen to sit on the jury said he found Trump “fascinating,” adding that he “walks into a room and he sets people off one way or another.”

Another woman said she disagrees with Trump’s policies and sometimes finds herself frustrated by him. But she pledged to be fair and impartial, telling defense lawyer Todd Blanche that she would give her “level-headed best” if she were picked for the jury.

“I didn’t sleep last night thinking about could I do that,” she said.

Trump broke into a grin, nodding his head in an exaggerated manner, when one person said he had read two of the former president’s books, “The Art of the Deal” and “How to Get Rich.” The man, who said some of his wife’s family members are lobbyists for the Republican Party, said he didn’t think there was anything that would prevent him from looking at the case fairly.

“I feel that no one’s above the law,” he said.

The charges center on \$130,000 in payments that Trump’s company made to his then-lawyer, Michael Cohen. He paid that sum on Trump’s behalf to keep porn actor Stormy Daniels from going public with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump has denied the encounter ever happened.

Prosecutors say the payments to Cohen were falsely logged as legal fees. The prosecution has described the money as being part of a scheme to bury damaging stories Trump feared could help his opponent in the 2016 race, particularly as Trump’s reputation was suffering at the time from comments he made about women.

Trump has acknowledged reimbursing Cohen for the payment and that it was designed to stop Daniels from going public about the alleged encounter. But Trump has said it had nothing to do with the campaign. He hinted Tuesday at the defense his legal team will mount, telling reporters: “I was paying a lawyer and marked it down as a legal expense.”

“That’s exactly what it was. And you get indicted over that?” Trump said.

If convicted of falsifying business records, Trump faces up to four years in prison, though there’s no guarantee he will get time behind bars.

The Latest | Iran president warns of ‘massive’ response if Israel launches ‘tiniest invasion’

By The Associated Press undefined

Iran’s president has warned that the “tiniest invasion” by Israel would bring a “massive and harsh” response, as the region braces for potential Israeli retaliation after Iran’s attack over the weekend.

President Ebrahim Raisi spoke Wednesday at an annual army parade that was relocated to a barracks north of the capital, Tehran, from its usual venue on a highway in the city’s southern outskirts. Iranian authorities gave no explanation for its relocation, and state television didn’t broadcast it live, as it has in previous years.

Iran launched hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel over the weekend in response to an apparent Israeli strike on Iran’s embassy compound in Syria on April 1 that killed 12 people, including two Iranian generals.

Israel, with help from the United States, the United Kingdom, neighboring Jordan and other nations, successfully intercepted nearly all the missiles and drones.

Tensions in the region have increased since the start of the latest Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7, when Hamas and Islamic Jihad, two militant groups backed by Iran, carried out a cross-border attack that killed 1,200 people in Israel and kidnapped 250 others. Israel responded with an offensive in Gaza that has

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caused widespread devastation and killed more than 33,800 people, according to local health officials.

Currently:

- British envoy says Israel is 'making a decision to act' as Iran vows to respond to any incursion
- UN appeals for \$2.8 billion to help 3 million Palestinians in desperate need of food and other aid
- Israel is vowing to retaliate against Iran, risking further expanding their shadow war

Here is the latest:

UK FOREIGN SECRETARY DAVID CAMERON IN ISRAEL FOR MEETINGS

JERUSALEM — U.K. Foreign Secretary David Cameron says "it's clear the Israelis are making a decision to act" against Iran, but he hopes it will do so "in a way that is smart as well as tough and also does as little as possible to escalate this conflict."

Cameron landed in Israel on Wednesday for meetings with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials.

He said his main aim was to "focus back the eyes of the world back on the hostage situation" and urged Hamas to agree to a temporary cease-fire agreement.

Cameron told broadcasters that "the real need is to refocus back on Hamas, back on the hostages, back on getting the aid in, back on getting a pause in the conflict in Gaza."

Cameron is due to travel from the Middle East to a meeting of Group of Seven foreign ministers in Italy. He said he wanted the group of wealthy industrialized nations to "show a united front" and impose coordinated sanctions on Iran in response to its "malign activity" in the region.

"They need to be given a clear and unequivocal message by the G7 and I hope that will happen at the weekend," Cameron said.

RIGHTS GROUP SAYS ISRAELI FORCES JOINED OR FAILED TO STOP SETTLER ATTACKS ON PALESTINIANS

JERUSALEM — Human Rights Watch says Israeli forces either took part in or failed to stop settler attacks on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank that displaced hundreds of people from several Bedouin communities last fall.

Settler violence surged after the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that triggered the war in Gaza, leading to the complete uprooting of at least seven Palestinian Bedouin communities and displacement from several others, according to the New York-based rights group.

Settlers launched another wave of attacks late last week after a 14-year-old Israeli boy was killed in what Israeli authorities say was a militant attack. The United Nations' human rights office on Tuesday called on Israeli security forces to "immediately end their active participation in and support for settler attacks on Palestinians."

The Human Rights Watch report released Wednesday focused on the earlier rash of violence. The rights group says Israeli settlers assaulted Palestinians, stole their belongings and livestock and threatened to kill them if they did not leave permanently. The settlers also destroyed homes and schools.

The military didn't immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press.

IRAN THREATENS 'MASSIVE' RESPONSE IF ISRAEL LAUNCHES 'TINIEST INVASION'

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's president has warned that the "tiniest invasion" by Israel would bring a "massive and harsh" response, as the region braces for potential Israeli retaliation after Iran's attack over the weekend.

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Israel, with help from the United States, the United Kingdom, neighboring Jordan and other nations, successfully intercepted nearly all the missiles and drones.

Israel has vowed to respond, without saying when or how, while its allies have urged all sides to avoid

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further escalation.

Raisi said Saturday's attack was a limited one, and that if Iran had wanted to carry out a bigger attack, "nothing would remain from the Zionist regime." His remarks were carried by the official IRNA news agency.

Israel and Iran have waged a shadow war for decades, but the strike over the weekend was the first direct Iranian military attack on Israel.

UN APPEALS FOR \$2.8 BILLION TO PROVIDE AID TO 3 MILLION PALESTINIANS

UNITED NATIONS – The United Nations is appealing for \$2.8 billion to provide desperately needed aid to 3 million Palestinians, stressing that tackling looming famine in war-torn Gaza doesn't only require food but sanitation, water and health facilities.

Andrea De Domenico, the head of the U.N. humanitarian office for Gaza and the West Bank, told reporters Tuesday that "massive operations" are required to restore those services and meet minimum standards — and this can't be done during military operations.

He pointed to the destruction of hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, homes, roads and schools, adding that "there is not a single university that is standing in Gaza." De Domenico said there are signs of Israel's "good intention" to get humanitarian aid into Gaza, but the U.N. keeps pushing because it's not enough. He pointed to Israeli denials and delays on U.N. requests for aid convoys to enter Gaza.

The U.N. humanitarian official called for a complete change of focus to recognize that preventing famine goes beyond providing flour for bread or pita and to recognize that "water, sanitation and health are fundamental to curb famine."

IRAQ'S PM SAYS HE URGED CALM AMONG ALL PARTIES IN TALKS WITH BIDEN

WASHINGTON — Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani says he pressed President Joe Biden on the need "for all parties to calm down" as conflict threatens to worsen further between Iran and U.S. ally Israel.

Al-Sudani spoke to reporters Tuesday night on a Washington visit that included talks with Biden at the White House on Monday.

Saturday's drone and missile launches by Iran targeting Israel, including some that overflowed Iraqi airspace and others that were launched from Iraq by Iran-backed groups, have underscored the delicate relationship between Washington and Baghdad.

Al-Sudani said Iraq, like some other Arab nations, had tried unsuccessfully to talk Iran out of the strikes on Israel. Iran's attack was in retaliation for a suspected Israeli strike that killed senior Iranian military leaders at Iran's embassy complex in Syria.

Al-Sudani said the decision on allowing Iraqi airspace or soil to be used in any future attacks between Israel and Iran was Iraq's to make.

Iraqis "reaffirmed Iraq is an independent and sovereign nation," he said. "We do not want to be a part in this conflict. We discussed this with Iran and with Biden."

Russian missiles slam into a Ukraine city and kill 13 people as the war approaches a critical stage

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Three Russian missiles slammed into a downtown area of the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv on Wednesday, hitting an eight-floor apartment building and killing at least 13 people, authorities said.

At least 61 people, including two children, were wounded in the morning attack, Ukrainian emergency services said. Chernihiv lies about 150 kilometers (90 miles) north of the capital, Kyiv, near the border with Russia and Belarus, and has a population of around 250,000 people.

The latest Russian bombardment came as the war stretched into its third year and approached what could be a critical juncture as a lack of further military support from Ukraine's Western partners increasingly leaves it at the mercy of the Kremlin's bigger forces.

Through the winter months, Russia made no dramatic advance along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front

line, focusing instead on attritional warfare. However, Ukraine's shortage of artillery ammunition, troops and armored vehicles has allowed the Russians to gradually push forward, military analysts say.

A crucial element for Ukraine is the holdup in Washington of approval for an aid package that includes roughly \$60 billion for Ukraine. House Speaker Mike Johnson said Sunday that he would try to move the package forward this week.

Ukraine's need is now acute, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank.

"The Russians are breaking out of positional warfare and beginning to restore maneuver to the battlefield because of the delays in the provision of U.S. military assistance to Ukraine," the ISW said in an assessment late Tuesday.

"Ukraine cannot hold the present lines now without the rapid resumption of U.S. assistance, particularly air defense and artillery that only the U.S. can provide rapidly and at scale," it said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pleaded with Western countries to provide his country with more air defense systems. He said of the Chernihiv strike that "this would not have happened if Ukraine had received enough air defense equipment and if the world's determination to counter Russian terror was also sufficient."

Zelenskyy told PBS in an interview broadcast earlier this week that Ukraine recently ran out of air defense missiles while it was defending against a major missile and drone attack that destroyed one of Ukraine's largest power plants, part of a recent Russian campaign targeting energy infrastructure.

Ukrainian forces are digging in, building fortifications in anticipation of a major Russian offensive that Kyiv officials say could come as early as next month.

Ukraine is using long-range drone and missile strikes behind Russian lines which are designed to disrupt Moscow's war machine.

Russia's defense ministry said Wednesday that a Ukrainian drone was shot down over the Tatarstan region early Wednesday. That's the same area that was targeted in early April by Ukraine's deepest strike so far inside Russia, about 1,200 kilometers (745 miles) east of Ukraine.

Ukrainian drone developers have been extending the weapons' range.

Another Ukrainian drone was shot down over the Mordovia region, roughly 350 kilometers (220 miles) east of Moscow, the ministry said. That is 700 kilometers (430 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

About an hour before that Mordovia attack, Russia's civil aviation authority halted flights at airports in two of the country's largest cities, Nizhny Novgorod and Tatarstan's Kazan, because of safety concerns.

Also, unconfirmed reports said a Ukrainian missile struck an airfield in occupied Crimea. Neither Russian nor Ukrainian officials confirmed the strike, but local authorities temporarily closed a road where the airfield is located. Russian news agency Tass quoted the local mayor as saying windows in a mosque and a private house in the region were shattered in a blast there.

Myanmar's ousted leader Suu Kyi moved from prison to house arrest due to heat, military says

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Myanmar's jailed former leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved from prison to house arrest as a health measure due to a heat wave, the military government said as it freed more than 3,000 prisoners under an amnesty to mark this week's traditional New Year holiday.

Suu Kyi, 78, and Win Myint, the 72-year-old former president of her ousted government, were among the elderly and infirm prisoners moved to house arrest because of the severe heat, military spokesperson Maj. Gen. General Zaw Min Tun told foreign media representatives late Tuesday. The move has not yet been publicly announced in Myanmar.

Suu Kyi's transfer comes as the army has been suffering a string of major defeats at the hands of pro-democracy resistance fighters and their allies in ethnic minority guerrilla forces. The nationwide conflict began after the army ousted the elected government in February 2021, imprisoned Suu Kyi and began

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suppressing nonviolent protests that sought a return to democratic rule.

Suu Kyi has been serving a 27-year prison term on a variety of criminal convictions in a specially built annex of the main prison in the capital Naypyitaw, where Myanmar's meteorological department said temperatures reached 39 degrees Celsius (102.2 degrees Fahrenheit) on Tuesday afternoon. Win Myint was serving an eight-year prison sentence in Taungoo in Myanmar's Bago region.

Suu Kyi's supporters and independent analysts say the charges were fabricated in an attempt to discredit her and legitimize the military's seizure of power. The military had claimed that her National League for Democracy Party used widespread electoral fraud to win a landslide victory in the 2020 general election, an allegation independent observers found unconvincing.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an independent group that monitors casualties and arrests, more than 20,351 people arrested on political charges since the 2021 army takeover are still in detention, most of whom have not received criminal convictions.

Suu Kyi's health has reportedly deteriorated in prison. In September last year, reports emerged that she was suffering from symptoms of low blood pressure including dizziness and loss of appetite, but had been denied treatment at qualified facilities outside the prison system.

Those reports could not be independently confirmed, but her younger son Kim Aris said in interviews that he had heard that his mother has been extremely ill and has been suffering from gum problems and was unable to eat. Aris, who lives in the U.K., urged that Myanmar's military government be pressured to free his mother and other political prisoners.

News about Suu Kyi is tightly controlled by the military government, and even her lawyers are banned by a gag order from talking to the media about her cases. Her legal team has faced several hurdles, including being unable to meet with her to receive her instructions since they last saw her in person in December 2022.

Whether the latest move was meant to be temporary was not announced.

Spokesperson Zaw Min Tun did not say where the released prisoners were being moved to in his remarks to U.S.-government funded Voice of America and Britain's BBC, but there was no indication it might be one of her own former homes. The lakeside house where Suu Kyi spent most of her years in house arrest is in legal limbo after a court-ordered auction in March failed to find a buyer.

Before being sent to prison, Suu Kyi was reportedly held in a military safe house inside an army base.

Other prisoners were released for the Thingyan New Year holiday, state-run MRTV television announced Wednesday, but it wasn't immediately clear how many were pro-democracy activists and political prisoners who were detained for protesting army rule. Aung Myo Kyaw of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said the group had heard of 7-10 people released in Yangon and nine from a prison in the central regions of Magway.

MRTV said that the head of the ruling military council, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, had pardoned 3,303 prisoners, including 28 foreigners who will be deported from Myanmar. He also reduced sentences for others. Mass amnesties on the holiday are not unusual in Myanmar.

Family and friends gathered outside the gates of Insein Prison, in northern Yangon, waiting expectantly and scanning the windows of buses that brought the released detainees out of the vast complex. Some of those waiting held up signs with the names of the people they were seeking, in the same fashion as at an airport arrival hall.

Amid tearful reunions, Khin Thu Zar said she was happy, but that she would have to call her family.

"My family still doesn't know about my release," she said. She, like many political detainees, had been held on a charge of incitement, a catch-all offense widely used to arrest critics of the government and punishable by up to three years in prison.

Suu Kyi, the daughter of Myanmar's martyred independence hero Gen. Aung San, spent almost 15 years as a political prisoner under house arrest by previous military governments between 1989 and 2010. Her tough stand against military rule turned her into a symbol of the nonviolent struggle for democracy and won her the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.

Nay Phone Latt, spokesperson of the shadow National Unity Government, told The Associated Press that relocating Suu Kyi and Win Myint, instead of releasing them outright, was not satisfactory. The NUG views itself as the country's legitimate administrative body and serves as an opposition umbrella organization.

He said all political prisoners, including those two, were unjustly detained and should be freed without conditions.

He said it was unacceptable for the military government to resolve its difficulties by playing political games, such as changing prisoners' places of detention and reducing sentences. The army's recent battle-field setbacks, including last week's loss to resistance forces of Myawaddy, a major trading town on the border with Thailand, is seen by many as underlining its increasing weakness.

A storm dumps record rain across the desert nation of UAE and floods the Dubai airport

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The desert nation of the United Arab Emirates attempted to dry out Wednesday from the heaviest rain ever recorded there after a deluge flooded out Dubai International Airport, disrupting travel through the world's busiest airfield for international travel.

The state-run WAM news agency called the rain Tuesday "a historic weather event" that surpassed "anything documented since the start of data collection in 1949." That's before the discovery of crude oil in this energy-rich nation then part of a British protectorate known as the Trucial States.

Rain also fell in Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. However, the rains were acute across the UAE. One reason may have been "cloud seeding," in which small planes flown by the government go through clouds burning special salt flares. Those flares can increase precipitation.

Several reports quoted meteorologists at the National Center for Meteorology as saying they flew six or seven cloud-seeding flights before the rains. The center did not immediately respond to questions Wednesday, though flight-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed one aircraft affiliated with the UAE's cloud-seeding efforts flew around the country Sunday.

The UAE, which heavily relies on energy-hungry desalination plants to provide water, conducts cloud seeding in part to increase its dwindling, limited groundwater.

The rains began late Monday, soaking the sands and roadways of Dubai with some 20 millimeters (0.79 inches) of rain, according to meteorological data collected at Dubai International Airport. The storms intensified around 9 a.m. local Tuesday and continued throughout the day, dumping more rain and hail onto the overwhelmed city.

By the end of Tuesday, more than 142 millimeters (5.59 inches) of rainfall had soaked Dubai over 24 hours. An average year sees 94.7 millimeters (3.73 inches) of rain at Dubai International Airport, a hub for the long-haul carrier Emirates.

At the airport, standing water lapped on taxiways as aircraft landed. Arrivals were halted Tuesday night, and passengers struggled to reach terminals through the floodwater covering surrounding roads.

One couple, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity to speak freely in a country with strict laws that criminalize critical speech, called the situation at the airport "absolute carnage."

"You cannot get a taxi. There's people sleeping in the Metro station. There's people sleeping in the airport," the man said Wednesday.

They ended up getting a taxi to near their home some 30 kilometers (18 miles) away, but floodwater on the road stopped them. A bystander helped them over a highway barrier with their carry-on luggage, the bottles of gin they picked up from duty-free clinking away.

Dubai International Airport acknowledged Wednesday morning that the flooding had left "limited transportation options" and affected flights as aircraft crews couldn't reach the airfield.

"Recovery will take some time," the airport said on the social platform X. "We thank you for your patience and understanding while we work through these challenges."

Emirates said the airline had halted check-in for passengers departing from Dubai itself from 8 a.m.

until midnight Wednesday as it tried to clear the airport of transit passengers — many of whom had been sleeping where they could in its cavernous terminals.

“We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience caused,” the airline said on X. “Emirates is working hard to restore our scheduled operations.”

Passengers on FlyDubai, Emirates’ low-cost sister airline, also faced disruptions.

Paul Griffiths, the airport’s CEO, acknowledged continued issues with flooding Wednesday morning, saying every place an aircraft could be safely parked was taken. Some aircraft had been diverted to Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, the city-state’s second airfield.

“It remains an incredibly challenging time. In living memory, I don’t think anyone has ever seen conditions like it,” Griffiths told the state-owned talk radio station Dubai Eye. “We are in uncharted territory, but I can assure everyone we are working as hard as we possibly can to make sure our customers and staff are looked after.”

Schools across the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms, largely shut ahead of the storm and government employees were largely working remotely if able. Many workers stayed home as well, though some ventured out, with the unfortunate stalling out their vehicles in deeper-than-expected water covering some roads.

Authorities sent tanker trucks out into the streets and highways to pump away the water. Water poured into some homes, forcing people to bail out their houses.

The country’s hereditary rulers offered no overall damage or injury information for the nation, as some slept in their flooded vehicles Tuesday night. In Ras al-Khaimah, the country’s northernmost emirate, police said one 70-year-old man died when his vehicle was swept away by floodwater.

Fujairah, an emirate on the UAE’s eastern coast, saw the heaviest rainfall Tuesday with 145 millimeters (5.7 inches) falling there.

Authorities canceled school and the government instituted remote work again for Wednesday.

Rain is unusual in the UAE, an arid, Arabian Peninsula nation, but occurs periodically during the cooler winter months. Many roads and other areas lack drainage given the lack of regular rainfall, causing flooding.

Meanwhile in neighboring Oman, a sultanate that rests on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, at least 19 people were killed in heavy rains in recent days, according to a statement Wednesday from the country’s National Committee for Emergency Management. That includes some 10 schoolchildren swept away in a vehicle with an adult, which saw condolences come into the country from rulers across the region.

Homes are demolished in Ivory Coast’s main city over alleged health concerns. Thousands are homeless

By TOUSSAINT N’GOTTA Associated Press

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — Dame Touré rushed to quickly gather what she could as bulldozers rolled into her neighborhood in Ivory Coast’s fast-growing economic hub of Abidjan. Her three children joined her, stuffing plastic bags with clothes and whatever other items they could grab, before their home was reduced to rubble as armed security forces looked on.

The Touré home was among hundreds crushed in a February wave of demolitions targeting Abidjan’s underdeveloped areas.

The government says it’s because of public health concerns as the poor areas — built along a lagoon in this port city of 6.3 million on West Africa’s southern coast — suffer deadly floods during the rainy season. More than 300 people have been killed since 2005 and officials say the deluges become breeding grounds for water-borne and other diseases.

“My children and I now sleep under the sun,” said Touré, 50. “We don’t know where to go.”

Demolitions in low-income neighborhoods are nothing new in Abidjan, where rapid urbanization has led to a population boom and housing shortages, with nearly one in five Ivorians residing in the city. It’s a challenge in many parts of Africa where economic woes pushed more people into cities in search of better

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opportunities, straining an already overstretched infrastructure.

However, the latest Abidjan demolition — mainly in impoverished suburbs in the Gesco and Sebroko districts — is one of the largest in years, with an estimated hundreds of thousands of residents affected since it began in late January. Evicted families and rights groups say that this time, it's being done without prior notice or compensation.

Analysts say many African governments struggle to manage population explosions in cities and meet growing infrastructure needs. Chimezie Anajama, a policy researcher and founder of Blooming Social Pen development nonprofit, says few administrations have managed to solve the developmental problem.

"There must be a strong commitment by different African governments to come up with creative solutions to address the infrastructure gaps in African cities," Anajama said.

Local authorities have defended the demolitions, and say relocations of families left homeless to safer areas has started.

Some 35% of Ivorians are poor. Water shortages are a daily curse, with many forced to fetch water from streams for their daily needs. The country has also had to contend with other challenges, such as jihadi attacks that have spread to coastal states in West Africa, including Ivory Coast.

"The aim is to provide a decent ... living environment for these people," the Ivory Coast's communications minister, Amadou Coulibaly, has said of the demolition campaigns. He claimed in February that some of those evicted in neighborhoods like Boribana are being resettled in at least 1,000 houses built by the government.

Many families, however, remain homeless, stranded in several parts of the city.

The demolitions are being carried out in "a brutal manner ... causing disastrous consequences for many families already vulnerable," the Ivorian League for Human Rights said in a statement. It urged authorities to halt the campaign.

Among those affected by the demolitions were nearly 2,000 schoolchildren of Cha Hélène College in the Yopougon neighborhood, which was reduced to rubble in February.

The school was not informed it would be demolished — neither by the Ivory Coast's ministry of construction nor the national education ministry, said Sévérin Okpo Abe, the school's founder. The children were eventually enrolled in other nearby schools.

Most of the evicted residents who are not sleeping out in the open have either relocated to other parts of Ivory Coast or are squatting with residents elsewhere.

"We have been made homeless in our own country," said Aimée Ouédraogo, a spokesperson for women affected by the forced evictions.

The evictions broke up families and the homeless were scattered across the city, she added. "We no longer have a home, we no longer have our family, we no longer have our children next to us."

Amid the outrage and protest from the evicted, Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara has asked Abidjan's local authorities to "show solidarity ... to preserve cohesion and social peace."

However, city's officials say the demolitions are part of a broader project to reconstruct and provide basic amenities in the areas. Plots of land would be leased to those evicted for up to 25 years, for about \$16 a month, they say.

On April 8, the government announced it's started to compensate affected households and that each would get about \$405 to support the relocation. In a country where the minimum wage is about \$121 a month, some believe it's not enough to afford the growing cost of housing.

"All displaced people will receive the necessary support for their relocation," said Belmonde Dogo, the minister in charge of efforts to alleviate poverty.

The Yopougon municipality, mostly of working-class residents, also announced plans to help those affected.

But many like Touré say they were overwhelmed by helplessness watching bulldozers rampage through their neighborhoods.

"I don't have anyone in Abidjan and I don't have money to buy a house," said the mother of three, not knowing how she would go on. "I can't do it."

Storm dumps heaviest rain ever recorded in desert nation of UAE, flooding roads and Dubai's airport

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Heavy thunderstorms lashed the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, dumping the heaviest rain ever recorded in the country in the span of hours as it flooded out portions of major highways and Dubai's international airport.

The state-run WAM news agency called the rain "a historic weather event" that surpassed "anything documented since the start of data collection in 1949." That's before the discovery of crude oil in this energy-rich nation then part of a British protectorate known as the Trucial States.

The rains began late Monday, soaking the sands and roadways of Dubai with some 20 millimeters (0.79 inches) of rain, according to meteorological data collected at Dubai International Airport. The storms intensified around 9 a.m. local Tuesday and continued throughout the day, dumping more rain and hail onto the overwhelmed city.

By the end of Tuesday, more than 142 millimeters (5.59 inches) of rainfall had soaked Dubai over 24 hours. An average year sees 94.7 millimeters (3.73 inches) of rain at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel and a hub for the long-haul carrier Emirates.

At the airport, standing water lapped on taxiways as aircraft landed. The airport ended up halting arrivals Tuesday night and passengers struggled to reach terminals through the floodwater covering surrounding roads.

One couple, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to speak freely in a country with strict laws that criminalize critical speech, called the situation at the airport "absolute carnage."

"You cannot get a taxi. There's people sleeping in the Metro station. There's people sleeping in the airport," the man said Wednesday.

They ended up getting a taxi to near their home some 30 kilometers (18 miles) away, but floodwater on the road stopped them. A bystander helped them over a highway barrier with their carry-on luggage, the bottles of gin they picked up from duty free clinking away.

Dubai International Airport acknowledged Wednesday morning that the flooding had left "limited transportation options" and affected flights as aircraft crews couldn't reach the airfield.

"Recovery will take some time," the airport said on the social platform X. "We thank you for your patience and understanding while we work through these challenges."

Police and emergency personnel drove slowly through the flooded streets of Dubai. Lightning flashed Tuesday across the sky, occasionally touching the tip of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. The city's driverless Metro saw disruptions and flooded stations as well.

Schools across the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms, largely shut ahead of the storm and government employees were largely working remotely if able. Many workers stayed home as well, though some ventured out, with the unfortunate stalling out their vehicles in deeper-than-expected water covering some roads.

Authorities sent tanker trucks out into the streets and highways to pump away the water. Water poured into some homes, forcing people to bail out their houses.

The country's hereditary rulers offered no overall damage information or injury information for the nation, as some slept into their flooded vehicles Tuesday night. In Ras al-Khaimah, the country's northernmost emirate, police said one 70-year-old man died when his vehicle was swept away by floodwater.

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Rain is unusual in the UAE, an arid, Arabian Peninsula nation, but occurs periodically during the cooler winter months. Many roads and other areas lack drainage given the lack of regular rainfall, causing flooding.

Rain also fell in Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

In neighboring Oman, a sultanate that rests on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, at least 18

people had been killed in heavy rains in recent days, according to a statement Tuesday from the country's National Committee for Emergency Management. That includes some 10 schoolchildren swept away in a vehicle with an adult, which saw condolences come into the country from rulers across the region.

Maui Fire Department report on deadly wildfire details need for more equipment and mutual aid plans

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER, REBECCA BOONE and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — When wildfires broke out across Maui last August, some firefighters carried victims piggyback over downed power lines to safety and sheltered survivors inside their engines. Another drove a moped into a burning neighborhood again and again, whisking people away from danger one at a time.

But despite devoting nearly all the personnel and vehicles it had to the fight on Aug. 8, 2023, the Maui Fire Department was no match for an unprecedented series of blazes including one that killed 101 people in the historic town of Lahaina, according to a newly released report.

Maui Fire Department workers "risked their lives in a valiant effort to stop the spread of the fires and save lives," according to the report, made public Tuesday by the Western Fire Chiefs Association, and are now "grappling with questions about what they could have done differently, a reflection that will likely persist throughout the rest of their careers."

It was the first of two major assessments of the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century coming out this week. The Hawaii Attorney General is expected to release the first phase of a comprehensive report Wednesday that will include a timeline of the 72 hours before, during and after the fire.

The department's report describes the difficulties and harrowing conditions faced by firefighters returning to the reignited Lahaina fire, including many resources being deployed elsewhere, structures quickly catching ablaze amid extreme winds and downed electricity lines making it hard to move resources.

It identifies 17 specific challenges faced by the department — including poorly stocked fire engines, a lack of mutual aid agreements between Hawaii counties and limited equipment — and makes 111 recommendations aimed at preventing similar disasters in the future.

"The worst-case scenario happened, the fire hydrants began to lose water supply," the authors wrote. "It is unknown if the sheer number of burning homes caused the water connections to fail or if the water supply tanks were not filled due to the early morning loss of electricity."

The report describes a truck getting caught between downed lines and the fast-approaching flames. One crew member was able to leave in a smaller vehicle and bring back police officers to evacuate the crew. They huddled to one side of the truck, one of them unconscious from a medical emergency, to avoid the extreme heat before they were rescued.

All of that happened before 4:30 p.m., according to the report.

"There were firefighters fighting the fires in Lahaina as they well knew their homes were burning down," Fire Chief Brad Ventura said during a news conference in Kula on Tuesday. "There were firefighters who rescued people and kept them in their apparatus for several hours as they continued to evacuate others."

Ventura said he was "incredibly proud" of the response but believes the department can always improve.

One recommendation is that the department keep all back-up vehicles ready to go. Extra engines that were on standby for large incidents took up to an hour to deploy, according to the report, because they needed to be stocked with the proper equipment. The report did not say what they were missing.

The report also describes the chaos after the fire raged out of control. Around 6 p.m., it says, fire trucks drove over downed power lines carrying evacuees to safety. One crew came across a couple who had found a baby, and another pulled people from the water near the sea wall after they jumped into the ocean to avoid the flames.

The report says a repeater enabled radio communications to stay up despite cell towers and fiber-optic cable damage taking down the cellular network, but they were overwhelmed due to "a variety" of unspecified reasons.

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Other recommendations include creating a statewide mutual aid program and an evacuation plan for residents and tourists who speak different languages.

Many of the factors that contributed to the disaster are already known: A windstorm battering the island had downed power lines and blown off parts of rooftops, and debris blocked roads throughout Lahaina.

Hawaiian Electric has acknowledged that one of its power lines fell and caused a fire in Lahaina early on Aug. 8, but the utility company denies that the morning fire caused the flames that burned through the town later that day.

Roughly 40% of Maui County's firefighting resources were already tied up fighting other wildfires on a different part of the island.

A smaller firefighting team was tasked with handling any outbreaks in Lahaina. That crew brought the morning fire under control and even declared it extinguished, then broke for lunch. By the time they returned less than an hour later, flames had erupted in the same area and were quickly moving into a major subdivision.

"Our firefighters are well-trained, they are well-equipped. They are basically forced to make decisions every single day with the best information available," Giesa said of the crew leaving. "It's 20-20 hindsight, but our crews did everything that they normally do on fires."

Cellphone and internet service was also down in the area at times, so it was difficult for some to call for help or to get information about the fire. And emergency officials did not use Hawaii's extensive network of emergency sirens to warn Lahaina residents. The after-action report also recommends that officials undertake an analysis of the island's cellular system.

The high winds made it hard at times for first responders to communicate on their radios, and 911 operators and emergency dispatchers were overwhelmed with hundreds of calls.

Police and electricity crews tried to direct people away from roads that were partially or completely blocked by power lines. Meanwhile, people trying to flee burning neighborhoods packed the few thoroughfares in and out of town.

The traffic jam left some trapped in their cars when the fire overtook them, and others who were near the ocean jumped in to escape.

The report also highlights a vulnerability rooted in the dramatic changes Maui experienced since the arrival of Westerners and the conversion of land into pineapple and sugar plantations in the 19th century. When those closed in the late 1900s, the fallow lands became covered in invasive grasses. That and prolonged drought created a "volatile fuel bed" for fire, the report says.

Roughly 3,000 properties were destroyed when the fire overtook Lahaina, causing more than \$5.5 billion in estimated damage, according to state officials.

UN appeals for \$2.8 billion to help 3 million Palestinians in desperate need of food and other aid

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations appealed for \$2.8 billion on Tuesday to provide desperately needed aid to 3 million Palestinians, stressing that tackling looming famine in war-torn Gaza requires not only food but sanitation, water and health facilities.

Andrea De Domenico, the head of the U.N. humanitarian office for Gaza and the West Bank, told reporters that "massive operations" are required to restore those services and meet minimum standards — and this can't be done during military operations.

He pointed to the destruction of hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, homes, roads and schools, adding that "there is not a single university that is standing in Gaza."

De Domenico said Israel's recently-ended second major military operation at Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest medical facility, was so destructive the facility has been forced to shut down. As an example, he questioned what the military objective was in shooting an MRI scanner that examines parts of the body and can detect cancers.

He said his team has been dealing with “a scene of terror” at the hospital, with U.N. and Palestinian colleagues helping people try to recognize family members from shoes or clothes on “the remnants of corpses.”

Israel promised to open more border crossings into Gaza and increase the flow of aid into Gaza after its drone strikes killed seven aid workers from the World Central Kitchen who were delivering food into the territory on April 1.

The killings were condemned by Israel’s closest allies and heightened criticism of Israel’s conduct in the 6-month-old war with Hamas, sparked by the extremist group’s surprise attack in southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people and led some 250 others to be taken hostage. The Israeli offensive in Gaza aimed at destroying Hamas has caused widespread devastation and killed over 33,800 people, according to local health officials.

De Domenico said there are signs of Israel’s “good intention” to get more humanitarian assistance into Gaza, citing the opening of a crossing to the north, which faces the most serious threat of famine, and the opening of bakeries there.

But the U.N. keeps pushing Israel to do more, he said.

De Domenico pointed to Israeli denials and delays on U.N. requests for aid convoys to enter Gaza.

He said 41% of U.N. requests that required going through Israeli checkpoints were denied during the week from April 6-12, and last week a convoy from the U.N. children’s agency UNICEF and the U.N. World Food Program was caught in crossfire in an area that was supposed to be safe.

De Domenico said convoys often spend hours at checkpoints and are only cleared in the afternoon, too late to make deliveries and return safely in daylight hours. He said the Israelis know this is how the U.N. operates, and delays allow them to say “we’re not blindly denying you” while controlling what happens.

“We continue to engage with them and our objective is really to solve the issue and deliver aid,” he said.

According to the international community’s authority on determining the severity of hunger crises, famine is imminent in northern Gaza where 70% of people are experiencing catastrophic hunger. And its recent report warned that escalating the war could push half of Gaza’s 2.3 million people to the brink of starvation.

De Domenico said the U.N. appeal was scaled back from \$4 billion because of difficulties in getting aid into Gaza — and most importantly getting it to the people who need it most.

He said 90% of the \$2.8 billion being sought for the rest of the year is for Gaza and 10% is for the West Bank, which has seen an upsurge in violence and settler attacks.

Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders in the US more likely to believe in climate change: AP-NORC poll

By TERRY TANG and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the United States are more likely than the overall adult population to believe in human-caused climate change, according to a new poll. It also suggests that partisanship may not have as much of an impact on this group’s environmental views, compared to Americans overall.

A recent poll from AAPI Data and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds 84% of AAPI adults agree climate change exists. In comparison, 74% of U.S. adults hold the same sentiment. And three-quarters of AAPI adults who accept climate change is real attribute it entirely or mostly to human activity. Among the general U.S. adult population surveyed in an AP-NORC poll in September, only 61% say humans are causing it.

The poll is part of an ongoing project exploring the views of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, whose views can usually not be highlighted in other surveys because of small sample sizes and lack of linguistic representation.

Scientists overwhelmingly agree that heat-trapping gases released from the combustion of fossil fuels are pushing up global temperatures, upending weather patterns and endangering animal species. Many scientific organizations have made public statements on the issue.

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In terms of partisanship, the percentage of AAPI Democrats, 84%, who acknowledge climate change falls exactly in line with the share of Democrats overall in the September poll. The share of AAPI Republicans who believe there is a climate crisis is lower, but they somewhat outnumber Republicans in general, 68% versus 49%.

Adrian Wong, 22, of Whippany, New Jersey, is registered as unaffiliated but leans Republican. A biology major in college, the Chinese American says the science behind climate change is indisputable.

"I've probably done more or looked more into it than the average person has," Wong said. "It's to me clear that it's changing due to human activity, not natural shifts."

There has been growing conflict within the Republican Party between those who insist climate change is a progressive-generated hoax and those — mostly younger generations — who say the issue cannot be ignored. GOP lawmakers, in general, refuse to consider measures like mandated lowering of carbon emissions. However, some consider that an untenable position long-term. American Conservation Coalition, the largest conservative environmental group in the nation, has said Republicans running for office cannot risk alienating people who care about climate change.

Wong is not surprised that AAPI conservatives like himself recognize that the climate is changing. He thinks they are more highly educated and more likely to be exposed to science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"It wouldn't surprise me if they were more likely to have studied more and actually more likely to have studied in science and STEM-related fields rather than, say like, finance or something," Wong said.

While climate change is an afterthought to her parents, Analisa Harangozo, 35, of Alameda, California, worries a great deal about it. She has noticed a rise in "crazy heatwaves and droughts and just like crazy weather in general" in the San Francisco Bay Area. She and her husband are teaching their sons — ages 7 and 4 — to take small steps to reduce their carbon footprint like composting, growing food and eating less meat. They're also trying to minimize their accumulation of household items.

"I always second-guess myself, 'Do I really need this?'" Harangozo said. "Stuff will eventually end up in the landfill. So, we're really mindful with the products we buy, and whether or not they can be recycled or they're made from materials that are natural, like wood or what-not."

A registered independent with Democratic leanings, Harangozo is open to proposals from California Gov. Gavin Newsom and other state lawmakers to slash greenhouse gas emissions and invest in renewable energy.

"I'm not knowledgeable enough to know what an attainable goal is," she said. "But, whatever it takes to actually make a difference, I'm all for it. I fully support."

Karthick Ramakrishnan, a public policy professor at the University of California, Riverside, and founder of AAPI Data, said the richness and detail of the data shows environmental groups need to consider reaching out to AAPI populations. They make up a relatively small share of the U.S. population — around 7%, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of 2021 census data — but their numbers are growing quickly.

"Asian American and Pacific Islander voters are environmental voters," Ramakrishnan said. "Many of us still have an image in our minds of a particular kind of person maybe of a particular race, gender or age group. What we see here is across the board Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders care about the environment."

Asian American and Pacific Islanders may also have more of a stake in climate change because of connections to relatives abroad. China, considered one of the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases alongside the U.S., vowed last year to reduce emissions. More Chinese companies are considering selling wind and solar power equipment in other countries. Around this time last year, Japan was preparing for another sweltering summer and risks of floods and landslides. That country has also pledged to curb emissions.

Heavy rains swept across Pakistan last month, causing landslides and leaving over 36 people dead and dozens of others injured. In 2022, unprecedented rainfall and flooding in that country killed more than 1,700. In India, farmers are grappling with frequent cyclones and extreme heat. In southern India, the city

of Bengaluru is seeing water levels running desperately low after an unusually hot February and March. "There's a fairly high level concern of what climate change means to low-income countries," Ramakrishnan said. "That sensitivity is either because people still have friends or family back in their home country or at least have some concern about what climate change does to other countries."

Facing a Republican revolt, House Speaker Johnson's plan for US aid to Ukraine, allies uncertain

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defiant and determined, House Speaker Mike Johnson pushed back Tuesday against mounting Republican anger over his proposed U.S. aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other allies, and rejected a call to step aside or risk a vote to oust him from office.

"I am not resigning," Johnson said after a testy morning meeting of fellow House Republicans at the Capitol.

Johnson referred to himself as a "wartime speaker" of the House and indicated in his strongest self-defense yet he would press forward with a U.S. national security aid package, a situation that would force him to rely on Democrats to help pass it, over objections from his weakened majority.

"We are simply here trying to do our jobs," Johnson said, calling the motion to oust him "absurd ... not helpful."

But as night fell, the speaker's resolve collided with Republican opposition to his plan.

For hours, Johnson holed up at the Capitol with lawmakers sorting through their alternative strategies, particularly ways to attach U.S.-Mexico border security measures to the package. No bill text was released, putting passage of any aid this week in serious doubt.

"We'll see," Johnson said about the legislation, ducking into a meeting that dragged toward midnight.

Tuesday had initially brought a definitive shift in tone from both the House Republicans and the speaker himself at a pivotal moment as the embattled leader tries, against the wishes of his majority, to marshal the votes needed to send the stalled national security aid for Israel, Ukraine and other overseas allies to passage.

Johnson appeared emboldened by his meeting late last week at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida when the Republican former president threw him a political lifeline with a nod of support. At his own press conference Tuesday, Johnson spoke of the importance of ensuring Trump, who is now at his criminal trial in New York, is reelected to the White House.

Johnson also spoke over the weekend with President Joe Biden as well as other congressional leaders about the emerging U.S. aid package, which the speaker plans to move in separate votes for each section — with bills for Ukraine, Israel, the Indo-Pacific region. He spoke to Biden about it again late Monday.

After Johnson briefed the president, White House officials said they were taking a wait-and-see approach until the text of the speaker's plan is released and the procedural pathway becomes more clear.

"It does appear at first blush, that the speaker's proposal will, in fact, help us get aid to Ukraine, aid to Israel and needed resources to the Indo-Pacific for a wide range of contingencies there," John Kirby, the White House's national security spokesman, told reporters on Tuesday.

The speaker is considering a complicated approach that would break apart the Senate's \$95 billion aid package for separate votes, and then either stitch it back together or send the components to the Senate for final passage, and potentially onto the White House for the president's signature.

All told, it would require the speaker to cobble together bipartisan majorities with different factions of House Republicans and Democrats on each measure.

Additionally, Johnson is preparing a fourth measure that would include various Republican-preferred national security priorities, such as a plan to seize some Russian assets in U.S. banks to help fund Ukraine and another to turn the economic aid for Ukraine into loans. It could also include provisions to sanction Iran over its weekend attack on Israel, among others.

The speaker's emerging plan is not an automatic deal-breaker for Democrats in the House and Senate,

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but the more Republicans try to pile on their priorities the further they push Democrats away from any compromise.

During their own closed-door meeting, Leader Hakeem Jeffries said House Democrats would not accept a "penny less" than the \$9 billion in humanitarian aid that senators had included in their package with money for Gaza, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss it.

Johnson will need Democratic votes to pass aspects of his package, but Democratic support for Israel is slipping in both the House and Senate amid the Netanyahu government's retaliatory bombardment of Gaza that has left 30,000 people dead. A previous House GOP bill for Israel gutted the assistance for Gaza.

House Republicans, meanwhile, were livid that Johnson would be leaving their top priority — efforts to impose more security at the U.S.-Mexico border — on the sidelines. Some predicted Johnson will not be able to push ahead with voting on the package this week, as planned.

Rep. Debbie Lesko, R-Ariz., called the morning meeting an "argument fest."

When the speaker said the House GOP's priority border security bill H.R. 2 would not be considered germane to the package, Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a chief sponsor, said it's for the House to determine which provisions and amendments are relevant.

"Things are very unresolved," Roy said.

The speaker faces a threat of ouster from Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., the top Trump ally who has filed a motion to vacate the speaker from office in a snap vote — much the way Republicans ousted their former speaker, Kevin McCarthy, last fall.

While Greene has not said if or when she will force the issue, and has not found much support for her plan after last year's turmoil over McCarthy's exit, she drew at least one key backer Tuesday.

Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., rose in the meeting and suggested Johnson should step aside, pointing to the example of John Boehner, an even earlier House speaker who announced an early resignation in 2015 rather than risk a vote to oust him, according to Republicans in the room.

"Speaker Johnson must announce a resignation date and allow Republicans to elect a new Speaker to put America First and pass a Republican agenda," Greene wrote on social media, thanking Massie for his support for her motion to vacate.

Johnson did not respond, but told the lawmakers they have a "binary choice" before them.

The speaker explained they either try to pass the package as he is proposing or risk facing a discharge petition from Democrats that would force a vote on their preferred package — the Senate approved measure. But that would leave behind the extra Republican priorities.

Later Johnson drew prominent support from six Republican committee chairmen in a unified show of force.

"There is nothing our adversaries would love more than if Congress were to fail to pass critical national security aid," said Reps. Tom Cole of Appropriations, Ken Calvert of the Defense Appropriations subcommittee, Mario Diaz-Balart of the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations subcommittee, Mike Rogers of the Armed Services Committee, Michael McCaul of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Mike Turner of the Intelligence committee in a joint statement.

"We don't have time to spare," the chairmen said. "We need to pass this aid package this week."

As the House debates, Ukraine faces increasing difficulty fighting Russia's invasion.

Lawmakers have stepped up their efforts to explain to Americans that the overseas aid to Ukraine largely flows to U.S. defense manufacturers to bolster production of missiles, munitions and other military provisions then sent abroad.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said this week on social media the U.S. and others' response to Iran's attack on Israel shows the potential of what can be done with "allied action."

Bob Graham, ex-US senator and Florida governor, dies at 87

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Former U.S. Sen. and two-term Florida Gov. Bob Graham, who gained national prominence as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks and as an early critic of the Iraq war, has died. He was 87.

Graham's family announced the death Tuesday in a statement posted on X by his daughter Gwen Graham.

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"We are deeply saddened to report the passing of a visionary leader, dedicated public servant, and even more importantly, a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather," the family said.

Graham, who served three terms in the Senate, made an unsuccessful bid for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination, emphasizing his opposition to the Iraq invasion.

But his bid was delayed by heart surgery in January 2003, and he was never able to gain enough traction with voters to catch up, bowing out that October. He didn't seek reelection in 2004 and was replaced by Republican Mel Martinez.

Graham was a man of many quirks. He perfected the "workdays" political gimmick of spending a day doing various jobs from horse stall mucker to FBI agent and kept a meticulous diary, noting almost everyone he spoke with, everything he ate, the TV shows he watched and even his golf scores.

Graham said the notebooks were a working tool for him and he was reluctant to describe his emotions or personal feelings in them.

"I review them for calls to be made, memos to be dictated, meetings I want to follow up on and things people promise to do," he said.

Graham was among the earliest opponents of the Iraq war, saying it diverted America's focus on the battle against terrorism centered in Afghanistan. He was also critical of President George W. Bush for failing to have an occupation plan in Iraq after the U.S. military threw out Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Graham said Bush took the United States into the war by exaggerating claims of the danger presented by the Iraqi weapons of destruction that were never found. He said Bush distorted intelligence data and argued it was more serious than the sexual misconduct issues that led the House to impeach President Bill Clinton in the late 1990s. It led him to launch his short, abortive presidential bid.

"The quagmire in Iraq is a distraction that the Bush administration, and the Bush administration alone, has created," Graham said in 2003.

During his 18 years in Washington, Graham worked well with colleagues from both parties, particularly Florida Republican Connie Mack during their dozen years together in the Senate.

As a politician, few were better. Florida voters hardly considered him the wealthy Harvard-educated attorney that he was.

Graham's political career spanned five decades, beginning with his election to the Florida House of Representatives in 1966.

He won a state Senate seat in 1970 and then was elected governor in 1978. He was re-elected in 1982. Four years later, he won the first of three terms in the U.S. Senate when he ousted incumbent Republican Paula Hawkins.

Graham remained widely popular with Florida voters — winning reelection by wide margins in 1992 and 1998 when he carried 63 of 67 counties. In that latter election, he defeated Charlie Crist, who later served as a Republican governor from 2007 to 2011.

"He blew me out of the water, and I came to know even more so why during the course of the campaign," Crist said Tuesday night. "I learned to respect him even more than I already had, and love him for the good, decent man that he was."

Crist, who has since switched parties and most recently served as a U.S. representative, said Graham was an influence on him.

"I always felt that when he was governor, that he was trying to govern for the people of Florida — not in any way political or partisan — and I took that to heart and tried to, in some small way, emulate it," Crist said.

House Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi called Graham "a patriotic American" and thanked him for his "distinguished public service." She highlighted his work on the inquiry into 9/11 and said he "bravely opposed entry into the war in Iraq."

"He brought his love for his family and for his state of Florida to the Senate, where he served with immense dignity and courage," she said in a statement Tuesday.

Even when in Washington, Graham never took his eye off the state and the leadership in Tallahassee.

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When Gov. Jeb Bush and the Republican-controlled Legislature eliminated the Board of Regents in 2001, Graham saw it as a move to politicize the state university system. He led a successful petition drive the next year for a state constitutional amendment that created the Board of Governors to assume the regents' role.

Daniel Robert Graham was born Nov. 9, 1936, in Coral Gables, where his father, Ernest "Cap" Graham, had moved from South Dakota and established a large dairy operation. Young Bob milked cows, built fences and scooped manure as a teenager. One of his half-brothers, Phillip Graham, was publisher of The Washington Post and Newsweek until he took his own life in 1963, just a year after Bob Graham's graduation from Harvard Law.

Graham was president of the student body at Miami Senior High School and attended the University of Florida, graduating in 1959.

In 1966 he was elected to the Florida Legislature, where he focused largely on education and health care issues.

Graham got off to a shaky start as Florida's chief executive, and was dubbed "Gov. Jello" for some early indecisiveness. He shook that label through his handling of several serious crises.

As governor he also signed numerous death warrants, founded the Save the Manatee Club with entertainer Jimmy Buffett and led efforts to establish several environmental programs.

Graham pushed through a bond program to buy beaches and barrier islands threatened by development and started the Save Our Everglades program to protect the state's water supply, wetlands and endangered species.

Graham also was known for his 408 "workdays," including stints as a housewife, boxing ring announcer, flight attendant and arson investigator. They grew out of a teaching stint as a member of the Florida Senate's Education Committee and then morphed into a campaign gimmick that helped him relate to the average voter.

"This has been a very important part of my development as a public official, my learning at a very human level what the people of Florida expect, what they want, what their aspirations are and then trying to interpret that and make it policy that will improve their lives" said Graham in 2004 as he completed his final job as a Christmas gift wrapper.

After leaving public life in 2005, Graham spent much of his time at a public policy center named after him at the University of Florida and pushing the Legislature to require more civics classes in the state's public schools.

Graham was one of five members selected for an independent commission by President Barack Obama in June 2010 to investigate a massive BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico that threatened sea life and beaches along several southeastern Gulf states.

Figures and Dobson win nominations for Alabama's 2nd Congressional District

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama voters decided primary runoffs on Tuesday for the state's newly redrawn 2nd Congressional District, setting up a potentially historic November race that could play a part in the battle for control of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Shomari Figures, a former top aide to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, defeated state House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels to win the Democratic nomination. Attorney and political newcomer Caroleene Dobson defeated former state Sen. Dick Brewbaker to win the Republican nomination. Dobson and Figures will face off in November in the closely watched general election.

Democrats are aiming to flip the seat after the district was redrawn by a federal court to boost the voting power of Black residents. If Figures is elected, it will be the first time in history that Alabama, which is about 27% Black, has two Black members in its congressional delegation.

"I'm enormously grateful for the confidence and the trust and the faith that the voters of this newly drawn district have placed in me to represent the Democratic Party in November," Figures said as he addressed

supporters Tuesday night. "That is something that I do not take lightly."

Figures, an attorney, also served as an aide to former President Barack Obama, serving as domestic director of the Presidential Personnel Office. He is the son of two prominent Alabama legislators: longtime state Sen. Vivian Davis Figures and the late Senate President Pro Tem Michael Figures. He moved home to Mobile from Washington D.C. to run for the congressional seat.

The non-partisan Cook Political Report rated the district as "likely Democrat," meaning that it favors the Democratic candidate in November but isn't considered a sure thing. Republicans believe they will be competitive in November and have a chance to keep the seat under GOP control.

Dobson, a real estate attorney and member of the Alabama Forestry Commission, harnessed support in rural areas to defeat Brewbaker, who had led in the March 5 primary. Dobson was raised in Monroe County and lived and practiced law in Texas before returning to Alabama and joining the Maynard Nexsen law firm in 2019.

"Thank you to each and every Republican voter in the Second District of Alabama. I am humbled by your outpouring of support and eagerness to join us in fighting for Alabama families," Dobson said in a written statement. "Because you believed in me and in my vision for our district, we are one step closer to saving our country."

The new district came after a lengthy court battle in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Black Alabamians who had challenged the state's existing congressional districts.

Federal judges approved new district lines in October after ruling that Alabama's previous map — which had only one majority-Black district out of seven — was racially gerrymandered to limit the influence of the state's Black voters. The three-judge panel said Alabama should have a second district where Black voters make up a substantial portion of the voting age population and have a reasonable opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice.

"Following tonight's runoff election, Alabama voters now stand on the cusp of making history in November, when Black Alabamians could — for the first time — elect two members of Congress who truly reflect their political desires," former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, chairman of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, said.

The new district spans the width of the state and includes Montgomery, parts of Mobile and rural counties in the state's Black Belt.

Voting technology company settles lawsuit against far-right news outlet over 2020 election claims

WASHINGTON (AP) — A voting technology company targeted by bogus fraud claims related to the 2020 presidential election settled a defamation lawsuit Tuesday against a conservative news outlet.

The settlement between Florida-based Smartmatic and One America News Network is the latest development in a larger legal pushback by voting equipment companies that became ensnared in wild conspiracy theories falsely claiming they had flipped votes and cost former President Donald Trump reelection.

In a statement, the company said it had "resolved its litigation with OANN through a confidential settlement." The dismissal of its lawsuit was filed in federal court in the District of Columbia. Chip Babcock, a Houston-based attorney representing the news outlet, confirmed the case had been resolved but said he was unable to disclose any of the settlement terms.

Smartmatic was an odd target for the conspiracy theorists because use of its voting technology and software was so limited. It was used only in Los Angeles County, a Democratic stronghold in a state that was not a presidential battleground and where Trump did not contest his loss.

But the company has for years also provided voting services in Venezuela, and that created a springboard for phony claims that a foreign company was involved in a vast conspiracy to flip the election from Trump to Democrat Joe Biden. Smartmatic also has active lawsuits against Fox News and the conservative outlet Newsmax over similar complaints. Fox has said it had a First Amendment right to air claims about an election that were being promoted by prominent figures.

Last year, on the eve of a trial, Fox News agreed to pay \$787 million to settle a defamation lawsuit filed by a much larger voting technology company, Dominion Voting Systems, which claimed the network and its hosts spread false claims that its equipment helped rig the election against Trump. Dominion has other defamation lawsuits that remain active, including one against One America News Network.

The conspiracy theories relating to voting equipment and software are among the lies about the outcome of the 2020 presidential election won by Biden. Numerous reviews, audits and recounts in the presidential swing states where Trump contested his loss have affirmed Biden's victory, and there has been no evidence of widespread fraud. Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, is facing federal and state charges related to his attempts to overturn the results.

Venezuela closes its embassy in Ecuador to protest the police raid on the Mexican Embassy there

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro ordered the closure of his country's embassy and consulates in Ecuador on Tuesday in solidarity with Mexico in its protest over a raid by Ecuadorian authorities on the Mexican Embassy in Quito.

Maduro and other presidents participating in a virtual meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States expressed their support for Mexico's request to have the United Nations suspend Ecuador from the world body over the April 5 raid. But Maduro was the only one to announce the closure of diplomatic outposts and recall of personnel.

"The condemnation has been unanimous, total, absolute," Maduro said, referring to the excoriation Ecuador's move has drawn. "No one today in this world comes out to defend this barbaric act."

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa ordered authorities to raid the Mexican Embassy to arrest the country's former Vice President Jorge Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive who had been living there since December. Mexico granted him asylum hours before police found Glas in a bedroom and dragged him out.

The extraordinarily unusual use of force drew immediate condemnation from governments around the world because diplomatic premises are considered foreign soil and "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties.

Noboa, who did not participate in Tuesday's meeting, said last week that he authorized the raid "to protect national security." His government has argued that Glas was wanted for his criminal convictions for corruption and not political reasons and has accused Mexico of violating the Vienna treaties by granting him asylum.

Mexico severed diplomatic relations with Ecuador immediately after the raid and recalled its diplomatic mission. It hoped to use the CELAC meeting to rally a unified front for its case both at the U.N. and before the International Court of Justice.

Honduras President Xiomara Castro, who currently leads CELAC, opened Tuesday's meeting by reading a proposed statement condemning Ecuador's actions. She then presented a video of Ecuadorian authorities breaking into Mexico's Embassy, along with dramatic music.

Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador followed, repeating his demand that Ecuador be suspended from the United Nations until it apologizes and promises to never do it again.

"If we don't do this, we are not going to be able to live in a world ruled by norms, by laws," López Obrador said. "We would be living in the world of the gorillas."

The Mexican president cited Augusto Pinochet, who ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990, and said even Pinochet did not raid Mexico's embassy when Chilean dissidents sought refuge there. "Pinochet didn't dare to invade our embassy, that fearsome dictator," López Obrador said.

Maduro said he has ordered all diplomatic personnel back to Venezuela "until international law is expressly restored in Ecuador."

Maduro said Glas, who is now being held at a maximum-security prison in the port city of Guayaquil, "must be returned to the Mexican embassy and have his political asylum recognized."

Noboa drew additional criticism for not appearing at CELAC's virtual gathering. While leaders questioned

his decision, he posted an Instagram video promoting improvements to law enforcement infrastructure and another one announcing an emergency declaration covering the country's electricity sector amid hours-long power outages in Quito.

"He should have shown up and assumed responsibility for himself in front of Ecuador, in front of Latin America, in front of the Caribbean, in front of the world and he has not shown his face," Maduro said. "I can say from Venezuela that he has gone into hiding and the people of Ecuador should know it."

Venezuela's Embassy in Quito appeared closed Tuesday. People trying to take care of paperwork remained outside, along with reporters, unable to get answers from embassy staff.

Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Venezuela's announcement.

Under Maduro's 11-year presidency, more than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left their home country, and most have settled elsewhere in Latin America and in the Caribbean. Ecuador has the sixth-largest concentration of Venezuelan migrants.

Ecuadorian officials and nongovernmental organizations that assist migrants estimate that 475,000 Venezuelans live in Ecuador. Of those more than 231,000 live permanently and legally there, according to Ecuador's 2023 census.

Citing safety, USC makes rare cancellation of speech by valedictorian who supported Palestinians

By JOHN ANTCZAK and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The University of Southern California canceled a commencement speech by its 2024 valedictorian who has publicly supported Palestinians, citing security concerns, a rare decision that was praised by several pro-Israel groups and lambasted by free speech advocates and the country's largest Muslim civil rights organization.

Andrew T. Guzman, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs for the private university in Los Angeles, said in a statement Monday that debate over the selection of valedictorian Asna Tabassum to give the May 10 commencement speech took on an "alarming tenor." Her speaking would have presented "substantial" security risks for the event, which draws 65,000 people to campus, he said.

While Guzman did not specify whether there had been threats, he said that "we cannot ignore the fact that similar risks have led to harassment and even violence at other campuses."

"The intensity of feelings, fueled by both social media and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, has grown to include many voices outside of USC and has escalated to the point of creating substantial risks relating to security and disruption at commencement," Guzman wrote.

The Israel-Hamas war has presented a challenge for colleges under pressure to preserve free speech and open debate, and campuses are expected to be further tested as commencement speeches get underway in the coming weeks.

Universities should resist cancelling events that could be perceived as censorship, especially one as high-profile as a commencement speech, said Zach Greenberg, a first amendment attorney with the national Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression or FIRE. But, if they do, schools must be transparent and specify security concerns "not only as a matter of integrity" but also to warn the public for their own safety, he said.

He expressed concern about other schools buckling to pressure and eroding free speech.

"This is kind of an opening salvo of commencement season," he said. "It seems to be a pretty clear example of a university canceling an event and censoring a student because of opposition to student views, especially on social media regarding the Gaza conflict."

Tabassum, who is graduating with a major in biomedical engineering and a minor in resistance to genocide, said she was blindsided by the decision, in a statement provided Tuesday by the Greater Los Angeles Area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. University officials told her Monday that there were resources to take appropriate safety measures but they were concerned about their image, she said.

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"Anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian voices have subjected me to a campaign of racist hatred because of my uncompromising belief in human rights for all," she said, adding that she was not aware of any specific threats against her or the university.

"I am both shocked by this decision and profoundly disappointed that the university is succumbing to a campaign of hate meant to silence my voice," she said. "I am not surprised by those who attempt to propagate hatred. I am surprised that my own university — my home for four years — has abandoned me."

Guzman said the decision was solely about safety and came after consulting the "expert campus safety team." USC's associate senior vice president of safety and risk assurance, Erroll G. Southers, is an expert in school violence prevention and a former FBI agent who is also president of the Los Angeles Police Commission, the civilian board that oversees the city's police department.

"To be clear: this decision has nothing to do with freedom of speech," Guzman's statement read. "There is no free-speech entitlement to speak at a commencement. The issue here is how best to maintain campus security and safety, period."

At the USC campus on Tuesday, some students expressed disappointment.

One, Isabella Griggs, said "there was no inkling" of Tabassum causing any harm with her words.

"And she's talking about issues that are important to not only our university and to students, but to the world," Griggs said.

Another student, Mohammed Zain Shafi Khan, said Tabassum "embodies what it means to be a valedictorian for USC, and to take that away from her — at least the honor that comes attached to it — is extremely disappointing because this is her moment to enjoy."

The university announced its decision the same day pro-Palestinian demonstrators blocked roadways in Illinois, California, New York and the Pacific Northwest, temporarily shutting down travel into some of the nation's most heavily used airports, onto the Golden Gate and Brooklyn bridges and on a busy West Coast highway to demand an immediate cease-fire.

Campuses have been a hotbed of protest over the war, which began following Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people. Israel's responding assault on Gaza has killed as many as 33,800 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry.

The organization EndJewHatred issued a statement Monday night praising USC's decision.

"Ms. Tabassum's speech as valedictorian was anticipated to be harmful to Jewish students and even potentially agitate anti-Jewish activists," the organization said.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations condemned the cancellation.

"USC cannot hide its cowardly decision behind a disingenuous concern for 'security,'" the organization's executive director, Hussam Ayloush, said in a statement.

Tabassum, describing herself as a first-generation South Asian American Muslim, said her speech aimed to inspire hope in troubled times.

"By canceling my speech, USC is only caving to fear and rewarding hatred," she said.

"As your class Valedictorian, I implore my USC classmates to think outside the box — to work towards a world where cries for equality and human dignity are not manipulated to be expressions of hatred," she said. "I challenge us to respond to ideological discomfort with dialogue and learning, not bigotry and censorship. And I urge us to see past our deepest fears and recognize the need to support justice for all people, including the Palestinian people."

Trump goes from court to campaign at a bodega in his heavily Democratic hometown

By JILL COLVIN and BILL BARROW Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Fresh from a Manhattan courtroom, Donald Trump visited a New York bodega where a man was stabbed to death, a stark pivot for the former president as he juggles being a criminal defendant and the Republican challenger intent on blaming President Joe Biden for crime.

Trump stopped by Sanaa Convenient Store, a tiny bodega that sells chips, sodas and other snacks. Trump

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aides said the former president and presumptive GOP nominee chose the store because it has been the site of a violent attack on an employee, a case that resulted in public criticism for the district attorney now prosecuting him.

The visit was Trump's first campaign appearance since his criminal hush money trial began, making the presumptive GOP nominee the first former president in U.S. history to stand criminal trial.

Trump will be confined to the courtroom on most days, dramatically limiting his movements and his ability to campaign, fundraise and make calls, as opposed to Biden, who campaigned Tuesday in Pennsylvania, a key battleground state. Trump aides have answered by planning rallies and other political events on weekends and Wednesdays, the one weekday when court is not supposed to be in session. Plans also include more local appearances Trump can make after court recesses each day.

For months, Trump has assailed Democratic-run cities as crime-ridden and overrun with migrants who have crossed the U.S.-Mexico border, even as violent crime has fallen in the U.S. With his local campaign stop in Harlem, Trump blended that familiar, if often exaggerated, message with his promise to make a serious play at winning his native state despite its heavily Democratic lean.

"They want law and order ... every week they're being robbed," Trump said of businesses in New York, as he tried to compare his prosecution with what happens on New York streets. "You know where the crime is? It's in the bodegas."

Contrary to Trump's rhetoric, FBI statistics show overall violent crime dropped nationally in 2023 after COVID-era spikes that began in 2020, when Trump was president. Crime also has fallen in New York City since the pandemic peaks.

Still, in July 2022, Jose Alba, a clerk at the store Trump visited in Hamilton Heights, a heavily Hispanic section of Harlem, was attacked by 35-year-old Austin Simon. The resulting altercation, captured on surveillance video, ended with Alba fatally stabbing Simon. Alba, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, was arrested and charged with murder but the Manhattan district attorney dropped the charges within weeks, saying they could not prove Alba had not acted in self-defense.

Before his arrival, Trump's campaign distributed materials to journalists criticizing Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg for his handling of the stabbing case, including the weeks Alba spent jailed at Rikers Island. Bragg oversees the office now prosecuting Trump.

Bragg's office responded Tuesday after news of Trump's plans emerged.

Simon's death and Alba's case were "resolved nearly two years ago, and the charges were dismissed after a thorough investigation," the statement said. "D.A. Bragg's top priority remains combating violent crime and the office has worked hand in hand with the NYPD to drive down overall crime in Manhattan."

Bragg's office cited statistics showing double-digit drops in homicides and shootings in Manhattan over the last two years.

Trump's campaign also billed the convenience store stop as a venue to highlight rising consumer prices during Biden's presidency. Trump skipped over those talking points, though, focusing instead on his depictions of New York crime and asserting that the judicial system is letting criminals go free.

"They don't pick them up — they go after Trump," he said.

The former president's effort in Harlem affirms his intentions to campaign in his home state, even though New York remains overwhelmingly Democratic. In 2020, Biden garnered more than 60% of the vote in the state and ran up even wider margins in New York City. Trump insists he can win New York in November anyway, and he has mused about holding rallies in the South Bronx and Queens, where the former president was born and grew up, and even Madison Square Garden.

"I may rent Madison Square Garden," he said in an interview with Breitbart News. "That's the belly of the beast, right?"

That would be a prohibitively expensive proposition, particularly as his campaign has worked to save cash as it confronts a fundraising gap with Biden.

"We're going to make a heavy play for New York," Trump said Tuesday, part of his promise to put more states in play.

At the least, Trump, long a famous figure for New Yorkers, showed that he can still turn heads in the city.

Throughout the afternoon, the crowds around the bodega grew half a dozen deep as word of Trump's impending visit spread. Barricades were set up along Broadway, between 139th and 140th Streets, in advance of Trump's appearance. The patio of the Mexican restaurant next door was packed with onlookers, and staff from a hair salon on the other side gathered by their open door.

"Papito Trump is coming. Yeah!" said one passerby ahead of the former president's arrival.

As Trump arrived, children climbed scaffolding around nearby buildings to get a better view. Trump shook hands with people standing behind police barricades before entering the bodega, where Plexiglas separates customers from the cash register.

"I love this city," Trump told reporters after emerging from the store. "We're going to straighten New York out."

Trump has argued that the ongoing influx of migrants to the city, where he grew his real estate empire and became a tabloid fixture, has made New Yorkers more willing to vote for him since his 2020 loss to Biden. The city has struggled to house the new arrivals, putting many up in city hotels.

"I think we have a chance. New York has changed a lot in the last two years," he recently told Fox News host Maria Bartiromo. "The people of New York are angry. People that would have never voted for me because I'm a Republican ... I think they're going to vote for me."

He doubled down on that take Tuesday, claiming that migrants "are coming from jails and prisons and mental institutions," even though there is no evidence to support that claim — reminiscent of his 2015 speech to launch his first presidential campaign.

Trump's prospects will depend on voters like Lesandra Carrion, a 47-year-old who lives in the neighborhood and came out to see the former president when she heard he might be visiting.

She said she doesn't agree with everything Trump says or does but declared that "he speaks the truth." Carrion cited the rising migrant population and strained city resources. "I think that he will make a difference," she said of Trump.

As for his troubles at the courthouse at the south end of Manhattan, Carrion was dismissive. "He's going to beat that," she said. "We all make mistakes at the end of the day. But he's the truth and light. I feel that God is in him."

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, a top Trump ally, predicted Monday that Trump will "make the best out of this" New York trial. "Democrats in New York and the judge and everyone," she said, "they're really going to regret it."

Not everyone was on board Tuesday, though.

Steven Kopstein, a 63-year-old neighborhood resident, expressed disgust at Trump's visit and occasionally jeered at Trump supporters as he walked through the crowd with his dog.

"You're not welcome here," Kopstein said of Trump, calling it ironic for the former president to rail against crime immediately after spending all day at a defendant's table. "He's done so much to hurt immigrants and migrants and this neighborhood's full of them. It's crazy to me that these people would support him. I just don't understand it."

The Latest | First 7 jurors seated at the end of the second day of Trump's hush money trial

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Following a protracted questionnaire phase and hours of questioning on Tuesday, seven jurors were seated by the time the court adjourned on the second day of Donald Trump's hush money trial. Jury selection will resume Thursday morning.

The jurors are picked by process of elimination in a system that will repeat until a full jury is selected: Eighteen prospective jurors are brought to the jury box and then lawyers move to have certain prospective jurors eliminated "for cause." They then eliminate some with peremptory challenges, which don't require a reason.

Those selected for the 12-person panel were culled from the first wave of prospective jurors — a group

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of about 100 people. Several possible jurors were dismissed earlier in the day after saying they could not be impartial or had other commitments that would conflict with the trial, which is expected to last several weeks.

The first day of Trump's trial ended on Monday with no one picked to sit on the jury or as one of six alternates.

The criminal trial is the first of any former U.S. commander-in-chief and also the first of Trump's four indictments to go to trial.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records as part of an alleged scheme to bury stories he feared could hurt his 2016 campaign.

The allegations focus on payoffs to two women, porn actor Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal, who said they had extramarital sexual encounters with Trump years earlier, as well as to a Trump Tower doorman who claimed to have a story about a child he alleged Trump had out of wedlock. Trump says none of these supposed sexual encounters occurred.

Currently:

- Here's what happened yesterday on the first day of Trump's historic hush money trial
- Only 1 in 3 US adults think Trump acted illegally in New York hush money case, AP-NORC poll shows
- Trump trial: Why can't Americans see or hear what is happening inside the courtroom?
- Donald Trump brings his campaign to the courthouse as his criminal hush money trial begins

Here's the latest:

BIDEN MAKES NO MENTION OF TRUMP'S TRIAL AT CAMPAIGN STOPS IN PENNSYLVANIA

President Joe Biden made a series of campaign stops in the Pennsylvania city of Scranton, where he spent part of his childhood, but he didn't publicly mention his predecessor's trial in New York even once.

Biden gave a speech at a community center, where he called for higher taxes on the rich and slammed Trump as out-of-touch and elitist.

He later visited his childhood home, lingering longer than planned and posing for pictures in the backyard with neighborhood children, as crowds of onlookers filled nearby sidewalks.

The president ended his day addressing campaign organizers at a union hall. Through it all, Biden didn't bring up the hush money case against Trump that was in its second day.

Biden's campaign has insisted that he will stay focused on governing and talking about policies that matter to American voters, while Trump is focused on himself and his legal issues. Complicating that hands-off message is the outsized amount of media attention the early part of Trump's trial has attracted — but so far Biden has successfully ignored the proceedings.

TRUMP CAMPAIGNS AT HARLEM BODEGA AFTER SPENDING TUESDAY IN COURT

Former President Donald Trump arrived at a Harlem bodega for a campaign stop after his second day in court.

Hundreds of onlookers were waiting as his motorcade pulled up outside the Sanaa Convenient Store, a location chosen for him to spotlight his campaign messages on crime and inflation.

Trump pumped his fist and shook hands with some supporters. He joined them as they chanted "Four more years!" before heading into the bodega. He came out after a few minutes and said, "They want law and order."

7TH JUROR SELECTED BEFORE COURT ADJOURNS TUESDAY

A seventh juror in Donald Trump's hush money trial was chosen before the court adjourned for the day. On his way out of the courthouse, Trump once again stopped in the hallway to rail against the case to reporters.

"We are going to continue our fight against this judge," he said, accusing Judge Juan Merchant of "rushing" the trial.

NYC MAYOR VISITS COURTHOUSE TO 'INSPECT' POLICE PRESENCE

New York City Mayor Eric Adams said Tuesday that court officers and police officers were doing a good job of maintaining order outside the courthouse where jury selection for Trump's hush money trial was proceeding.

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"Justice is going to take its course here in the city but the name of the game is to make sure we minimize our resources, and I think no one does it better than our law enforcement apparatus, knowing how to control big events, making sure it's done right," Adams said.

The Democratic mayor visited the area across the street from the courthouse and said he wanted to ensure that police resources were being allocated appropriately because "you have to inspect what you expect."

Adams checked out the courthouse scene following a news conference nearby at City Hall.

SECOND POOL OF POTENTIAL JURORS SWORN IN

A second group of potential jurors in Donald Trump's hush money trial in Manhattan were sworn in Tuesday afternoon.

The 96 individuals looked around curiously as they passed a half-dozen journalists and a sketch artist seated in the back row of the courtroom for the trial's second day.

"Ma'am, ma'am put your cell phone away," a court security officer told one panelist after she saw the former president and tried to pull out her phone.

They were sworn in, vowing to truthfully answer all questions, and subsequently sent home for the day.

"I know that you've been sitting around all day, waiting for something to happen, and I want you to know that that wasn't lost on us," Judge Juan M. Merchan said, telling them that things would start right away when they return Thursday morning.

SELECTED JURORS SWORN IN

The first six jurors selected for Trump's criminal trial were sworn in just before 4 p.m. on Tuesday.

"This will be your permanent seat for the duration of the trial," Judge Juan M. Merchan told the jurors as they took their places in the jury box.

The jurors stood and all raised their right hands. The panelists selected so far are an IT worker, an English teacher, an oncology nurse, a sales professional, a software engineer and a corporate lawyer.

6 JURORS SELECTED IN TRUMP TRIAL

The first six jurors in Donald Trump's hush money trial were seated by late afternoon Tuesday after a protracted questionnaire process that began a day earlier and hours of questioning.

Those picked for the 12-person panel were culled from the first wave of prospective jurors — a group of about 100 people. The jurors were selected by process of elimination. Several other potential jurors were dismissed earlier in the day after saying they could not be impartial or had other commitments that would conflict with the trial, which is expected to last several weeks. At least one was excused after coming down with flu-like symptoms.

Fifteen other jurors still need to be selected and a second wave of potential jurors has yet to be questioned.

JUDGE ALLOWS QUESTIONING OF POTENTIAL JURORS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Judge Juan M. Merchan will allow attorneys in Donald Trump's hush money trial to ask prospective jurors about social media posts after Trump lawyer Todd Blanche raised the issue.

With prospective jurors not yet back in the room, Blanche told the judge he had found a number of social media posts he said come from possible jurors that are "very much contrary to the answers they gave."

As an example, he showed Merchan a Facebook post that he said was from a prospective juror's account and which described going to a Manhattan dance party to celebrate Trump's loss in the last election.

Merchan said he would ask the juror to come in and permit attorneys to ask her questions about it.

This is clearly an anti-Trump event that she's outside rallying and celebrating with," Susan Necheles, one of Trump's attorneys, said.

POTENTIAL JURORS DEMUR WHEN ASKED FOR THEIR OPINIONS OF TRUMP

Several prospective jurors in Donald Trump's hush money trial hemmed and hawed after being asked about their opinions of the former president during the questioning phase of jury selection on Tuesday.

When asked about his personal views of Trump, a Manhattan bookseller said it "has absolutely no bearing on the case that you're presenting or defending. That is a separate thing.

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"What I think of President Trump outside this room has nothing to do with what goes on in this room."

Trump's lawyer Todd Blanche again asked the man to divulge his views of Trump, suggesting he imagine himself sitting at a bar with friends. The man demurred, getting a laugh out with his response: "If we were at a bar, I would."

"You're asking me to imbue my political views into a criminal case," the man continued, calling them apples and oranges.

Finally, he offered: "I'm a Democrat, so there you go."

Another man, a criminal prosecutor in the Bronx, said he had at least some positive views toward the former president.

"There's things associated with him that I agree with, things I don't really agree with him on," the man said. He added, "I have a lot of friends in law enforcement who are pro-Trump."

Another prospective juror said she's not into politics and doesn't have an opinion about Trump, but she is aware of criticism of his treatment of women.

"I'm a female, he's targeted some females, so I would say some of my friends have strong opinions on him," said the woman, who works in social media marketing for a sports betting company.

TRUMP BACKTRACKS ON BEING PRESENT FOR ALL SIDEBAR QUESTIONING

A day after Donald Trump insisted that he be present during one-on-one sidebar questioning of prospective jurors in his hush money trial, the former president changed his mind. Before an early afternoon break on Tuesday, Trump's lawyers informed Judge Juan M. Merchan that he no longer wished to exercise his right to be present for all sidebars.

No such questioning has taken place, yet. The judge on Monday said that instead of in a side room, he'd conduct such questioning in his courtroom — with other jurors ushered out — to accommodate the logistical challenges of having his Trump and his Secret Service detail present.

"Mr. Trump, yesterday we discussed whether you wanted to be present at sidebars. You indicated you did. Your attorney indicated to me that you have changed your mind," Merchan said, noting that Trump had signed a form waiving that right, known as Antommarchi Rights.

FIRST WAVE OF JURY SELECTION ENTERS NEW PHASE

The first wave of jury selection in former President Donald Trump's hush money trial entered a new phase just before noon Tuesday after the remaining people from the first pool of potential jurors finished answering the questionnaire, allowing attorneys to begin individual questioning.

"Let's talk about the obvious: The defendant in this case is both the former president and a candidate for that office. No one is suggesting that you can't be a fair juror because you've heard of Donald Trump," Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass told the group. "We don't expect you to have been living under a rock for the last eight years or the last 30 years."

Steinglass spelled out the unique nature of the case, telling prospective jurors the witnesses include a former tabloid publisher, an adult film star, and Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, who went to prison for crimes including lying to Congress.

He added that some witnesses have written books and recorded podcasts about the issues involved in the case, that in the past some have denied "many of the same facts that they'll testify about here," and that some have received immunity to compel their cooperation.

DISMISSED WOULD-BE JUROR SAYS TRUMP LOOKED 'EXACTLY LIKE HE DOES ON TV'

One would-be juror in former President Donald Trump's hush money trial shared her reaction to seeing Trump in person for the first time after being dismissed from the pool on Tuesday.

"Hilariously, my first thought was, 'Oh, he looks exactly like he does on TV,'" Kara McGee recalled to reporters outside the Manhattan courthouse.

McGee, who works in cybersecurity, said she made eye contact with Trump after she told the judge that it would be hard for her to be a juror due to her work schedule.

McGee said that when she received her jury duty letter, her mother pointed out the date coincided with Trump's trial, and she responded, "That sounds fascinating. I really hope I get to be on it."

MORE POTENTIAL JURORS EXCUSED, BUT NOT EVERYONE

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In the interest of saving time as jury selection in Donald Trump's trial stretched into its second day Tuesday, Judge Juan M. Merchan asked prospective jurors to raise concerns about their ability to serve before filling out the entire questionnaire.

A number of potential jurors were dismissed before noon Tuesday, including an Upper East Sider who works at a financial services firm and worried that spending four days a week in court, for an estimated six weeks, would load him down with work at night.

But not everyone who voiced concerns is being dismissed outright. One Upper West Side resident who works for a senior living company said she has her own court date April 30.

"We can work around that," Merchan said.

The former president jotted down notes and raised sheets of paper to his face as jurors rattled off answers to the lengthy questionnaire.

After one prospective juror said she would be unable to serve impartially, the former president twisted in his chair, looking in the direction of the box.

PROSECUTORS WANT TRUMP FINED, ADMONISHED OVER TRUTH SOCIAL POSTS

Following up on a request made in court Monday, prosecutors in Donald Trump's hush money case filed court documents outlining why they believe he should be fined \$3,000 for violating a gag order barring him from disparaging prosecution witnesses.

The Manhattan district attorney's office highlighted three social media posts from Trump on Truth Social that name Michael Cohen and/or Stormy Daniels — in one case calling them "two sleaze bags who have, with their lies and misrepresentations, cost our Country dearly" — saying he should be fined a thousand dollars for each post, admonished and ordered to take the posts down.

"It is absolutely critical that defendant immediately halt any conduct that would violate the April 1 order's narrow restrictions to protect the integrity of the ongoing trial," the filing reads.

Judge Juan M. Merchan has set a hearing on the matter for April 23.

POOL OF POTENTIAL JURORS PARED DOWN WITH MORE DISMISSALS

The initial group of 96 prospective jurors in Donald Trump's hush money case was reduced to just 30 on Tuesday morning after Judge Juan M. Merchan announced that he had excused one potential juror who was due to answer the questionnaire had come down with flu-like symptoms.

He said she duly showed up in a mask, but said she didn't feel well enough to go ahead with the day.

Another prospective juror — a partner in an accounting firm — was also excused after saying he feared his ability to be impartial could be compromised by "unconscious bias" from growing up in Texas and working in the finance world with people who "intellectually tend to slant Republican."

"A bunch of family and friends are Republicans, it's probably going to be tough to be impartial," he said.

A second group of about 100 prospective jurors has yet to be questioned.

TRUMP BEGINS SECOND DAY OF TRIAL RAILING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Former president and presumptive GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump started Tuesday complaining about his hush money trial, calling it "AN ASSAULT ON AMERICA!" and railing about a gag order that bars him from publicly commenting on the cases' jurors, potential witness and others.

"This conflicted, Trump Hating Judge won't let me respond to people that are on TV lying and spewing hate all day long," he wrote on his Truth Social network. "He is running rough shod over my lawyers and legal team."

"I want to speak, or at least be able respond," he went on, demanding the order be lifted. "Election Interference! RIGGED, UNCONSTITUTIONAL TRIAL! Take off the Gag Order!!!"

On his way into the courtroom, Trump stopped briefly to address a TV camera stationed in a hallway and denounced the proceeding and the judge.

"This is a trial that should have never been brought," he said. "I was paying a lawyer and marked it down as a legal expense ... and you get indicted over that?"

Judge Juan M. Merchan will hold a hearing on April 23 over the prosecution's assertion that Trump violated the gag order when he disparaged prosecution witnesses Cohen and Daniels as "two sleaze bags," circulated an earlier statement from Daniels and lashed out at what he claimed was a double standard by prosecutors.

Yellen says Iran's actions could cause global economic spillovers as White House vows new sanctions

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned Tuesday of potential global economic damage from rising tensions in the Middle East as the Biden administration said it was readying new sanctions in response to Iran's malevolent activity in the region.

Yellen spoke out against Iran's "malign and destabilizing activity" in remarks ahead of this week's spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, saying Iran's weekend missile and drone attack on Israel "underscores the importance of Treasury's work to use our economic tools to counter Iran's malign activity."

She added: "From this weekend's attack to the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, Iran's actions threaten the region's stability and could cause economic spillovers."

Iran's attack on Israel early Sunday came in response to what it says was an Israeli strike on Iran's consulate in Syria earlier this month. Israel's military chief said Monday that his country will respond to the attack, while world leaders caution against retaliation, trying to avoid a spiral of violence.

As the IMF and its fellow lending agency, the World Bank, hold their spring meetings this week, high on the agenda are the fast-rising tensions between Iran and Israel and what escalation could spell for the global economy.

Meanwhile, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan also said Tuesday that coming U.S. sanctions would target Iran's missile and drone program and entities supporting the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran's Defense Ministry.

"We anticipate that our allies and partners will soon be following with their own sanctions," Sullivan said in a statement. "In addition, we continue to work through the Department of Defense and U.S. Central Command to further strengthen and expand the successful integration of air and missile defense and early warning systems across the Middle East to further erode the effectiveness of Iran's missile and UAV capabilities."

Israel and Iran have been on a collision course throughout Israel's six-month war against Hamas militants in Gaza. The war erupted after two militant groups backed by Iran led an attack on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people in Israel and kidnapped 250 others. An Israeli offensive in Gaza has caused widespread devastation and killed over 33,000 people, according to local health officials.

"We've targeted over 500 individuals and entities connected to terrorism and terrorist financing by the Iranian regime and its proxies since the start of the Administration," Yellen said, citing sanctions against Iran's drone and missile programs, militant groups Hamas, the Houthis, Hezbollah, and other Iraqi militia groups.

Yellen said she expected the additional sanctions to be announced in the coming days.

The annual gathering will take place as other ongoing conflicts, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, threaten global financial stability.

Yellen in February offered her strongest public support yet for the idea of liquidating roughly \$300 billion in frozen Russian Central Bank assets and using them for Ukraine's long-term reconstruction.

She said Tuesday that the U.S. is "continuing to work with our international partners to unlock the economic value of immobilized Russian sovereign assets and ensure that Russia pays for the damage it has caused." Yellen added that she will meet with Group of Seven finance leaders Wednesday to continue discussions on the topic and will look at "a series of possibilities, ranging from actually seizing the assets to using them as collateral."

Another major issue for this year's meetings on the U.S. side, Yellen said, will be ongoing conversations about Chinese industrial policy that poses a threat to U.S. jobs and the global economy. She traveled to Guangzhou and Beijing earlier this month, to hold "difficult conversations" with counterparts over what she describes as China's overcapacity in its wave of low-priced Chinese green tech exports that could

overwhelm factories in the U.S. and make it impossible to compete.

Yellen said she plans to meet later this week with her Chinese counterparts for a fourth meeting of the U.S.-China Economic and Financial Working Groups, "to share information, identify potential areas of cooperation, and, when we disagree, frankly communicate concerns."

U.S. Treasury and China's Ministry of Finance launched the economic working groups in an effort to ease tensions and deepen ties between the nations.

Black immigrant rally in NYC raises awareness about racial, religious and language inequities

By CEDAR ATTANASIO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Black immigrants turned out in the hundreds on Tuesday across from New York City Hall during a hearing about racial inequities in the city's shelter and immigrant support systems.

Over 1,500 immigrants, mostly from Guinea, assembled in City Hall Park, after it became clear that only around a hundred people would be accommodated inside for the hearing.

The City Council considered relatively minor proposals. One set of bills would require administrators to collect better data on migrants in city services. Another effort, a resolution, called on the federal government to eliminate or to reimburse immigration application fees.

City Council members are asking for better data because they believe, with some evidence acknowledged by city officials, that Black migrants are more often turned away from shelters, denied access to help in their native languages, and less able to find accommodations for religious practices than others.

City officials say African migrants are more likely to arrive to the city without children, meaning they're often less of a priority for limited shelter space. Under a recent legal settlement, the city can evict adult migrants after 30 days in a shelter and 60 days for those under age 23, before forcing them to reapply for another spot. It's unclear how often those migrants end up sleeping on the street or in a subway car.

"The 30-60 day notices disproportionately affect Black immigrants," said Council Member Alexa Avilés, Chair of the Committee on Immigration, in a gilded hearing room Tuesday. Dozens of immigrants listened to proceedings on headsets with access to simultaneous translations in Wolof, Haitian Creole, Arabic, French, Fula and Bambara.

Rallies in support of City Council proposals are common, but usually draw only a few dozen people, often just the most tuned-in activists. But Guineans cheering and clapping outside Tuesday said that by word of mouth, often on WhatsApp groups with fellow immigrants, they learned about the event and came to support City Council members, or see if they could get information about jobs and housing. Some learned for the first time that they're eligible for city-run health insurance.

"I'm very impressed that, you know, today there was a call to action and you showed up," Council Member Mercedes Narcisse said to those inside the hearing room and outside in the park.

"We want support, because we have no shelter, we have nowhere to live. What is more, we also want help in legalizing our situation in this country," said Ibrahima Barry, from Guinea, of gaining work permission and residency.

While asylum-seekers must wait six months for a possible work permit, some migrant groups are offered a shortcut.

In September, President Joe Biden authorized Venezuelans already in the country to receive indefinite immigration protection, making them eligible for work permits. In December, in response to a surge of violence in Haiti, the administration announced an expansion of the program for Haitians.

Some countries in Africa, such as Sudan and Ethiopia, are also on that relief list, but not Guinea or other common origin countries of New York immigrants such as Senegal and Mauritania. And like the relief for Venezuelans, the protections don't apply to migrants who have arrived since the initial announcement.

Those migrants, many of them Muslim and French-speaking, face unique challenges that are not fully mitigated by the city's most well-funded charities, which tend to be Christian-based and have decades of

experience serving Spanish-speaking migrants.

New York City's estimated 275 mosques were among the first to host or counsel Muslim immigrants seeking shelter, halal food and water spigots used in pre-prayer ablutions. But they've had trouble keeping up with demand, even as the city moves to drop some building code requirements to make it easier to convert religious buildings into shelters. New York City is home to thousands of immigrants from African countries whose languages and religions are distinct from the Latin American immigrants who make up the majority of those in the city's care.

Around 75% of immigrants who are served by the city speak Spanish, followed by French — which is spoken in Guinea, Haiti and other countries — and then Wolof, Arabic and Chinese, according to Molly Schaefer, who leads the city's Office of Asylum Seeker Operations.

"Go look at the other cities. No one is sleeping in airports. No one is sleeping in police precincts. No one is sleeping in hospital, on floors. Children and families are not sleeping on the streets," Mayor Eric Adams told reporters Tuesday. He spoke at an unrelated news conference that took place at the same time as the City Council hearing, referring to stopgap solutions found in other large cities over the past few years. "And we continue to evolve."

Outside the hearing room, among blooming trees and the occasional tour group, Guinean video editor and web designer Diogo Diallo said he came to City Hall Park to find information, not necessarily to support a specific bill. His top request is to "accelerate the work permits," which only federal authorities can do. He plans to submit an asylum application this week, enabling him to possibly receive a work permit in around six months. He'd like to get that sooner. Under a new legal settlement, he only has 2 weeks left before he has to reapply for a spot in a shelter, with the possibility of not getting another one.

"If I work, I can leave the shelter," Diallo said.

AP mock NFL draft 3.0: 8 trades, including 2 in the top 5 highlight AP's final mock draft

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

The NFL draft madness begins early in the final edition of the AP's 2024 mock draft.

Eight trades in the first round. Two swaps in the top five. One team moves down and back up. Another makes three trades, going down twice before a move up to snatch a quarterback. A division champion trades out of the first round.

It's no secret the Chicago Bears are taking Caleb Williams with the No. 1 overall pick. The 2022 Heisman Trophy winner at USC has been ticketed for the top selection for months.

The Washington Commanders are expected to choose between LSU's Jayden Daniels, the 2023 Heisman winner, and North Carolina's Drake Maye at No. 2.

Then, the New England Patriots are expected to take the remaining quarterback.

Or, will they?

Here's the AP's mock draft 3.0:

1. Chicago Bears: CALEB WILLIAMS, QUARTERBACK, USC

Williams is the consensus No. 1 pick. The Bears already traded away Justin Fields, their 2021 first-round pick, and now finally may have a long-term answer at the most important position.

2. Washington Commanders: JAYDEN DANIELS, QUARTERBACK, LSU

The 2023 Heisman Trophy winner is an ideal fit for new offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury, who had some success with dual-threat QB Kyler Murray in Arizona.

3. Minnesota Vikings (mock trade with New England): DRAKE MAYE, QUARTERBACK, NORTH CAROLINA

Despite signing Sam Darnold to a \$10 million, one-year deal after losing Kirk Cousins to Atlanta, the Vikings are looking for a franchise QB. They send picks Nos. 11 and 23 plus a 2025 first-rounder to New England for No. 3 and 2025 third and sixth-rounders.

Maye won't have to start right away but could replace Darnold after a handful of games.

4. Buffalo Bills (mock trade with Arizona): MARVIN HARRISON JR., WIDE RECEIVER, OHIO STATE

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Harrison, the son of Hall of Fame receiver Marvin Harrison, was the best WR on the field last season. His stock has slipped some because he skipped offseason workouts but his tape is enough. The Bills are under pressure to win a Super Bowl and need a No. 1 wideout after trading Stefon Diggs. This blockbuster deal sends pick No. 28, a second-rounder (60), a fourth (128), a fifth (160) and a 2025 first and second to Arizona for No. 4 and a 2025 fourth.

5. Los Angeles Chargers: MALIK NABERS, WIDE RECEIVER, LSU

New Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh loves offensive linemen but Keenan Allen and Mike Williams are gone. Justin Herbert needs playmakers. Nabers gives them a physical receiver with elite ball skills and explosive route-running ability. He caught 89 balls for 1,569 yards and 14 TDs last season.

6. New York Giants: ROME ODUNZE, WIDE RECEIVER, WASHINGTON

Odunze has size, speed and skills to be elite. He had 92 catches for 1,640 yards, 13 TDs in 2023. The Giants haven't had a 1,000-yard receiver since Odell Beckham Jr. in 2018.

7. Tennessee Titans: JOE ALT, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, NOTRE DAME

The 6-9, 321-pound Alt is an athletic, versatile player widely considered the best blocker in a strong draft class. His father, John Alt, was a two-time Pro Bowl left tackle in Kansas City. The Titans need to protect Will Levis after allowing an AFC-high 64 sacks last season.

8. New England Patriots (mock trade with Atlanta): J.J. MCCARTHY, QUARTERBACK, MICHIGAN

After trading down from No. 3, the Patriots move up to add the Michigan quarterback, hoping McCarthy can have just a fraction of the success former Wolverines QB Tom Brady had in New England.

Despite playing in a run-heavy offense, McCarthy's stock has been on the rise after leading Michigan to a national championship. He's a winner who brings plenty of intangibles along with a strong arm. With veteran Jacoby Brissett back in New England, McCarthy won't have to start immediately.

To get No. 8, the Patriots send No. 11 and a second-rounder (34) to Atlanta and get back a third (74) and fifth (143).

9. Chicago Bears: DALLAS TURNER, EDGE, ALABAMA

The Bears turn to defense after taking Williams first and get the best pass rusher in the draft. Turner is an athletic edge rusher with size, speed and burst to get after playmaking QBs.

10. New York Jets: BROCK BOWERS, TIGHT END, GEORGIA

After addressing the offensive line in free agency, the Jets give Aaron Rodgers another playmaker by selecting the best tight end in the draft. Bowers has the versatility to line up anywhere and he's a reliable blocker.

11. Atlanta Falcons (mock trade with New England via Minnesota): QUINYON MITCHELL, CORNERBACK, TOLEDO

Mitchell ran a 4.33 second 40-yard dash at the combine and gives Atlanta a potential shutdown corner-back after the Falcons bolstered the offense in free agency, adding Cousins and WR Darnell Mooney.

12. Philadelphia Eagles (mock trade with Denver): J.C. LATHAM, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, ALABAMA

Latham is an athletic, powerful right tackle who can play the left side. He can slide into the right guard spot and eventually replace Lane Johnson at right tackle. The Eagles value offensive line strength and general manager Howie Roseman is known for being aggressive. They send No. 22, a second-rounder (50) and a sixth (210) for this pick and a fifth (136).

13. Las Vegas Raiders: TERRION ARNOLD, CORNERBACK, ALABAMA

Arnold is an exceptional cover guy tough enough to be an asset against the run and has excellent ball skills. The Raiders already made a splash on defense in free agency, signing DT Christian Wilkins.

14. New Orleans Saints: OLUMUYIWA FASHANU, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, PENN STATE

The 6-6, 321-pound Fashanu is already an elite pass blocker on the right side. He didn't allow a sack in college.

15. Indianapolis Colts: NATE WIGGINS, CORNERBACK, CLEMSON

Wiggins has elite speed, he's versatile and is a playmaker. He bolsters a pass defense that finished middle of the pack.

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16. Seattle Seahawks: LAIATU LATU, EDGE, UCLA
Latu was the best defensive end in college last season, earning both the Lombardi and Ted Hendricks awards. He'll give the Seahawks a pass rusher with game-changing skills.
17. Jacksonville Jaguars: JARED VERSE, EDGE, FLORIDA STATE
Verse has the skills to be an elite pass rusher for a team that finished 25th in the league in sacks.
18. Cincinnati Bengals: BYRON MURPHY, DEFENSIVE TACKLE, TEXAS
The Bengals bolster the interior of their defensive line by putting the powerful Murphy in the middle.
19. Los Angeles Rams: JER'ZHAN NEWTON, DEFENSIVE TACKLE, ILLINOIS
Newton is a disruptive interior defender who brings a physical presence in the middle of the line along with outstanding ability to get to the quarterback. He'd help replace future Hall of Famer Aaron Donald, who retired.
20. Dallas Cowboys (mock trade with Pittsburgh): TALIESE FUAGA, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, OREGON STATE
The massive Fuaga, 6-6, 324, excels in pass protection and is a people-mover as a run blocker. He can play either tackle spot and the Cowboys lost two starting offensive linemen in free agency. Dallas sends No. 24, a third (87) and sixth (216) for this pick, a sixth (178) and 2025 fourth.
21. Miami Dolphins: CHOP ROBINSON, EDGE, PENN STATE
Robinson is a freakish athlete and three-down player who upgrades a defense that lost top edge rushers Bradley Chubb and Jaelan Phillips to serious injuries last season.
22. Kansas City Chiefs (mock trade with Denver via Philadelphia: BRIAN THOMAS JR., WIDE RECEIVER, LSU
Thomas had 1,177 yards receiving on 68 catches and ran a 4.33 40-yard dash at the combine. The Chiefs added Marquis "Hollywood" Brown in free agency and have won two Super Bowls since trading Tyreek Hill but can't pass up a potential superstar.
They send No. 32, a third-rounder (95) and a 2025 third to the Broncos, who move down again.
23. New England Patriots (mock trade with Minnesota): ADONAI MITCHELL, WIDE RECEIVER, TEXAS
The 6-3 burner ran a 4.34-second 40 at the combine and gives the Patriots a true No. 1.
24. Pittsburgh Steelers (mock trade with Dallas): TROY FAUTANU, OFFENSIVE LINEMAN, WASHINGTON
A versatile linemen who can play tackle or fill a need at guard.
25. Green Bay Packers: GRAHAM BARTON, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, DUKE
Barton is a versatile pass protector who can play tackle or guard.
26. Carolina Panthers (mock trade with Tampa Bay): JACKSON POWERS-JOHNSON, OFFENSIVE LINE-MAN, OREGON
Powers-Johnson is the consensus No. 1 center/interior offensive lineman in the draft. The Panthers send the first pick in the second round (33), a fourth (96) and fifth (141) to slide up seven spots.
27. Arizona Cardinals: TROY FRANKLIN, WIDE RECEIVER, OREGON
Franklin has elite speed and gives the Cardinals a playmaker to stretch the field.
28. Arizona Cardinals (mock trade with Buffalo): AMARIUS MIMS, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, GEORGIA
The Cardinals get a combine superstar in Mims, who has outstanding speed for a giant (6-7, 340) of a man and slots in immediately at right tackle.
29. Detroit Lions: KOOL-AID MCKINSTRY, CORNERBACK, ALABAMA
He's a tough, physical cornerback with speed and quickness to bolster the secondary.
30. Denver Broncos (mock trade with Baltimore): MICHAEL PENIX JR., QUARTERBACK, WASHINGTON
After trading down twice to add draft capital, the Broncos move up and snag their quarterback. Penix said the Broncos were hard on him in their combine meeting, highlighting his bad plays. Playing for Sean Payton won't get any easier for the talented southpaw QB. Denver sends No. 32, a fifth-rounder (136) and 2025 sixth to move up two spots.
31. San Francisco 49ers: TYLER GUYTON, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, OKLAHOMA
Guyton is a mammoth (6-8, 322) tackle versatile enough to play either side. Can start on the right side and eventually move over to replace Trent Williams.
32. Baltimore Ravens (mock trade with Denver): JORDAN MORGAN, OFFENSIVE TACKLE, ARIZONA
Morgan is a versatile lineman who played tackle but can move to guard.

Whitey Herzog, Hall of Fame manager who led St. Louis Cardinals to 3 pennants, dies at 92

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Whitey Herzog, the gruff and ingenious Hall of Fame manager who guided the St. Louis Cardinals to three pennants and a World Series title in the 1980s and perfected an intricate, nail-biting strategy known as “Whiteyball,” has died. He was 92.

Cardinals spokesman Brian Bartow said Tuesday the team had been informed of Herzog’s death by his family. Herzog, who had been at Busch Stadium on April 4 for the Cardinals’ home opener, died on Monday, according to Bartow.

“Whitey Herzog devoted his lifetime to the game he loved, excelling as a leader on and off the field,” Jane Forbes Clark, chair of the Hall of Fame’s board of directors, said in a statement. “Whitey always brought the best out of every player he managed with a forthright style that won him respect throughout the game.”

A crew-cut, pot-bellied tobacco chewer who had no patience for the “buddy-buddy” school of management, Herzog joined the Cardinals in 1980 and helped end the team’s decade-plus pennant drought by adapting it to the artificial surface and distant fences of Busch Memorial Stadium. A typical Cardinals victory under Herzog was a low-scoring, 1-run game, sealed in the final innings by a “bullpen by committee,” relievers who might be replaced after a single pitch, or temporarily shifted to the outfield, then brought back to the mound.

The Cardinals had power hitters in George Hendrick and Jack Clark, but they mostly relied on the speed and resourcefulness of switch-hitters Vince Coleman and Willie McGee, the acrobatic fielding of shortstop and future Hall of Famer Ozzie Smith and the effective pitching of starters such as John Tudor and Danny Cox and relievers Todd Worrell, Ken Dayley and Jeff Lahti. For the ‘82 champions, Herzog didn’t bother rotating relievers, but simply brought in future Hall of Famer Bruce Sutter to finish the job.

“They (the media) seemed to think there was something wrong with the way we played baseball, with speed and defense and line-drive hitters,” Herzog wrote in his memoir “White Rat: A Life in Baseball,” published in 1987. “They called it ‘Whiteyball’ and said it couldn’t last.”

Under Herzog, the Cards won pennants in 1982, 1985 and 1987, and the World Series in 1982, when they edged the Milwaukee Brewers in seven games. Herzog managed the Kansas City Royals to division titles in 1976-78, but they lost each time in the league championship to the New York Yankees.

Overall, Herzog was a manager for 18 seasons, compiling a record of 1,281 wins and 1,125 losses. He was named Manager of the Year in 1985 and voted into the Hall by the Veterans Committee in 2010, his plaque noting his “stern, yet good-natured style,” and his emphasis on speed, pitching and defense. Just before he formally entered the Hall, the Cardinals retired his uniform number, 24.

When asked about the secrets of managing, he would reply a sense of humor and a good bullpen.

Herzog is survived by his wife of 71 years, Mary Lou Herzog; their three children, Debra, David and Jim, and their spouses; nine grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Dorrel Norman Elvert Herzog was born in New Athens, Illinois, a blue-collar community that would shape him long after he left. He excelled in baseball and basketball and was open to skipping the occasional class to take in a Cardinals game. Signed up by the Yankees, he was a center fielder who discovered that he had competition from a prospect born just weeks before him, Mickey Mantle.

Herzog never played for the Yankees, but he did get to know manager Casey Stengel, another master shuffler of players who became a key influence. The light-haired Herzog was named “The White Rat” because of his resemblance to Yankees pitcher Bob “The White Rat” Kuzava.

Like so many successful managers, Herzog was a mediocre player, batting just .257 over eight seasons and playing several positions. His best year was with Baltimore in 1961, when he hit .291. He also played for the Washington Senators, Kansas City Athletics and Detroit Tigers, with whom he ended his playing career, in 1963.

“Baseball has been good to me since I quit trying to play it,” he liked to say.

After working as a scout and coach, Herzog was hired in 1967 by the New York Mets as director of

player development, with Tom Seaver and Nolan Ryan among the future stars he helped bring along. The Mets liked him well enough to designate him the successor to Gil Hodges, but when the manager died suddenly in 1972 the job went to Yogi Berra. Herzog instead debuted with the Texas Rangers the following season, finishing just 47-91 before being replaced by Billy Martin. He managed the Angels for a few games in 1974 and joined the Royals the following season, his time with Kansas City peaking in 1977 when the team finished 102-60.

Many players spoke warmly of Herzog, but he didn't hesitate to rid his teams of those he no longer wanted, dumping such Cardinals stars as outfielder Lonnie Smith and starting pitcher Joaquin Andujar. One trade worked out brilliantly: Before the 1982 season, he exchanged .300 hitting shortstop Garry Templeton, whom Herzog had chastised for not hustling, for the Padres' light-hitting Ozzie Smith, now widely regarded as the best defensive shortstop in history. Another deal was less far successful: Gold Glove first baseman Keith Hernandez, with whom Herzog had feuded, to the Mets in the middle of 1983 for pitchers Neil Allen and Rick Ownbey. Hernandez led New York to the World Series title in 1986, while Allen and Ownbey were soon forgotten.

Herzog was just as tough on himself, resigning in the middle of 1990 because he was "embarrassed" by the team's 33-47 record. He served as a consultant and general manager for the Angels in the early '90s and briefly considered managing the Red Sox before the 1997 season.

If the '82 championship was the highlight of his career, his greatest blow was the '85 series. The Cardinals were up 3 games to 2 against his former team, the Royals, and in Game 6 led 1-0 going into the bottom of the ninth, with Worrell brought in to finish the job.

Jorge Orta led off and grounded a 0-2 pitch between the mound and first base. In one of the most famous blown calls in baseball history, he was ruled safe by umpire Don Denkinger, even though replays showed first baseman Jack Clark's toss to Worrell was in time. The Cardinals never recovered. Kansas City rallied for two runs to tie the series and crushed the Cards 11-0 in Game 7.

"No, I'm not bitter at Denkinger," Herzog told the AP years later. "He's a good guy, he knows he made a mistake, and he's a human being. It happened at an inopportune time but I do think they ought to have instant replay in the playoffs and World Series."

As if testing Herzog's humor, the Hall inducted him alongside an umpire, Doug Harvey.

"I don't know why he should get in," Herzog joked at the time. "Doug kicked me out of more games than any other umpire."

House Republicans send Mayorkas impeachment articles to the Senate, forcing a trial

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House sent two articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to the Senate on Tuesday, forcing a trial on allegations that he has "willfully and systematically" refused to enforce immigration laws.

While the Senate is obligated to hold a trial under the rules of impeachment once the charges are walked across the Capitol, the proceedings may not last long. Democrats are expected to try to dismiss or table the charges later this week before the full arguments get underway.

After delivering the articles, the Republican prosecutors appointed by House Speaker Mike Johnson stood in the well of the Senate. The Senate sergeant-at-arms, the chamber's top security official, called the session to order with a "hear ye! hear ye!" and a notice that "all persons are commanded to keep silence, on pain of imprisonment."

The House Homeland Security Committee chairman, Mark Green, a Tennessee Republican who is one of the impeachment managers, read the articles aloud as most senators sat in their seats, following along with their own paper copies.

Republicans have argued there should be a full trial. As Johnson signed the articles Monday in preparation for sending them across the Capitol, he said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer should convene

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a trial to "hold those who engineered this crisis to full account."

Schumer "is the only impediment to delivering accountability for the American people," Johnson said. "Pursuant to the Constitution, the House demands a trial."

After Tuesday's ceremonial procession and presentation of the articles, the proceedings will not begin until Wednesday. Senators will be sworn in as jurors, turning the chamber into the court of impeachment. The Senate will then issue a summons to Mayorkas to inform him of the charges and ask for a written answer. He will not have to appear.

The entire process could be done within hours on Wednesday. Majority Democrats have said the GOP case against Mayorkas doesn't rise to the "high crimes and misdemeanors" laid out as a bar for impeachment in the Constitution, and Schumer probably has enough votes to end the trial immediately if he decides to do so.

Schumer has said he wants to "address this issue as expeditiously as possible."

"Impeachment should never be used to settle a policy disagreement," Schumer said. "That would set a horrible precedent for the Congress."

The House narrowly voted in February to impeach Mayorkas for his handling of the U.S.-Mexico border. House Republicans charged in two articles of impeachment that Mayorkas has not only refused to enforce existing law but also breached the public trust by lying to Congress and saying the border was secure. It was the first time in nearly 150 years a Cabinet secretary was impeached.

Since then, Johnson has delayed sending the articles to the Senate for weeks while both chambers finished work on government funding legislation and took a two-week recess. Johnson had said he would send them to the Senate last week, but he punted again after Senate Republicans said they wanted more time to prepare.

South Dakota Sen. John Thune, the Senate's No. 2 Republican, has said the Senate needs to hold a full trial at which it can examine the evidence against Mayorkas and come to a conclusion.

"This is an absolute debacle at the southern border," Thune said. "It is a national security crisis. There needs to be accountability."

House impeachment managers previewed some of their arguments at a hearing with Mayorkas on Tuesday morning on President Joe Biden's budget request for the department.

Green, the chairman of the House Homeland Security panel, told the secretary that he has a duty under the law to control and guard U.S. borders, and "during your three years as secretary, you have failed to fulfill this oath. You have refused to comply with the laws passed by Congress, and you have breached the public trust."

Mayorkas defended the department's efforts but said the nation's immigration system is "fundamentally broken, and only Congress can fix it."

Other impeachment managers are Michael McCaul of Texas, Andy Biggs of Arizona, Ben Cline of Virginia, Andrew Garbarino of New York, Michael Guest of Mississippi, Harriet Hageman of Wyoming, Clay Higgins of Louisiana, Laurel Lee of Florida, August Pfluger of Texas and Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia.

At a press conference with a group of Republican senators after the articles were delivered, the impeachment managers demanded that Schumer move forward with their case.

"The voice of the people is very clear," said Texas Rep. Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "Secure the border and impeach this man, this criminal."

Exactly how Democrats will proceed on Wednesday is still unclear. Impeachment rules generally allow the Senate majority to decide how to manage the trial, and Schumer has not said exactly what he will do.

After the jurors are sworn in, Senate Republicans are likely to try to raise a series of objections if Schumer calls a vote to dismiss or table. But ultimately they cannot block a dismissal if majority Democrats have the votes.

Some Republicans have said they would like time to debate whether Mayorkas should be impeached, even though debate time is usually not included in impeachment proceedings. Negotiations were underway between the two parties over whether Schumer may allow that time and give senators in both parties a chance to discuss the impeachment before it is dismissed.

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While most Republicans oppose quick dismissal, some have hinted they could vote with Democrats.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said last week he wasn't sure what he would do if there were a move to dismiss the trial. "I think it's virtually certain that there will not be the conviction of someone when the constitutional test has not been met," he said.

At the same time, Romney said he wants to at least express his view that "Mayorkas has done a terrible job, but he's following the direction of the president and has not met the constitutional test of a high crime or misdemeanor."

In any case, Republicans would not be able to win the support of the two-thirds of the Senate that is needed to convict and remove Mayorkas from office. Democrats control the Senate, 51-49, and they appear to be united against the impeachment effort. Not one House Democrat supported it, either.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, a Democrat who is facing a tough reelection bid in Ohio, called the impeachment trial a "distraction," arguing that Republicans should instead support a bipartisan border compromise they scuttled earlier this year.

If Democrats are unable to dismiss or table the articles, they could follow the precedent of several impeachment trials for federal judges over the last century and hold a vote to create a trial committee that would investigate the charges. While there is sufficient precedent for this approach, Democrats may prefer to end the process completely, especially in a presidential election year when immigration and border security are top issues.

If the Senate were to proceed to an impeachment trial, it would be the third in five years. Democrats impeached President Donald Trump twice, once over his dealings with Ukraine and a second time in the days after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Trump was acquitted by the Senate both times.

At a trial, senators would be forced to sit in their seats for the duration, maybe weeks, while the House impeachment managers and lawyers representing Mayorkas make their cases. The Senate is allowed to call witnesses, as well, if it so decides, and it can ask questions of both sides after the opening arguments are finished.

Israel says it will retaliate against Iran. These are the risks that could pose to Israel

By JULIA FRANKEL and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel is vowing to retaliate against Iran, risking further expanding the shadow war between the two foes into a direct conflict after an Iranian attack over the weekend sent hundreds of drones and missiles toward Israel.

Israeli officials have not said how or when they might strike. But as countries around the world urge Israel to show restraint and the threat of a multi-front war mounts, it's clear that a direct Israeli attack on Iranian soil would lead to major fallout.

Iran says it carried out the strike to avenge an Israeli airstrike that killed two Iranian generals in Syria on April 1. It has pledged a much tougher response to any Israeli counterattack on its soil.

With Israel focused on its war against Hamas in Gaza, and already battling Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon every day, the U.S. has urged Israel to show restraint.

U.S. officials say President Joe Biden has told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the U.S. will not participate in any offensive action against Iran, and the president made "very clear" to Netanyahu "that we do have to think carefully and strategically" about the risks of escalation.

Israel's war cabinet has spent the last two days debating their next move. Here are some considerations key to their decision.

INCREASING ISRAELI ISOLATION

Israel's successful air defense Saturday night — conducted in tandem with the U.S., Britain, France and Jordan — bought the country a brief moment of international support and sympathy after months of mounting international isolation over the Gaza war. The six-month offensive has killed nearly 34,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, and unleashed a humanitarian catastrophe.

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A coalition of international partners helped Israel defend itself effectively. Israel's military says 99% of the weapons were intercepted, with few reaching Israeli airspace. The attack caused only minor damage and wounded one person: a 7-year-old girl.

This coalition worked under the leadership of the U.S. Central Command, which oversees American forces in the region. It works closely with Israel and moderate Arab countries to form a unified front against Iran.

Jordan, a country whose population is predominantly pro-Palestinian, joined the effort, despite being at odds with Israel over the war in Gaza, calling its participation self-defense.

It also appears likely that help may have come from regional powerhouse Saudi Arabia, which does not have official relations with Israel. A map released by Israel shows many of the Iranian missiles flying through Saudi airspace.

Israel has been careful not to identify its Arab partners, but an Israeli air force official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the mission, said Israeli warplanes needed to fly "east of Israel" to shoot down missiles.

Yoel Guzansky, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies, a Tel Aviv think tank, said Israel would be risking this goodwill if it acts alone.

"Israel can take advantage of this and buy itself a lot of credit right now, if it does not launch a massive retaliatory attack," he said. "But if it does attack, a lot of credit is lost."

The tacit support of Arab states does not mean they would assist Israel in a counterattack on Iran. Any air or missile response other than ballistic missiles — which would arc over neighboring countries' airspace rather than through it — would require overflights of surrounding countries, which technically would require Israel obtain permission from those Arab neighbors, said Daniel Byman, a senior fellow with the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"With Saudi Arabia and Jordan, there's kind of a route and access questions," in terms of whether they would grant Israel overflight clearance.

"From Iran's point of view, that would be seen as a hostile act," Byman said. "And even though these countries don't like Iran, they're not terribly eager to be seen on the side of Israel doing that."

FEARS OF A MULTI-FRONT WAR

A major retaliatory strike on Iranian soil risks sparking a full-scale regional war, so any response must be carefully calculated.

A direct strike on Iranian soil would almost certainly result in a brutal counterattack and risk prompting Hezbollah to launch further attacks. The Iranian-backed Lebanese group has a far more powerful arsenal than Hamas, but has so far shown hesitancy about engaging in an all-out war.

Some 60,000 citizens in northern Israel already have been forced to evacuate their homes due to ongoing exchanges with Hezbollah. Heavier fighting would likely force them to spend even more time away from home.

A direct conflict would also further stretch Israel's military, remove its focus from Gaza and hamper Israel's war-wearied economy.

Any major attack on Iranian soil could also undermine shaky U.S. support for the war.

Two U.S. officials said Israel has not yet told the U.S. how it intends to respond. But the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe diplomatic discussions, said Israel has signaled that whatever it does will be designed to prevent a worsening of the already tense regional security situation. That could point to a more limited action, such as a strike on Iranian proxies across the region or a cyber attack on Iran.

Tamar Hermann, a polling expert at the Israel Democracy Institute, says most Israelis are in favor of some sort of military response as long as it is coordinated with regional allies, including the United States.

"If it is done with no consultation and no agreement with allies ... support will be much smaller," Hermann said.

MILITARY CAPACITY

Israel's army is vastly superior to others in the region. It possesses a range of high-tech weaponry, including F35 fighter planes that can launch long-range munitions. Experts say it has the ability to directly strike Iran or its proxies in the region.

Fabian Hinz, a weapons expert and research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said the Iranian air force is "not even remotely comparable." He said the force is composed of a collection of planes from the 1980s and 90s, with some dating back to the reign of the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi who ruled the country until 1979.

The extent of the Islamic republic's air defense system is less known, he said. Many of Iran's missile sites and nuclear installations are deep underground, making them difficult to hit, Hinz added. Israel might also need the agreement of Gulf Arab countries to use their airspace — something that is not guaranteed.

"I don't think it's going to be a full-scale Israeli attack against many targets all over Iran," said Raz Zimmt, another senior researcher at Israel's INSS. "It will probably be limited against one or two, perhaps inside Iran."

Artist and curators refuse to open Israel pavilion at Venice Biennale until cease-fire, hostage deal

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — The artist and curators representing Israel at this year's Venice Biennale announced on Tuesday they won't open the Israeli pavilion exhibit until there is a cease-fire in Gaza and an agreement to release hostages seized by Hamas on Oct. 7.

Their decision, praised as courageous by the festival's main curator, was posted on a sign in the window of the Israeli pavilion on the first day of media previews, ahead of the Biennale contemporary art fair opening on Saturday.

"The art can wait, but the women, children and people living through hell cannot," the curators said in a statement together with the artist. It expressed horror at both the plight of Palestinians in Gaza and that of the relatives of hostages seized in the militant Hamas group's Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

Israel is among 88 national participants in the 60th Venice Biennale, which runs from April 20-Nov. 24. The Israeli pavilion was built in 1952 as a permanent representation of Israel inside the Giardini, the original venue of the world's oldest contemporary art show and the site of 29 national pavilions. Other nations show in the nearby Arsenale or at venues throughout the city.

This year, the Israeli exhibit has been titled "(M)otherland" by artist Ruth Patir.

Even before the preview, thousands of artists, curators and critics had signed an open letter calling on the Biennale to exclude the Israeli national pavilion from this year's show to protest Israel's war in Gaza. Those opposed to Israel's presence had also vowed to protest on-site.

Italy's culture minister had firmly backed Israel's participation, and the fair was opening amid unusually heightened security.

Written in English, the announcement Tuesday of Israel's delayed opening read: "The artist and curators of the Israeli pavilion will open the exhibition when a cease-fire and hostage release agreement is reached." Two Italian soldiers stood guard nearby.

In a statement, Patir said she and the curators wanted to show solidarity with the families of the hostages "and the large community in Israel who is calling for change."

"As an artist and educator, I firmly object to cultural boycott, but I have a significant difficulty in presenting a project that speaks about the vulnerability of life in a time of unfathomed disregard for it," Patir said in the statement.

Patir, who remained in Venice on Tuesday, declined further comment. Neither the Biennale organizers nor the Israeli culture ministry commented.

The curators of the Israeli pavilion, Mira Lapidot and Tamar Margalit, said they were delaying the opening of the exhibit because of the "horrific war that is raging in Gaza," but that they hoped the conditions would change so the exhibit could open for public view.

"There is no end in sight, only the promise of more pain, loss, and devastation. The exhibition is up and the pavilion is waiting to be opened," they said. For now, a video work made by Patir can be seen through the pavilion window.

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Adriano Pedrosa, the Brazilian curator of the main show at the Biennale, praised the gesture.

"It's a very courageous decision," Pedrosa told The Associated Press. "I think it's a very wise decision as well" because it is "very difficult to present a work in this particular context."

The national pavilions at Venice are independent of the main show, and each nation decides its own show, which may or may not play into the curator's vision.

Palestinian artists are participating in collateral events in Venice and three Palestinian artists' works are to appear in Pedrosa's main show, titled "Stranieri Ovunque — Foreigners Everywhere," which has a preponderance of artists from the global south.

Pedrosa, the artistic director of Brazil's Sao Paulo Museum of Art, said one of the Palestinian artists, New York-based Khaled Jarrar, was not physically in Venice because he couldn't get a visa.

Geopolitics is no stranger to the Biennale. The Italian festival discouraged, and then banned, South Africa's participation during apartheid. Russian artists withdrew their participation in 2022 to protest the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine, and the Biennale said Russia did not request to participate this year.

The war in Gaza erupted after Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants carried out a cross-border attack on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people in Israel and kidnapped 250 others.

Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has so far killed over 33,700 Palestinians, according to local health officials, causing widespread devastation. The United Nations has warned of imminent famine in northern Gaza.

Fed's Powell: Elevated inflation will likely delay rate cuts this year

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell cautioned Tuesday that persistently elevated inflation will likely delay any Fed interest rate cuts until later this year, opening the door to a period of higher-for-longer rates.

"Recent data have clearly not given us greater confidence" that inflation is coming fully under control and "instead indicate that it's likely to take longer than expected to achieve that confidence," Powell said during a panel discussion at the Wilson Center.

"If higher inflation does persist," he said, "we can maintain the current level of (interest rates) for as long as needed."

The Fed chair's comments suggested that without further evidence that inflation is falling, the central bank may carry out fewer than the three quarter-point reductions its officials had forecast during their most recent meeting in March.

His remarks Tuesday represented a shift for Powell, who on March 7 had told a Senate committee that the Fed was "not far" from gaining the confidence it needed to cut rates. At a news conference on March 20, Powell appeared to downplay that assertion. But his comments Tuesday went further in dimming the likelihood of any rate cuts in the coming months.

"Powell's comments make it clear the Fed is now looking past June," when many economists had previously expected rate cuts to begin, Krishna Guha, an analyst at EvercoreISI, said in a research note.

In the past several weeks, government data has shown that inflation remains stubbornly above the Fed's 2% target and that the economy is still growing robustly. Year-over-year inflation rose to 3.5% in March, from 3.2% in February. And a closely watched gauge of "core" prices, which exclude volatile food and energy, rose sharply for a third straight month.

As recently as December, Wall Street traders had priced in as many as six quarter-point rate cuts this year. Now they foresee only two rate cuts, with the first coming in September.

Powell's comments followed a speech earlier Tuesday by Fed Vice Chair Philip Jefferson, who also appeared to raise the prospect that the Fed would not carry out three cuts this year in its benchmark rate. The Fed's rate stands at a 23-year high of 5.3% after 11 rate hikes beginning two years ago.

Jefferson said he expected inflation to continue to slow this year with the Fed's key rate "held steady at its current level." But he omitted a reference to the likelihood of future rate cuts that he had included

in a speech in February.

Last month, Jefferson had said that should inflation keep slowing, "it will likely be appropriate" for the Fed to cut rates "at some point this year" — language that Powell has also used. Yet neither Powell or Jefferson made any similar reference Tuesday.

Instead, Powell said only that the Fed could reduce rates "should the labor market unexpectedly weaken."

Fed officials have responded to recent reports that the economy remains strong and inflation is undeniably high by underscoring that they see little urgency to reduce their benchmark rate anytime soon.

On Monday, the government reported that retail sales jumped last month, the latest sign that robust job growth and higher stock prices and home values are fueling solid household spending. Vigorous consumer spending can keep inflation elevated because it can lead some businesses to charge more, knowing that many people are able to pay higher prices.

Biden's latest plan for student loan cancellation moves forward as a proposed regulation

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's latest plan for student loan cancellation is moving forward as a proposed regulation, offering him a fresh chance to deliver on a campaign promise and energize young voters ahead of the November election.

The Education Department on Tuesday filed paperwork for a new regulation that would deliver the cancellation that Biden announced last week. It still has to go through a 30-day public comment period and another review before it can be finalized.

It's a more targeted proposal than the one the U.S. Supreme Court struck down last year. The new plan uses a different legal basis and seeks to cancel or reduce loans for more than 25 million Americans.

Conservative opponents, who see it as an unfair burden for taxpayers who didn't attend college, have threatened to challenge it in court.

The Democratic president highlighted the the plan during a trip to Wisconsin last week, saying it would provide "life-changing" relief. He laid out five categories of people who would be eligible for help.

The new paperwork filed by the Education Department includes four of those categories, while a separate proposal will be filed later addressing how people facing various kinds of hardship can get relief.

The broadest forgiveness category would help borrowers who owe more than they originally borrowed because of runaway interest. It would eliminate up to \$20,000 in interest for anyone in that situation, while those with annual incomes below \$120,000 and enrolled in income-driven repayment plans would get all their interest erased with no maximum limit. It would be done automatically.

Another category would cancel loans for people who have been paying back their undergraduate student loans for at least 20 years, and those who have been paying graduate loans at last 25 years.

It would automatically cancel loans for those who went to colleges or programs considered to have low financial value. Borrowers would be eligible for cancellation if they attended a program that leave graduates with earnings no better than those with a high school diploma, for example, or programs that leave graduates with large shares of debt compared with their incomes.

Borrowers who are eligible for other federal forgiveness programs but haven't applied would also get loans erased. Federal education officials would use existing data to identify those people and offer relief. It's intended to reach those who don't know about other programs or have been deterred by complicated application processes.

The proposal was hashed out over the course of several hearings as part of a federal rules process that gathers advice from outside experts. The plan was drafted with the help of students, college officials, state officials, borrower advocates and loan servicers.

During that process, advocates pushed for a fifth category of forgiveness for people who have different kinds of hardship that prevent them from being able to repay their loans. The Education Department said it's still working on the details of that rule, with a separate proposal to come "in the coming months."

The department said the hardship proposal will offer cancellation to borrowers who are at high risk of defaulting on their loans along with those who face other hardships, including high medical and caregiving expenses. That proposal will mirror one agreed upon by outside experts during the rulemaking process, the agency said.

It usually takes months for a proposed rule to be finalized, and months more before it can take effect. The Biden administration said it plans to start implementing some parts of the new proposal as soon as this fall, using the education secretary's authority to implement rules early in certain cases.

Republicans are staunchly opposed to any broad student loan cancellation, saying it's an unfair bailout for people who went to college.

"Where is the relief for the guy who didn't go to college but is working to pay off the loan on the truck he takes to work?" said Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., the ranking member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. "What about the woman who paid off her student loans but is now struggling to afford her mortgage? Instead the Biden administration is sticking these Americans with the bill of someone else's student debt.

Two coalitions of Republican states have sued the Biden administration to block a separate repayment plan that offers an accelerated path to loan forgiveness.

The White House says it's confident the new plan is on solid legal ground, saying the Higher Education Act gives the education secretary the power to waive student loans in certain cases.

Only 1 in 3 US adults think Trump acted illegally in New York hush money case, AP-NORC poll shows

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first criminal trial facing former President Donald Trump is also the one in which Americans are least convinced he committed a crime, a new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll finds.

Only about one-third of U.S. adults say Trump did something illegal in the hush money case for which jury selection began Monday, while close to half think he did something illegal in the other three criminal cases pending against him. And they're fairly skeptical that Trump is getting a fair shake from the prosecutors in the case — or that the judge and jurors can be impartial in cases involving him.

Still, half of Americans would consider Trump unfit to serve as president if he is convicted of falsifying business documents to cover up hush money payments to a woman who said he had a sexual encounter with her.

While a New York jury will decide whether to convict Trump of felony charges, public opinion of the trial proceedings could hurt him politically. The poll suggests a conviction could hurt Trump's campaign. Trump enters a rematch with President Joe Biden as the first presumptive nominee of a major party — and the first former president — to be under indictment. A verdict is expected in roughly six weeks, well before the Republican National Convention, at which he will accept the GOP nomination.

Trump has made the prosecutions against him a centerpiece of his campaign and argued without evidence that Biden, a Democrat, engineered the cases. That argument helped him consolidate GOP support during the Republican primary, but a conviction might influence how many Americans — including independent voters and people long skeptical of Trump — perceive his candidacy.

"Any conviction should disqualify him," said Callum Schlumpf, a 31-year-old engineering student and political independent from Clifton, Texas. "It sets a bad example to the rest of the world. I think it misrepresents us, as a country, as to what we believe is important and virtuous."

Yet, a cloud of doubt hangs over all the proceedings. Only about 3 in 10 Americans feel that any of the prosecutors who have brought charges against Trump are treating the former president fairly. And only about 2 in 10 Americans are extremely or very confident that the judges and jurors in the cases against him can be fair and impartial.

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"It's very obvious political persecution," said Christopher Ruff, a 46-year-old political independent and museum curator from Sanford, North Carolina. "I'm no fan of Trump in any way, shape or form. Didn't vote for him, never will. But it's obviously all political."

Consistent with AP-NORC polls conducted over the past year, the new poll found that about half of Americans say Trump did something illegal regarding the classified documents found at his Florida home, and a similar share think he did something illegal regarding his alleged attempt to interfere in Georgia's vote count in the 2020 presidential election. The poll also found that nearly half of Americans believe he did something illegal related to his effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Prosecutors in New York will argue that Trump falsified his company's internal records to hide the true nature of a payment to his former lawyer Michael Cohen. Cohen alleges he was directed by Trump to pay adult film actor Stormy Daniels \$130,000 one month before the 2016 election to silence her claims about an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to the 34-count indictment and denied any sexual encounter with Daniels. The poll found that 35% of Americans say Trump has done something illegal with regard to the hush money allegations. Slightly fewer, about 3 in 10, think he did something unethical without breaking the law. Fourteen percent think he did nothing wrong at all. Those numbers haven't shifted meaningfully in the year since he was first charged in the case.

Republicans are much less likely than Democrats and independents to say Trump committed a crime in the hush money case.

"He's done nothing wrong," said Louie Tsonos, a 43-year-old sales representative and Republican from Carleton, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. "Because Trump has a lot of money and fame, they want to destroy his reputation. Or at least they are trying to."

Fewer than one in 10 Republicans say Trump did something illegal in the case, while 4 in 10 Republicans think he did something unethical but did not break the law. About 3 in 10 Republicans, like Tsonos, say he did nothing wrong.

By contrast, about 6 in 10 Democrats and roughly 3 in 10 independents believe he did something illegal. Monica Brown, a Democrat from Knoxville, Tennessee, thinks Trump did something unethical, though not illegal, in the New York criminal case under way. But a conviction would ruin his credibility to serve as president, she said.

"I don't believe any president – whether it's Donald Trump or anyone else – should have a criminal conviction on his record," said Brown, a 60-year-old veterinary technician and social worker. "Even if it's related to something like hush money, what respect are they going to get from anyone? Citizens of the country or world leaders, they aren't going to respect you."

Nearly 6 in 10 Republicans say they would consider Trump fit to be president even if he were to be convicted of falsifying business documents in the hush money case. About 8 in 10 Democrats say Trump would not be fit to serve in the event of a conviction. About half of independents think he would be unfit to serve, with 22% saying he would be fit and 30% saying they didn't know enough to say.

"I don't think any of that stuff has any relevance to his ability to lead this country," said Jennifer Solich, a Republican from York, Pennsylvania, and retired nuclear engineer who believes Trump would be fit to serve if convicted in the New York case. "There may be some unethical aspects to it. I just think it's more trivial than what we're facing as a nation."

Torch and sandals: What to know about the flame-lighting ceremony in Greece for the Paris Olympics

By NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, Greece (AP) — A priestess prays to a dead sun god in front of a fallen Greek temple. If the sky is clear, a flame spurts that will burn in Paris throughout the world's top sporting event. Speeches ensue.

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On Tuesday, the flame for this summer's Paris Olympics was lit at the birthplace of the ancient Olympic Games in southern Greece in a meticulously choreographed ceremony.

It will then be carried through Greece for more than 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles) before being handed over to French organizers at the Athens venue used for the first modern Olympics in 1896.

Here's a look at the workings and meaning of the elaborate ceremony held among the ruins of Ancient Olympia ahead of each modern Olympiad.

COULDN'T THE FRENCH JUST LIGHT IT IN PARIS?

Couldn't the Academy Awards just be announced in a conference call?

The pageantry at Olympia has been an essential part of every Olympics for nearly 90 years since the Games in Berlin. It's meant to provide an ineluctable link between the modern event and the ancient Greek original on which it was initially modelled.

Once it's been carried by any means imaginable to the host city — it's been beamed down by satellite, lugged up Mount Everest and towed underwater — the flame kindles a cauldron that burns in the host Olympic stadium until the end of the games. Then it's used for the Paralympics.

SO HOW'S IT LIT?

An actor playing an ancient Greek priestess holds a silver torch containing highly combustible materials over a concave mirror. The sun's rays bounce off every inch of the burnished metal half-globe and come together at one extremely hot point, which ignites the torch.

This happens inside the archaeological site at Olympia, before the ancient temple of Hera — wife of Zeus, king of the Greek gods, whose own ruined temple lies close by.

The flame is eventually used to light the first runner's torch — champagne-colored this year for France — and a long relay through Greece leads to the April 26 handover at the Panathenaic stadium in Athens.

NEED IT BE SO COMPLICATED?

Flames and sandals make for an impressive spectacle, and while the priestess' largely tongue-in-cheek prayer to Apollo might not be answered, the parabolic mirror works well.

The idea was the result of Greek-German cooperation ahead of the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany, which were heavy on fanfare — and swastikas. It was based on a mechanism mentioned by ancient writers in a non-Olympic context, and served the desire to blend the games of antiquity with the modern revival.

The 1936 innovations included a torch relay all the way to Berlin, and have been followed, with modifications, ever since. An initial idea to do the relay flame in hollow plant stalks — a nod to the Greek myth of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods — was ditched as impractical.

DID THIS HAPPEN AT THE ANCIENT GAMES?

No. But then modern athletes don't compete naked, or, when victorious, receive olive wreaths and the right to a marble statue in their name — and, for three-times winners, in their actual likeness.

Also, there's no brief cessation of warfare to allow the modern games to go ahead, women not only attend but compete as well, and rich sponsors — or heads of state — don't reap the glory for their chariot teams' wins.

According to ancient Greek tradition, the games of antiquity, held every four years in honor of Zeus, started in 776 B.C. They were the most important of the major Greek sporting festivals, where events included running, wrestling and horse racing. Up to 40,000 spectators could attend.

Like in most preindustrial societies, life in ancient Greece was deeply physical and a well-exercised body was seen as the mark of a gentleman.

The games continued, with minor blips, until the new Christian authorities in Greece banned them as part of the reprehensible pagan past, in A.D. 393.

COULD ANYTHING SPOIL THE SHOW?

Rain. Heavy cloud cover. Then the mirror doesn't work. But ceremony organizers in Olympia hold several rehearsals in the days leading up to the official lighting, which provide a backup flame should the big day prove sunless. That's what ended up happening on Tuesday, when the skies were cloudy.

Potential protests are a worse headache. Twice this century — during the lighting ceremonies for the

Beijing Summer and Winter Games — human-rights activists disrupted the ceremony inside the fenced and heavily guarded archaeological site. Even after the embarrassment of the first incident in 2008, Greek police were unable to anticipate and prevent the second, 14 years later. There was no incident Tuesday.

The flame-lighting, with its broad TV coverage — although the official stream shies from showing any form of protest — is a magnet for activists who want to grab headlines. And even if ancient Olympia can, in theory at least, be efficiently guarded, the route of the torch relay through Greece is too long to be protest-proof.

The 2008 incidents at Olympia and abroad led to the scrapping of torch relays outside Greece and the host country.

Further along the road, while the torches are designed to stay lit, there have been hitches in the past. During the relay for the 2014 Sochi Games, wind blew out the torch, which was sneakily rekindled with a lighter. The same quick fix was used at Montreal in 1976, when rain extinguished the Olympic cauldron.

Tensions rise in Australia after a bishop and priest are wounded in a knife attack in a church

By MARK BAKER and ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — A teenager has been accused of wounding a Christian bishop and a priest during a church service in the second high-profile knife attack to rock Sydney in recent days, leaving communities on edge, leaders calling for calm and a besieged church urging against retaliation.

The 16-year-old was overpowered by the shocked congregation at Christ the Good Shepherd Church after he allegedly stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and the Rev. Isaac Royel during a service on Monday night that was being streamed online.

Police have not commented on reports that the boy's fingers were severed by parishioners in the Orthodox Assyrian church in suburban Wakeley, but confirmed his hand injuries were "severe."

Video of the attack spread quickly on social media and an angry mob converged on the church demanding vengeance. They hurled bricks, bottles and fence boards at police, who temporarily barricaded the boy inside the church for his own safety. Many in the crowd chanted "an eye for an eye" and "bring him out."

Several people including police officers required hospital treatment following the hourslong riot.

The church said in a statement on Tuesday it "denounced retaliation of any kind." Police stood guard around mosques in parts of Sydney on Tuesday after reports that text messages were circulating urging the Assyrian Christian community to retaliate against Muslims.

Sydney's Lakemba Mosque, Australia's largest, has hired additional private security for the next week after receiving fire bomb threats on Monday night.

Police and community leaders said public anxiety had been heightened by a lone assailant's knife attack in a Sydney shopping mall on Saturday that killed five women and a male security guard who attempted to intervene. The 40-year-old assailant, Joel Cauchi, had a history of mental illness and trouble with women and a fascination with knives. He was shot dead by police.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged the public not to take the law into their own hands.

"We understand the distress and concerns that are there in the community, particularly after the tragic event at Bondi Junction on Saturday," Albanese told reporters, referring to the Westfield Bondi Junction shopping mall.

"But it is not acceptable to impede police and injure police doing their duty or to damage police vehicles in a way that we saw last night," Albanese added.

News South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb on Tuesday declared the church attack a terrorist incident, but not the shopping mall rampage.

The declaration gives police expanded powers to stop and search people, premises and vehicles without a warrant.

Webb said the teen's comments and actions pointed to a religious motive for the attack. She didn't detail

the wording of the comments that led her to believe he had been religiously motivated.

Ten Network television reported the boy had told churchgoers who restrained him, in Arabic: "If they didn't insult my Prophet, I wouldn't have come here."

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns said state police were urging social media platforms to shut down accounts posting misinformation that incited violence since Monday's stabbing.

"New South Wales Police and community leaders have been battling misinformation spreading around the web inciting community members to rush to particular religious facilities and mosques and churches on the hint or the rumor of some kind of violent activity taking place," Minns told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"It's very difficult to maintain community cohesion when outright lies are spread within the community inciting the worst fears of particularly young people," Minns added.

The teen suspect was in hospital on Tuesday under police guard. He has yet to be charged.

Webb said he had been known to police, but was not on a terror watch list. He had been convicted in January for a range of offenses including possession of a switchblade knife, being armed with a weapon with an intention to commit an indictable offense, stalking, intimidation and damaging property, ABC reported.

A Sydney court released him on a good behavior bond, ABC reported.

The boy used a switchblade, which is an illegal weapon in Australia, in Monday's attack, ABC reported.

Juvenile offenders cannot be publicly identified in New South Wales.

The church in a message on social media said the bishop and priest were in stable condition and asked for people's prayers. The church said in a statement on Tuesday the 53-year-old Iraq-born bishop's condition was "improving."

Emmanuel has a strong social media following and is outspoken on a range of issues. He proselytizes to both Jews and Muslims and is critical of liberal Christian denominations. He also speaks out on global political issues and laments the plight of Palestinians in Gaza.

The bishop, described in local media as a sometimes divisive figure on issues such as COVID-19 restrictions, was in the national news last year over comments about gender.

Despite weather glitch, the Paris Olympics flame is lit at the Greek cradle of ancient games

By NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, Greece (AP) — Even without the help of Apollo, the flame that is to burn at the Paris Olympics was kindled Tuesday at the site of the ancient games in southern Greece.

Cloudy skies prevented the traditional lighting, when an actress dressed as an ancient Greek priestess uses the sun to ignite a silver torch — after offering up a symbolic prayer to Apollo, the ancient Greek sun god.

Instead, she used a backup flame that had been lit on the same spot Monday, during the final rehearsal.

Normally, the foremost of a group of priestesses in long, pleated dresses dips the fuel-filled torch into a parabolic mirror which focuses the sun's rays on it, and fire spurts forth.

But this time she didn't even try, going straight for the backup flame, kept in a copy of an ancient Greek pot. Ironically, a few minutes later the sun shone forth.

From the ancient stadium in Olympia, a relay of torchbearers will carry the flame along a 5,000-kilometer (3,100-mile) route through Greece, including several islands, until the handover to Paris Games organizers in Athens on April 26.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said the flame lighting combined "a pilgrimage to our past in ancient Olympia, and an act of faith in our future."

"In these difficult times ... with wars and conflicts on the rise, people are fed up with all the hate, the aggression and negative news," he said. "We are longing for something which brings us together; something that is unifying; something that gives us hope."

Thousands of spectators from all over the world packed Olympia for Tuesday's event amid the ruined temples and sports grounds where the ancient games were held from 776 B.C.-393 A.D.

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The sprawling site, in a lush valley by the confluence of two rivers, is at its prettiest in the spring, teeming with pink-flowering Judas trees, small blue irises and the occasional red anemone.

Greek authorities maintained high security around Olympia on Tuesday, after protests by rights activists disrupted the lighting ceremonies for the Beijing summer and winter games. Armed police stopped incoming vehicles and checked for explosives, while sniffer dogs combed the grounds.

The first torchbearer was Greek rower Stefanos Douskos, a gold medalist in 2021 in Tokyo. He ran to a nearby monument that contains the heart of French Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the driving force behind the modern revival of the games.

The next runner was Laure Manaudou, a French swimmer who won three medals at Athens in 2004. She handed over to senior European Union official Margaritis Schinas, a Greek.

The IOC's Bach praised Paris organizers for doing "an outstanding job" with preparations for the July 26-August 11 games.

He also highlighted their environmental impact, saying that cleanup efforts will make it possible to swim in the River Seine, which traverses Paris, "for the first time in a hundred years."

IOC politics briefly reared their head in Olympia as well, with the heads of two sports federations criticizing track and field leader Sebastian Coe for breaking with Olympic tradition last week by promising prize money of \$50,000 to each of its gold medalists in Paris. The money will be paid from the share of Olympic games revenues that the IOC pays governing bodies of Olympic sports.

International Cycling Union President David Lappartient complained that Coe did not consult with other sports before announcing his move.

"We really believe that that's not the Olympic spirit," Lappartient said. "If we concentrate the money ... on only top athletes, only gold, then of course a lot of opportunities will disappear for athletes all over the world."

Coe has been widely expected to run for the IOC presidency, which should become vacant in 2025. Lappartient is close to Bach and is increasingly seen as a potential successor.

From Greece, the Olympic flame will travel from Athens' port of Piraeus on the Belem, a French three-masted sailing ship built in 1896 — the year of the first modern games in Athens.

According to Captain Aymeric Gibet, it's due on May 8 in the southern French port of Marseille, a city founded by Greek colonists some 2,600 years ago.

The Belem arrived in Katakolo, near Olympia, on Monday. Lookers-on included a small, enthusiastic group of tourists from the northwestern French region of Brittany, where the ship's homeport of Nantes is, waving French and Breton flags.

"We thought it would be a unique opportunity to see the flame lighting at the historic site of Olympia," said Jean-Michel Pasquet from Lorient, near Nantes. "And when we also learnt the Belem would carry the flame ... we said we must do this."

But Pasquet said he'd have to watch the Paris Games from home.

"For us, it would be really very expensive, unaffordable," to go to the venues, he said. "So we'll watch them on television ... from our armchairs."

The Paris Games' grandiose opening ceremony is being squeezed by security and transport issues

By JEROME PUGMIRE AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — The talk before the opening ceremony of the Paris Games ideally should be about its grandiose backdrop: a summer sun setting on the Seine River as athletes drift by in boats and wave to cheering crowds.

But behind the romantic veneer that Paris has long curated, mounting security concerns already have had an impact on the unprecedented open-air event. In January, the number of spectators allowed to attend the ceremony was slashed from around 600,000 to around 320,000.

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Tourists were told they won't be allowed to watch it for free from riverbanks because the French government scaled back ambitions amid ongoing security threats. Then, on March 24, France raised its security readiness to the highest level after a deadly attack at a Russian concert hall and the Islamic State's claim of responsibility.

French President Emmanuel Macron says the ceremony could be shifted instead to the national stadium at Stade de France if the security threat is deemed too high.

Security and transportation are the biggest concerns heading into the Paris Games, which run from July 26-Aug. 11.

Here is an overview of preparations:

VENUES

The Olympic Village and the bio-based Aquatics Centre are in proximity to Stade de France. The 5,000-seat aquatics venue made predominantly of wood connects to the national stadium via a footbridge.

While the village and the aquatics center in the poor, run-down area both leave a legacy for the future, the Games are steeped in history across the 35 venues.

Equestrian riders will gallop on the grounds of the royal Palace of Versailles, where Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette once held lavish banquets.

B-boys and B-girls cutting improbable shapes, BMX freestylers launching into gravity-defying moves, skaters flipping boards and 3-on-3 basketball players facing off will provide a youthful vibe at an urban park at Place de la Concorde, a prominent location in France's gory past.

It is where Louis XVI died by guillotine in 1793 and where French revolutionary Maximilien Robespierre met the same fate a year later. It's also been home to the Luxor Obelisk for nearly 200 years.

The Grand Palais, built for the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1900, hosts fencing and taekwondo, while the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in the northwest suburb of Colombes is another link to the past: It was the main venue for the 1924 Paris Games. This time it holds field hockey matches.

The Parc des Princes soccer stadium, home to Paris Saint-Germain star Kylian Mbappé, is one of seven stadiums around the country hosting matches. France fans hope Mbappé will play for Les Bleus.

Beach volleyball takes place near the foot of the Eiffel Tower, while tennis, naturally, is at Roland Garros, home of the French Open. Roland Garros, where Rafael Nadal has made history with his record 14 Grand Slam titles at one tournament, also packs a punch as the venue for boxing.

Surfers won't be in Paris, however, but rather nearly 10,000 miles away in Teahupo'o, a coastal village in Tahiti, and they will sleep on a cruise ship docked at the French Polynesian island.

Breezy Marseille hosts the sailing events.

TICKET SALES

Around 9 million of the 10 million available tickets have been sold, organizers said, with 63% of buyers from France. The top 10-selling sports in order: soccer, track and field, basketball, rugby sevens, volleyball, handball, beach volleyball, field hockey, tennis and water polo.

The Paris Games' organizing committee will put an additional 250,000 tickets up for sale on April 17 to mark the 100 days to go.

Tickets are on sale via the official platform, with a sliding barometer allowing buyers to choose a price ranging from 24 euros (\$26) to 2,700 euros (\$2,900) — the highest price for watching the opening ceremony, the first to be held outside of a usual stadium setting.

Remaining hospitality packages for soccer matches and the women's basketball quarterfinals begin at 250 euros (\$269), and they start at 375 euros (\$404) for the men's basketball game between the United States and South Sudan in Lille — one hour from Paris by train — on July 31.

Regular tickets for the U.S. women's gold medal-game rematch against Japan on July 29 range from 50 euros (\$54) to 200 euros (\$216).

Want to watch the BMX freestyle finals? Regular tickets are sold out.

But fans can still get tickets for the men's 200 meters and women's 400 meter hurdles finals on Aug. 8 at Stade de France with tickets that day priced at 295 euros, 525 euros and 980 euros.

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SECURITY

Around 30,000 police officers are expected to be deployed each day, with 45,000 working the opening ceremony.

With its own resources stretched thin, France has asked 46 countries to help provide about 2,200 extra officers, many of whom will be armed. The French Defense Ministry also has asked foreign nations for a small number of military personnel, including sniffer dogs.

Tony Estanguet, the head of the Paris Games' organizing committee, said there will be unprecedented security measures.

"France has never deployed so many means for security," he said. "I have faith that the security services in our country will make the Games safe."

Cameras will be increased around the city, but facial recognition will not be used.

So far, 120 chiefs of state have confirmed they will attend the opening ceremony. Holding it outside a stadium means greater exposure for athletes paraded on 84 boats on the Seine along a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) route toward the Eiffel Tower, with 20,000 people living in apartments having views of the ceremony. Behind multiple security cordons, paying spectators will watch from the lower embankments while upper embankments are free for those with invitations.

An area around the Seine is expected to be closed to traffic a week before the parade and airspace will be closed on the night of the ceremony, France's Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin said.

Swedish swimmer Victor Johansson will not attend the ceremony because it's the day before the 400-meter freestyle, but is confident it is safe.

"I don't have any worries at all," Johansson said. "I think they've taken all the precautionary actions to make it safe and fun for everyone involved."

TRANSPORTATION

Driving in congested Paris can be hellish at the best of times, let alone during a major international event.

Some of the 2.1 million people living within the city limits plan to flee Paris for two-plus weeks while motorists are angered by a proposal that would require them to apply online for a QR code to access traffic-restricted zones.

There's also the threat of train strikes to take into account.

The CGT public servants union has announced plans to strike during the Olympics, which could mean many transport workers walking out.

Transport operators are gearing up to carry between 600,000 to 800,000 Olympic visitors per day. An ad campaign on billboards called "Anticipate the Games" directs people to a website instructing them how to lessen the impact.

National rail giant SNCF has blocked sales of tickets for July 26 to and from three major stations all very near the Seine: Gare de Lyon — France's biggest station for main line trains — Paris-Bercy and Austerlitz. Some other smaller stations will also close.

Subway tickets will rise from €2.10 (\$2.30) to €4 (\$4.30) for a single ticket and a book of 10 tickets from €16.90 (\$18.30) to €32 (\$34.60).

Tourists opting for a Paris 2024 pass pay 16 euros (\$17) per day or 70 euros (\$76) weekly, a far cry from the free public transport once envisaged. And an express train running from Paris' main international airport, Charles de Gaulle, to the center of the city in 20 minutes has been shelved until 2027.

But a newly extended Metro service on Line 14 is expected to be ready in June, carrying people from Paris' second airport, Orly, to an Olympic hub that includes the village, national stadium and aquatics center.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Olympic Village will house more than 14,000 athletes and officials, with apartments holding a maximum of eight people.

Fans and tourists, however, have been subjected to an increase in hotel and Airbnb prices.

The Paris region has France's greatest concentration of hotel accommodation, with 160,000 rooms. Adding rental accommodations, campsites and other options, the region has around 260,000 rooms for the Olympics.

Although some hotels tripled prices, competition from Airbnbs forced them to backpedal. Average prices for a one-night stay dropped from about 760 euros (\$825) to 520 euros (\$565) — still far higher than the average price last July of 200 euros (\$220).

China's economy grew 5.3% in first quarter, beating expectations, though weak spots remain

By ZEN SOO AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — China's economy grew faster than expected in the first quarter of the year with help from policies and stronger demand, though signs of weakness in the troubled housing market persisted.

The world's second-largest economy expanded at a 5.3% annual pace in January-March, beating analysts' forecasts of about 4.8%, data released Tuesday showed. Compared to the previous quarter, the economy grew 1.6%.

China's economy has struggled to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic but gained momentum late last year as government policies to help the housing market and boost investment took effect.

However, Tuesday's better-than-expected data came days after China reported its exports sank 7.5% in March compared to the year before, while imports also weakened. Inflation cooled, reflecting deflationary pressures resulting from slack demand amid a crisis in the property sector.

Investment in property developments fell 9.5% from a year earlier in January-March, compared with a decline of 9% in the previous quarter.

"The investment and sales of real estate in the first quarter are indeed not very optimistic. The real estate market is still in a process of adjustment," Sheng Laiyun, deputy commissioner of the National Bureau of Statistics, told reporters in Beijing.

Sheng also acknowledged that while growth was stronger than anticipated, it was uneven. Investment in infrastructure such as roads and bridges rose 6.5% year-on-year after a 6% increase in the previous quarter.

Fixed investment, in factories and equipment, grew 4.5% compared to the same period a year earlier, up from 4.2% in the previous quarter.

China's leaders have been trying to recalibrate growth away from investment spending and toward a greater reliance on consumer demand, similar to other major economies.

While retail sales climbed 4.7% in January-March, growth in March was only 3.1% year-on-year.

"Looking at the degree of recovery, we have found that the recovery of consumption is not as good as production, and the recovery of small and medium-sized enterprises is not as good as that of large enterprises, so there is a clear imbalance in the economic recovery," Sheng said.

Industrial output for the first quarter was up 6.1% compared to the same time last year, but it rose only 4.5% in March.

The strong growth in January-March was supported by "broad manufacturing outperformance," festivities-boosted household spending due to the Lunar New Year holidays and policies that helped boost investments, according to China economist Louise Loo of Oxford Economics.

"However, 'standalone' March activity indicators suggest weakness coming through post-Lunar New Year," she said. "External demand conditions also remain unpredictable, as seen in March's sharp export underperformance."

Loo noted that an unwinding of excess inventory, normalization of household spending after the holidays and a cautious approach to government spending and other stimulus will affect growth in this quarter.

Policymakers have unveiled a raft of fiscal and monetary policy measures as Beijing seeks to boost the economy. China has set an ambitious gross domestic product (GDP) growth target of about 5% for 2024.

Such strong growth usually would push share prices across the region higher. But on Tuesday, Asian shares fell sharply after stocks retreated on Wall Street.

The Shanghai Composite index lost 1.47% and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong lost 2.1%. The benchmark for the smaller market in Shenzhen, in southern China, lost 3.8%.

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Stronger growth in the region's biggest economy normally would be seen as a positive for its neighbors, which increasingly rely on demand from China to power their own economies. However, strong growth figures are also viewed as a signal that the government will hold back on further stimulus.

Today in History: April 17

US launches Bay of Pigs invasion to topple Fidel Castro in Cuba

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, April 17, the 108th day of 2024. There are 258 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 17, 1961, some 1,500 CIA-trained Cuban exiles launched the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in an attempt to topple Fidel Castro, whose forces crushed the incursion by the third day.

On this date:

In 1521, Martin Luther went before the Diet of Worms (vohrms) to face charges stemming from his religious writings. (Luther was later declared an outlaw by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.)

In 1961, "The Apartment" won the Academy Award for best picture of 1960; Burt Lancaster was named best actor for "Elmer Gantry," while the best actress award went to Elizabeth Taylor for "Butterfield 8."

In 1964, Ford Motor Co. unveiled the Mustang at the New York World's Fair.

In 1969, a jury in Los Angeles convicted Sirhan Sirhan of assassinating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

In 1970, Apollo 13 astronauts James A. Lovell, Fred W. Haise and Jack Swigert splashed down safely in the Pacific, four days after a ruptured oxygen tank crippled their spacecraft while en route to the moon.

In 1972, the Boston Marathon allowed women to compete for the first time; Nina Kuscsik was the first officially recognized women's champion, with a time of 3:10:26.

In 1973, Federal Express (later FedEx) began operations as 14 planes carrying 186 packages took off from Memphis International Airport, bound for 25 U.S. cities.

In 1975, Cambodia's five-year war ended as the capital Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, which instituted brutal, radical policies that claimed an estimated 1.7 million lives until the regime was overthrown in 1979.

In 1986, at London's Heathrow Airport, a bomb was discovered in the bag of Anne-Marie Murphy, a pregnant Irishwoman about to board an El Al jetliner to Israel; she'd been tricked into carrying the bomb by her Jordanian fiance, Nezar Hindawi.

In 1991, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above 3,000 for the first time, ending the day at 3,004.46, up 17.58.

In 1993, a federal jury in Los Angeles convicted two former police officers of violating the civil rights of beaten motorist Rodney King; two other officers were acquitted.

In 2012, riding on the back of a 747 jet, retired space shuttle Discovery traveled from Cape Canaveral, Florida, to Chantilly, Virginia, to be installed in its new home: the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum annex in Virginia.

In 2013, 15 people were killed in an explosion at a fertilizer plant in the city of West, Texas.

In 2018, Barbara Bush, who was both a first lady and the mother of a president, died in Houston at the age of 92; she was survived by her husband, George H.W. Bush; their marriage of 73 years was the longest of any presidential couple in American history.

In 2020, President Donald Trump urged supporters to "LIBERATE" three states led by Democratic governors, apparently encouraging protests against stay-at-home mandates aimed at stopping the coronavirus.

In 2022, Ukrainian fighters holed up in a steel plant in the last known pocket of resistance inside the shattered city of Mariupol ignored a surrender-or-die ultimatum from the Russians and continued to hold out against the capture of the strategically vital port.

Today's Birthdays: Actor David Bradley is 82. Composer-musician Jan Hammer (yahn HAH'-mur) is 76. Actor Olivia Hussey is 73. Actor Clarke Peters is 72. Rapper Afrika Bambaataa is 67. Actor Sean Bean is

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65. Former NFL quarterback Boomer Esiason is 63. Actor Joel Murray is 62. Rock singer Maynard James Keenan (Tool) is 60. Actor Lela Rochon is 60. Actor William Mapother is 59. Actor Leslie Bega is 57. Actor Henry Ian Cusick is 57. Actor Kimberly Elise is 57. Singer Liz Phair is 57. Director/producer Adam McKay is 56. Rapper-actor Redman is 54. Actor Jennifer Garner is 52. Singer Victoria Beckham is 50. Actor-singer Lindsay Korman is 46. Actor Tate Ellington is 45. Actor Nicholas D'Agosto is 44. Actor Charlie Hofheimer is 43. Actor Rooney Mara is 39. Actor Jacqueline MacInnes Wood is 37. Actor Paulie Litt is 29. Actor Dee Dee Davis is 28.