

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 1 of 74

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Ad](#)
- [4- Tri-M Music Honor Society](#)
- [5- Prairie Doc: "Learning to Adapt after a stroke"](#)
- [6- High School Baseball](#)
- [10- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [10- Manhart Ad](#)
- [11- EarthTalk - Algae](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Now that Noem knows what's in her own book, she should tell us how it got there](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: How the state, tribes and federal government are working to curb SD's syphilis epidemic](#)
- [16- Weather Pages](#)
- [21- Daily Devotional](#)
- [22- Subscription Form](#)
- [23- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [24- News from the Associated Press](#)

Monday, May 6

Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad with dressing, fruit, cookie, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Turkey gravy over mashed potatoes..

Girls Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.

Junior High Track Meet at Webster, 3 p.m.

The Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

United Methodist: PEO (outside group), 7 p.m.

Tuesday, May 7

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, biscuit, vegetable Catalina blend pears, tapioca pudding.

School Breakfast: Waffles.

School Lunch: Chicken fajitas, Spanish rice.

Bramble Zoo Presentation/Assembly at Groton Area Elementary, 9:30 a.m.-1:45 p.m.

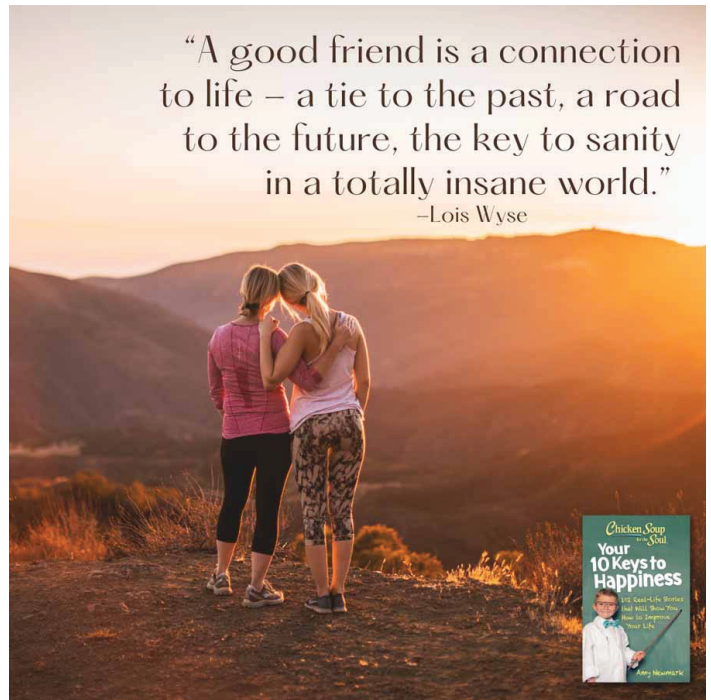
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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

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

"A good friend is a connection to life – a tie to the past, a road to the future, the key to sanity in a totally insane world."

–Lois Wyse



The Pantry at Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Baseball, Softball, T-Ball Parent meeting at the Groton Community Center, 7:30 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran Vacation Bible School, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, May 8

Scalloped potato with ham, mixed vegetables, sunset salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Taco burgers tater tots.

High School Baseball in Groton hosting Redfield, 5:30 .m.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran Vacation Bible School, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; League at church, go to Alleviate, 5:30 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour 9:30 a.m.

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 2 of 74

1440

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet yesterday voted unanimously to close local operations of Qatari-owned Al Jazeera, describing it as a mouthpiece for Hamas. The ban can be extended in 45-day increments and is expected to be challenged in Israeli courts. It marks the first time Israel has shuttered a foreign news outlet.

Aerospace giant Boeing will attempt the first crewed test flight of its Starliner spacecraft tonight, a major milestone in the company's effort to shuttle astronauts to the International Space Station. The reusable capsule will carry two astronauts to the station, where they'll spend a week before returning to Earth aboard the same vehicle.

Tonight is the annual benefit for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's fabrics and textile wing, the Costume Institute, an event colloquially referred to as the Met Gala. Vogue's livestream of the red carpet will begin at 6 pm ET (watch here).

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Mystik Dan edges Sierra Leone and Forever Young to win 150th Kentucky Derby in a photo finish; see complete results.

Frank Stella, pioneering minimalist American painter, dies at 87. Bernard Hill, actor known for role as Captain Smith in "Titanic," dies at 79.

Madonna attracts a record-breaking crowd of 1.6 million to her free concert at Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach.

Science & Technology

US Air Force announces plans for a fleet of 1,000 AI-controlled fighter jets, with the first reportedly scheduled to begin operating in 2028; follows a recent successful test flight of an AI-controlled F-16 with a human passenger.

Study suggests beluga whales may communicate by changing the shape of the large fat deposit on their foreheads. Researchers find bumblebees can collaborate to perform tasks, a trait usually observed in large-brained animals.

Urinary tract infection vaccine shows success in preliminary trials; around half of women who took the oral treatment reported no infections during nine-year study.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher Friday (S&P 500 +1.3%, Dow +1.2%, Nasdaq +2.0%) on the news of weaker-than-expected wage and job data in April, raising expectations for Federal Reserve rate cuts.

Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway's annual meeting, informally known as the "Woodstock of capitalism," held over the weekend in Omaha, Nebraska; Buffett reveals Berkshire has sold entire Paramount stake at a loss as well as 13% of its Apple stock as Berkshire's first-quarter profit plunged 64% from last year.

Tesla's decision to lay off at least 500 staff from its Supercharger business puts pressure on other electric vehicle companies to expand charger stations; Tesla operates almost two-thirds of the 42,000 fast-charging ports in the US.

Politics & World Affairs

Russia's interior ministry adds Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's name to its list of wanted criminals without specifying charges.

Flooding in Houston and East Texas leaves one child dead, while more than 400 people have been rescued from their homes, roads, and rooftops, after the region receives more than 20 inches of rain in less than a week.

Panama holds general election days after frontrunner was convicted of money laundering and disqualified from running for president; early results show former security minister Jose Raul Mulino on track to win presidency.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 3 of 74





Tri-M Music Honor Society

From left to right: Teagan Hanten, Natalia Warrington, Kira Clocksene, Rebecca Poor, Gretchen Dinger, Axel Warrington, JD Schwan, and Addison Hoeft. Not pictured is Libby Cole.

The Groton Music Department has started a Tri-M Music Honor Society. The name Tri-M was derived from the original honor society, Modern Music Masters. At this year's Spring Concert 9 members were inducted into the first Tri-M Music Honor Society. These student's were selected on their basis of scholarship, character, leadership, and service. Any student interested filled out an application, answered questions that were given, and chose two staff members for a recommendation. Below is a picture of the students reciting the Tri-M Pledge before becoming official members. The Tri-M Chapter Advisor is Desiree Yeigh.

“Learning to Adapt after a stroke”

Working as an RN in inpatient rehab, I am often called upon to care for patients who have had a cerebrovascular accident, or more commonly called a stroke. I have observed that every stroke patient experiences a unique combination of symptoms but the one of the most important tasks they accomplish in rehab is learning how to be adaptable.

According to the American Stroke Association, left sided strokes (which affect the right side of the body) cause patients to experience more difficulty with language, both in speech and understanding. Right sided strokes, can cause more behavioral changes that may lead to uncharacteristic impulsivity, and may affect the patient’s vision. Based upon the type of stroke, each patient’s experience is different and they will have their own set of challenges to overcome as they work towards recovery.

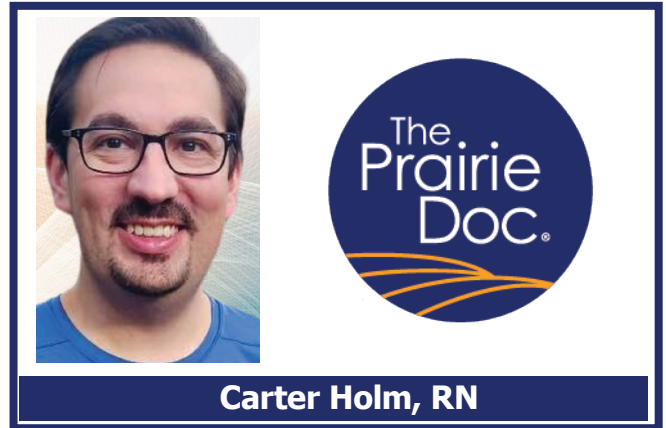
Identifying the challenges is a crucial aspect of stroke rehabilitation. A main focus of the rehab team, for example, is balance and gait. Physical therapy is crucial in recovering strength and coordination in the affected side. If a patient is experiencing weakness to the left or right side of their body, they may require the use of a walker to allow for safe ambulation. Some patients may instead require the use of a cane, quad cane, or hemi-walker. Finding the correct assistive devices is one way stroke patients work to return to some normalcy.

Stroke patients may regain their freedom of movement with the help of an adaptive foot brace, or the use of a specialized cane. They may adapt to using their non-dominant hand for eating or writing. They may learn tools to adapt their speech patterns, or use electrical stimulation of the facial muscles to increase strength, and improve oral function. What all of these things have in common is learning how to change, how to adapt. And while each stroke is different, and symptoms vary from patient to patient, one common thread is that all stroke patients, their families, and friends must learn to adapt. And it isn’t just the physical recovery, people must adapt to the emotional and psychological changes as well.

Depression, anxiety, altered moods or sudden mood changes are all common symptoms following a stroke. Often, I have had patients who are so frustrated that they feel like giving up on therapy, even giving up on life. Patients and family members may experience grief: mourning the loss of the person that they were, or that they once knew. Author Delanie Stephenson wrote of her stroke, “While my body and mind were healing, I was learning to be a new person”. Just as the body needs time and practice to adapt to the physical changes, the brain also needs time and practice.

Neuroplasticity does not return overnight, and may take months to return to normal. Regaining function requires setting goals, hard work, patience, and most important an acceptance of the need to adapt!

Carter Holm, RN is a Registered Nurse at Avera McKennan in Sioux Falls Specializing in inpatient rehabilitation. Holm is a Certified Rehabilitation Registered Nurse and works with patients through their rehabilitation from strokes, brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, and trauma. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook and Instagram featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its 22nd season of health information based on science, built on trust, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



High School Baseball

Colby Dunker Drives In 6 To Lead Groton Area Tigers Varsity Past Rebels

Colby Dunker drove in six runs on two hits to lead Groton Area Tigers Varsity past Rebels 34-1 on Sunday. Dunker hit a home run to left field on the first inning, scoring three runs, and doubled in the first inning, scoring two.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored 21 runs in the first inning on the way to victory. an error scored one run, Dunker homered to left field, scoring three runs, Karsten Flies drew a walk, scoring one run, Braxton Imrie drew a walk, scoring one run, Brevin Fliehs singled, scoring two runs, an error scored one run, Dunker was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Logan Ringgenberg singled, scoring one run, Gavin Englund hit a grand slam to center field, Dillon Abeln doubled, scoring three runs, Dunker doubled, scoring two runs, and Englund singled, scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored nine runs on five hits in the top of the second inning. Lincoln Krause drew a walk, scoring one run, Jarrett Erdmann drew a walk, scoring one run, Englund singled, scoring one run, Nick Groeblichhoff was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Kellen Antonsen singled, scoring one run, Fliehs was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Bradin Althoff singled, scoring two runs, and Krause singled, scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity added to their early lead in the top of the third inning after Fliehs singled, Rebels committed an error, Althoff hit into a fielder's choice, and Erdmann singled, each scoring one run.

Fliehs earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The right-handed pitcher gave up zero hits and zero runs over one inning, striking out three and walking none. Caden Hojer took the loss for Rebels. They went one inning, allowing 21 runs (six earned) on 10 hits, striking out none and walking eight. Antonsen appeared in relief for Groton Area Tigers Varsity.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity piled up 18 hits in the game. Fliehs, Englund, and Ringgenberg each collected three hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Althoff collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity in four at bats. Fliehs paced Groton Area Tigers Varsity with three walks.

Overall, the team had patience at the plate, tallying 12 walks for the game. Groton Area Tigers Varsity didn't commit a single error in the field. Nicholas Morris had the most chances in the field with five.

Brennon Bickett went 1-for-1 at the plate as the first baseman led the team with one run batted in.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 7 of 74

High School Baseball

Groton Area Tigers Varsity Trounce Hamlin Area Varsity (Castlewood, De Smet, Hamlin)

Groton Area Tigers Varsity easily dispatched Hamlin Area Varsity (Castlewood, De Smet, Hamlin) on Sunday, 8-1. Groton Area Tigers Varsity got on the board in the top of the first inning after Bradin Althoff grounded out, and Colby Dunker singled, each scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity added to their early lead in the top of the second inning after Dunker hit into a fielder's choice, and Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored on a wild pitch, each scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored one run in the top of the third on a solo home run to left field by Carter Simon on an 0-2 count.

Gavin Englund stepped on the mound first for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The righty surrendered six hits and one run over seven innings, striking out nine and walking three. Gavin Maag started on the hill for Hamlin Area Varsity (Castlewood, De Smet, Hamlin). The righty allowed two hits and four runs over two innings, striking out three and walking six.

Dunker provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Groton Area Tigers Varsity with two runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-3 on the day. Brevin Flihs, Dunker, Simon, and Englund each collected one hit for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Flihs led Groton Area Tigers Varsity with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, tallying 1 walks for the game. Flihs stole two bases.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity ran wild on the base paths, accumulating four stolen bases for the game.

Jyler Tharaldsen and Watson Grantham each collected two hits for Hamlin Area Varsity (Castlewood, De Smet, Hamlin). Kelby Hauck led Hamlin Area Varsity (Castlewood, De Smet, Hamlin) with one run batted in. Hamlin Area Varsity (Castlewood, De Smet, Hamlin) were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Maag had the most chances in the field with six.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 8 of 74

Groton Area Tigers Varsity **8 - 1** Hamlin Area Varsity (Castlewood, De Smet, Hamlin)

📍 Away 📅 Sunday May 05, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	2	2	1	0	0	0	3	8	4	1
HMLN	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	6	0

BATTING

Groton Area Tigers	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Fliehs (CF)	2	2	1	0	3	1
D Abeln (SS)	2	2	0	1	2	1
B Althoff (1B)	4	0	0	1	1	1
C Dunker (LF)	3	1	1	2	0	0
L Ringgenberg (RF)	2	0	0	0	1	1
G Englund (P)	2	1	1	1	2	1
C Simon (3B)	2	2	1	1	1	1
K Fliehs (C)	4	0	0	1	0	0
B Imrie (2B)	3	0	0	0	1	2
Totals	24	8	4	7	11	8

HR: C Simon, **TB:** C Dunker, B Fliehs, C Simon 4, G Englund, **HBP:** D Abeln, C Dunker, L Ringgenberg, C Simon, **SB:** D Abeln, C Dunker, B Fliehs 2, **LOB:** 10

PITCHING

Groton Area 1	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Englund	7.0	6	1	1	3	9	0
Totals	7.0	6	1	1	3	9	0

W: G Englund, **P-S:** G Englund 96-59, **HBP:** G Englund 2, **BF:** G Englund 31

Hamlin Area Varsit	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
W Grantham (SS,...	4	0	2	0	0	0
J Williams (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	2
J Tharaldsen (1B)	3	0	2	0	0	0
G Maag (P, C)	3	0	0	0	1	2
T Smith (LF, SS, 3...	3	0	0	0	0	0
T Everson (C, 2B)	2	1	1	0	1	1
J Eidson (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Mahe (RF)	1	0	0	0	1	0
E Schultz (2B, 3B,...	3	0	1	0	0	1
K Hauck (3B, LF)	3	0	0	1	0	2
Totals	26	1	6	1	3	9

TB: W Grantham 2, J Tharaldsen 2, T Everson, E Schultz, **HBP:** J Tharaldsen, J Williams, **LOB:** 9

Hamlin Area 1	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Maag	2.0	2	4	4	6	3	0
W Grantham	4.1	1	2	2	3	5	1
E Schultz	0.2	1	2	2	2	0	0
Totals	7.0	4	8	8	11	8	1

L: G Maag, **P-S:** W Grantham 68-43, G Maag 66-29, E Schultz 19-7, **WP:** W Grantham, G Maag 3, E Schultz, **HBP:** W Grantham, G Maag, E Schultz 2, **BF:** W Grantham 17, G Maag 15, E Schultz 7

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 9 of 74

Groton Area Tigers 34 - 1 Rebels Varsity

📍 Away 📅 Sunday May 05, 2024

	1	2	3	R	H	E
GRTN	21	9	4	34	18	0
RBLS	0	0	1	1	1	8

BATTING

Groton Area Tigers	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Fliehs (P, 2B)	3	5	3	4	2	0
D Abeln (SS)	6	6	1	3	0	0
B Althoff (1B)	4	4	2	3	2	0
C Dunker	2	3	2	6	0	0
L Krause (LF)	1	3	1	2	2	0
L Ringgenberg	3	2	3	1	0	0
J Erdmann (CF)	2	1	1	2	1	0
G Englund (3B)	5	3	3	6	0	1
H Sippel (3B)	1	1	0	0	0	0
C Simon	2	1	0	0	1	0
N Groeblichhoff...	1	1	1	1	0	0
K Fliehs	0	0	0	1	3	0
N Morris (C)	2	0	0	0	0	1
B Imrie	2	2	0	0	1	0
K Antonsen (2B,...	2	2	1	1	0	0
Totals	36	34	18	30	12	2

2B: L Ringgenberg, C Dunker, D Abeln, **HR:** G Englund, C Dunker, **TB:** K Antonsen, L Krause, J Erdmann, G Englund 6, L Ringgenberg 4, B Fliehs 3, C Dunker 6, D Abeln 2, N Groeblichhoff, B Althoff 2, **HBP:** B Fliehs, C Dunker, N Groeblichhoff, **SB:** B Fliehs, **LOB:** 7

PITCHING

Groton Area	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Fliehs	1.0	0	0	0	0	3	0
K Antonsen	2.0	1	1	1	3	3	0
Totals	3.0	1	1	1	3	6	0

W: B Fliehs, **P-S:** K Antonsen 47-25, B Fliehs 18-13, **HBP:** B Fliehs, **BF:** K Antonsen 10, B Fliehs 5

Rebels	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Lingbeck (CF)	1	0	0	0	1	1
E Ruml (C)	1	1	0	0	1	1
C Hojer (P, 3B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
B Bickett (1B)	1	0	1	1	0	0
M Antonen (SS)	1	0	0	0	1	0
H Pooler (3B, P)	2	0	0	0	0	1
C Weber (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
C Misar (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
K McLaughlin (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	11	1	1	1	3	6

2B: B Bickett, **TB:** B Bickett 2, **HBP:** B Bickett, **LOB:** 5

Rebels	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Hojer	1.0	10	21	6	8	0	2
H Pooler	2.0	8	13	5	4	2	0
Totals	3.0	18	34	11	12	2	2

L: C Hojer, **P-S:** H Pooler 69-37, C Hojer 95-47, **WP:** C Hojer, **HBP:** H Pooler 2, C Hojer, **BF:** H Pooler 24, C Hojer 27

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

Last week we evaluated the two first-round picks by the Minnesota Vikings, so this week we turn our attention to the other five rookies who were drafted and the 17 undrafted rookie free agents. J.J. McCarthy and Dallas Turner will undoubtedly be the focus of the national media, but later-round picks are what complete the team and fill in the gaps.

Khyree Jackson, CB, Oregon (4th round) – My favorite late-round cornerback, Jackson should be a perfect fit for Brian Flores' defense. He's 6'4" and nearly 200 lbs with good speed and a bully mentality. He prefers to jam receivers at the line of scrimmage and isn't afraid to come up in run support.

Walter Rouse, OT, Oklahoma (6th round) – The Vikings needed depth on the offensive line, particularly at swing tackle now that Oli Udoh left in free agency. He has 52 starts under his belt at left tackle, and according to PFF, he didn't allow a single sack in 2023 (453 pass block snaps).

Will Reichard, K, Alabama (6th round) – Even though the Vikings signed a kicker in free agency to replace the departing Greg Joseph, they decided to spend a draft pick to bring in some competition. Reichard doesn't have an incredibly strong leg, but he is consistent on kicks under 40 yards.

Michael Jurgens, C/G, Wake Forest (7th round) – The Vikings weren't done adding depth to their offensive line. They found a swing tackle in the 6th round, now they find an interior offensive lineman in the 7th. Jurgens is primarily a center but he can play guard in a pinch. He will need a few years to increase his strength, but the technique and intelligence are there.

Levi Drake Rodriguez, DT, Texas A&M-Commerce – In a surprising move, the Vikings didn't address what many felt was their second-biggest need until the 7th round. Rodriguez is an undersized defensive tackle who is coming from the FCS, so the huge leap in competition is something to be wary of. He does have a relentless motor, so if he can bulk up, he might make a good rotational player in a few years.

Besides the seven total players the Vikings drafted, they also brought in 17 undrafted rookie free agents.

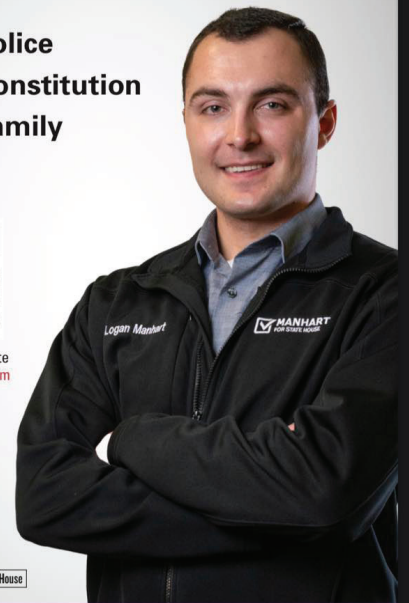
Matt Cindric, OL, California - K.J. Cloyd, LB, Miami - Jeremy Flax, OL, Kentucky - Dallas Gant, LB, Toledo - Devron Harper, WR, Mercer - Ty James, WR, Mercer - Jashaun Jones, WR, Maryland - Trey Knox, TE, South Carolina - Tyler Manoa, DL, Arizona - Donovan Manuel, LB, FIU - Dwight McGlothorn, CB, Arkansas - Gabriel Murphy, OLB, UCLA - Doug Nester, OL, West Virginia - Owen Porter, OLB, Marshall - Bo Richter, OLB, Air Force - Spencer Rolland, OL, North Carolina - Taki Taimani, DL - Oregon -

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Primary Election - June 4

Absentee Voting Begins April 19

General Election - Nov 5

Absentee Voting Begins September 20

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: We used to hear a lot about algae's potential as a renewable source of biofuels. Is it still being cultivated and processed accordingly?

– P.K., Richmond, VA

In recent years, algae has emerged as a potential renewable and less pollutive energy resource. Some species have high levels of fat, carbohydrates and proteins that can produce up to 30 times more energy than other biofuels. And algae, unlike corn and soy-based biofuels, can thrive well in a variety of environments (including otherwise unusable waste or brackish water). Combined, the high-energy content and abundance of algae make it a promising alternative to current fuel sources.



A researcher holds up laminaria saccharina sugar kelp algae in Southeast Alaska. Credit: David Csepp,

NOAA/NMFS/AKFS/Auke Bay Lab.

Some companies, including the low-carbon energy research organization, Decerna, experimented with algae, hoping it could be produced at an industrial level. They cultivated it in artificial light, feeding it a mixture of glycerol, yeast and various chemicals. They then extracted the functional fats and converted them into biodiesel. The researchers calculated the energy required during each stage of the process and the carbon emissions produced from burning the resulting biodiesel. They concluded that the production process required more energy than the final product generates, and that total emissions produced during the production and combustion phases of the algae surpassed those of traditional petroleum diesel.

It was also learned that the extraction of the algae's biomolecules may involve the use of harsh chemicals or solvent, and that the growth of algae may also require chemicals like fertilizers and pesticides, which can have adverse effects on aquatic ecosystems if they get into surrounding water bodies through runoff, or if they accumulate in the algae biomass. Mechanical procedures require fewer chemicals but are less effective at separating the diverse array of materials within the algae. Also, cultivation of algae on a large scale uses large amounts of electricity as it often relies on artificial lighting to ensure optimal and controlled growth conditions. Moreover, the space required to grow and process algae on a commercial scale can also be a significant environmental concern. Large-scale algae cultivation facilities often occupy substantial land areas or require dedicated infrastructure such as ponds, bioreactors or photobioreactors.

Despite the promise that algae holds, there is a clear need for technological advancements across the entire supply chain. Techniques for seaweed cultivation, harvesting and transportation must be made more efficient. Several laboratories, such as the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the Los Alamos National Laboratory, have been cultivating and manipulating particular strains of algae to genetically maximize the production of fuel biomolecules and other bioproducts. Additionally, improvements in pre-treatment methods, co-digestion processes, and the development of eco-friendly extraction techniques are essential. Furthermore, advancements in fuel conversion technologies are necessary to ensure that the algae is economically viable and able to be implemented into the current infrastructure. With these changes, perhaps we will see the rise of algae-based biofuels in the future.



COMMENTARY

Now that Noem knows what's in her own book, she should tell us how it got there

SETH TUPPER

Kristi Noem owes South Dakotans an explanation for the embarrassment she's caused herself and the state.

The Republican governor has not yet told us how or why she included a false story in her forthcoming book about meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Margaret Brennan of "Face the Nation" pressed Noem for an answer Sunday on CBS.

Noem replied, "This anecdote shouldn't have been in the book, and as soon as it was brought to my attention, I made sure that that was adjusted."

So Noem would have us believe that she didn't know until last week — when The Dakota Scout broke the story — that her own memoir falsely claimed she had met one of the world's most notorious dictators.

The relevant portion of the book isn't a passing mention of Kim's name. It's a full-on boast.

"I remember when I met with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un," Noem wrote. "I'm sure he underestimated me, having no clue about my experience staring down little tyrants (I'd been a children's pastor, after all)."

How could such a passage be included without Noem's knowledge, when she's the only credited author? South Dakotans aren't as dumb as she apparently thinks we look, so we can deduce three possibilities:

She fabricated the story and thought nobody would catch her in the lie.

She met some other official from an Asian country and mistook or misremembered that person as Kim Jong Un.

She relied on a ghostwriter so heavily that she didn't read her own book before it went to the printer.

We can rule out the third possibility, because we know Noem read her own manuscript. Prior to anyone else reading it, she posted social media videos of herself narrating the audiobook.

That leaves two explanations: She lied, or she's incompetent. When those are the only answers, it's no wonder she avoids the question.

Noem's other starring television role this weekend was on "Saturday Night Live" — but not as the host. Instead, she was the butt of several jokes about another portion of her book, in which she disclosed that she fatally shot a hunting dog and a billy goat.

The show's focus on Noem made it abundantly clear that she's the main object of ridicule in the country right now. That's no small feat while a former president is on trial for allegedly falsifying business records to cover up hush-money payments to a porn star.

The governor's shocking fall is an abrupt flip of the script for South Dakotans, after Noem and her enablers spent the past few years promoting her rising political fame as a boon to the state.

Now South Dakotans can only wait to see how far Noem might drag down the state's reputation before she hits rock bottom. With the book not even scheduled to be released until Tuesday — all the damage so far has arisen from advance copies — who knows what further humiliation might be in store.

Noem intended the book's title, "No Going Back," as a rallying cry for her plans to move the country

forward. Instead, it now stands as a sadly ironic reference to a turning point in her career.

But the title isn't the only ironic part of the book. Its 200-plus pages include pronouncements by Noem that "excuses are not accepted" in her state, and that "we need truth from our leaders."

Perhaps Noem should take her own advice by dropping the excuses, telling the truth about why the false Kim Jong Un anecdote is in her book, and saving what little dignity she and her state have left.

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.

How the state, tribes and federal government are working to curb SD's syphilis epidemic

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 5, 2024 6:00 AM

Tyler Broghammer leaves his office nearly every day armed with a small blue cooler.

Inside is a weapon against South Dakota's syphilis epidemic: syringes of penicillin. The sexually transmitted infection case manager at Oyate Health Center in Rapid City also carries rapid STI tests and condoms on his near daily drive around town, meeting with people he's learned may have the disease.

Broghammer is one of two STI case managers at Oyate Health finding and treating people who have syphilis. The organization is one of several working to address the epidemic in South Dakota through collaborative partnerships.

COVID-19 'completely overwhelmed' screening

Syphilis is a bacterial infection most often spread through sex that can be cured, but can cause serious health problems without treatment and can be spread from mothers to unborn babies.

South Dakota experienced a 2,493% increase in adult syphilis cases from the five-year median in 2022, according to the state Department of Health, with 1,504 cases reported — the highest rate of syphilis cases in the country at the time. That was a 90% increase from 2021.

The number of syphilis cases in the state dropped in 2023 to 1,374 cases, according to the state's infectious disease dashboard.

Syphilis cases are down by 335 cases in the first quarter of this year compared to 2023, according to a state Department of Health spokesperson.

The state had the second highest rate of congenital syphilis in the country in 2022 with 40 cases, which is 351.8 cases per 100,000 births, and was a 150% year-over-year increase. The state saw a 1,233% increase in congenital syphilis among infants from the five-year median in 2022.

The state reported 54 congenital syphilis cases in 2023 and 18 through April of that year. So far this year, there have been nine reported cases.

Syphilis was close to being eradicated in the United States in the 1990s, but cases in South Dakota were increasing in the years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Syphilis infections nationwide have climbed rapidly in recent years, reaching a 70-year high in 2022, according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That rise comes amid a shortage of penicillin, the most effective treatment, due to the nationwide increase in syphilis cases. The shortage is predicted to last until the end of this year.

Hospitals were overwhelmed with treating the coronavirus in 2020 and 2021 and patients were hesitant to get screened or treated for STIs, said Meghan Curry O'Connell, a member of the Cherokee Nation and chief public health officer at the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board in Rapid City.

"The whole system we have to make sure people are screened and treated for STIs was completely overwhelmed by COVID, like everything else," said Curry O'Connell, who is a family physician by training. "Particularly in South Dakota, added challenges included difficulty in accessing care in very rural areas, which compounded the impacts of the pandemic."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 14 of 74

Native American communities hit hardest

Native American communities have been hit the hardest by the epidemic in South Dakota and nationally. About 90% of congenital syphilis cases in South Dakota are among Indigenous babies, according to the state Health Department.

Syphilis causes a range of symptoms, including rashes, sores and hair loss. But if the disease isn't treated, symptoms may go away even though the infection remains, making it a prolific spreader unless sexually active people are educated on the disease, practice safe sex and are regularly tested, Curry O'Connell said.

The disease can potentially persist for decades if untreated, which can lead to death. If pregnant people are infected, it poses a dangerous risk to their baby; congenital syphilis can cause bone deformities, severe anemia, jaundice, meningitis and even death. In 2022, the CDC recorded 231 stillbirths and 51 infant deaths caused by syphilis nationally, out of 3,761 congenital syphilis cases reported that year.

The Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board and tribal leaders from North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa have asked the federal Department of Health and Human Services to declare a public health emergency in their states. A declaration would expand staffing, funding, and access to contact tracing data across their region.

"It's important to get treated, because we want to prevent any of those outcomes, and it's just so easy for people to do," Curry O'Connell said. "Most people just need one shot of penicillin if newly infected."

The rate of congenital syphilis infections among Native Americans (644.7 cases per 100,000 people in 2022) is comparable to what the rate for the entire U.S. population was in 1941 (651.1) before doctors began using penicillin to cure syphilis, according to KFF Health News.

The risk is especially high for people with limited access to health care.

"If you're putting off care or don't have a regular relationship with a doctor, those people are more likely to go untreated," Curry O'Connell said. "For whatever reason or barrier — if a person can't get time off of work, they have a distance to travel, they don't have immediate transportation or anything — it could end up that the symptom goes away."

How SD entities are addressing the epidemic

Broghammer's position is funded by a grant from the Indian Health Service. His "boots on the ground" method is the most effective way to treat patients, though it's also a "grind," Broghammer said.

Whether due to homelessness, financial or privacy concerns, many patients struggle to find their way to Oyate Health on the west side of Rapid City, Broghammer said. He'll meet patients anywhere: their home, hotels or even in parking lots.

"Some days I'll get five to six phone calls reaching out to us, which is great. Other days we're picking up the phone and trying to locate people but might not find anybody," Broghammer said. "It's not just as simple as a phone call and meeting with them. We have a decent sized population of houseless relatives where it's difficult to find them — no phone or address. Sometimes we literally have nothing to go off of."

Some other health care systems will test for syphilis but won't go to the patient's location.

"Underlying all of this is it's very resource intensive, especially in rural areas," Curry O'Connell said. "However, there's not anything we know of yet that can replace it. Boots on the ground, going out to talk to people, giving testing and doing what needs to be done is just basic public health work, and there's nothing else that really works better."

Some tribes and Indian Health Service locations are also sending nurses across South Dakota reservations to find and treat people. The state Department of Health plans to launch its Wellness on Wheels program in May, with five vans traveling across the state to provide basic health care to rural communities — including STI testing, treatment, education, counseling and referrals to community resources.

The vans will also provide pregnancy care services, safe sleep guidance and developmental screening for children, WIC services, maternal depression screening, immunizations and oral health.

"We hope to use these vans several times a week to reach clients who might not have access to one of our physical locations," said Tia Kafke, media spokesperson for the department, in an emailed statement.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 15 of 74

"The vans will operate in the winter as much as possible, weather permitting."

The state, tribes and tribal health board have monthly meetings about syphilis, Curry O'Connell said. IHS recommends every patient age 16 and older be screened for syphilis at least once a year. Pregnant patients should be screened three times during their pregnancy.

Broghammer often receives calls from the state Department of Health with leads on people who tested positive for syphilis.

"They save me time and energy, so I know they're working their tails off," Broghammer said.

The state department started piloting a rapid testing partnership with a health care provider in Mission, on the Rosebud Reservation, in December. Fifty patients were tested in the first three months with eight testing positive and being treated for the disease.

The move to rapid testing is an important development, professionals agree, because patients are able to be treated immediately rather than days or weeks later when results come in from laboratories. The department has seven normal testing centers across the state.

The number of syphilis cases in South Dakota has decreased since it peaked in 2022, though it's still at epidemic levels. Congenital syphilis is only prevented by treating pregnant females. The number of congenital syphilis cases in South Dakota increased from 2022 to 2023.

Prenatal care, intervention key to addressing congenital syphilis

Though Broghammer sees the collaborations' effect, he said there could be more entities working together in the state to put more boots on the ground.

Curry O'Connell said more effort is needed to test pregnant patients who aren't receiving prenatal care. Nearly one-third of congenital syphilis cases in the first half of 2023 did not receive prenatal care, according to the state.

Most women still will interact with the health care system at some point during their pregnancy, even if they don't receive prenatal care. They should be screened with a rapid test at that point, Curry O'Connell said.

"If someone goes into urgent care or goes in for something that's not even pregnancy related, that would be a place to start, because a lot of women will receive some sort of care during pregnancy," Curry O'Connell said. "It's trying to maximize the screening potential of those visits that's important."

Education, Broghammer said, is an important tool.

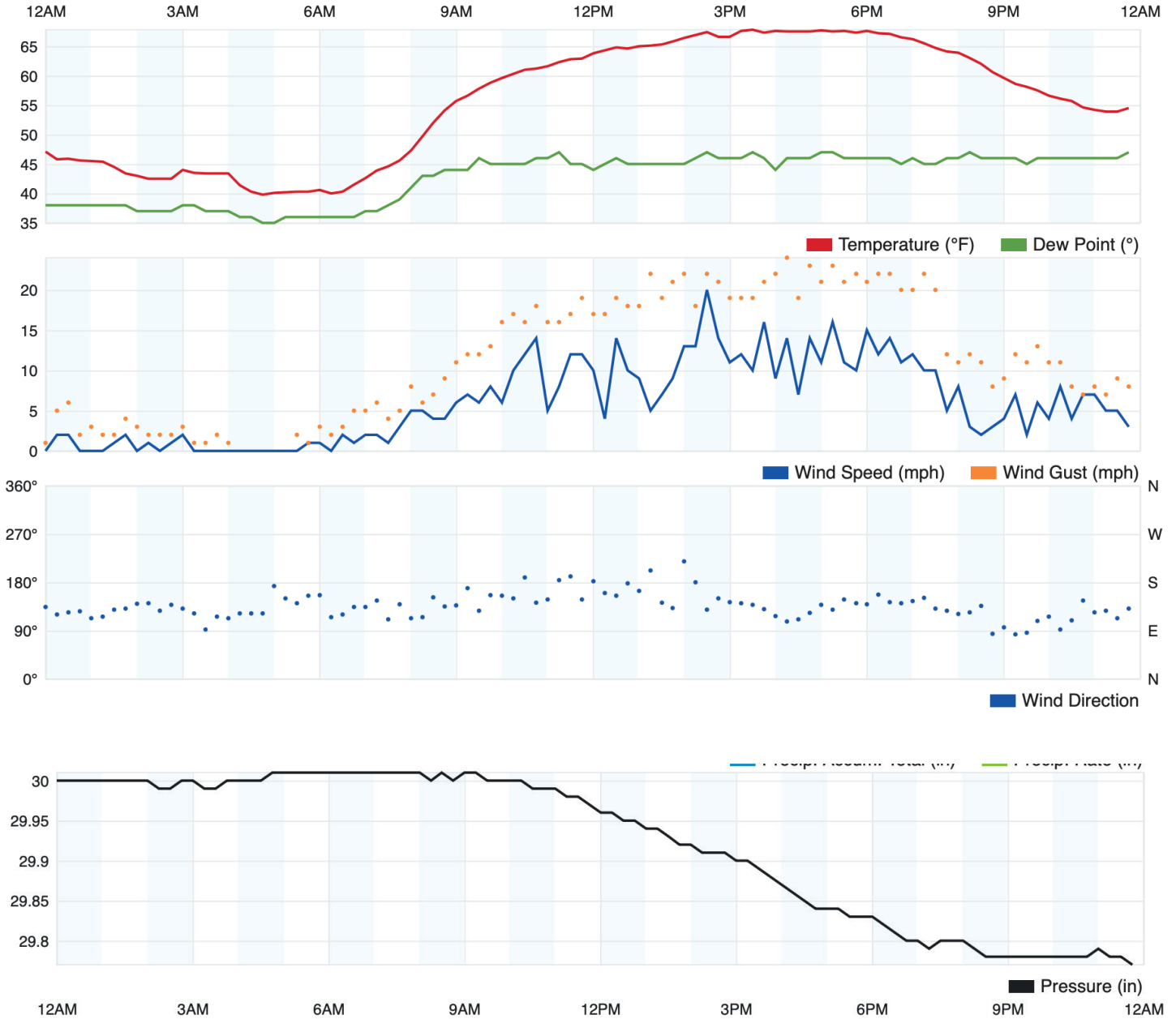
"I think the biggest thing is to just get checked," Broghammer said. "If you're sexually active, be safe: get screened and get checked. Be mindful of your partners and safe sex practices."

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.

Groton Daily Independent

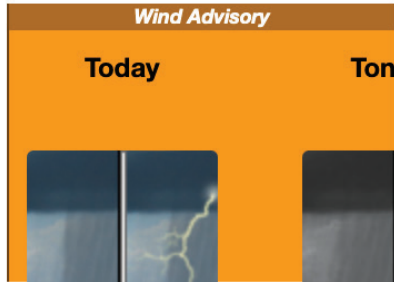
Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 16 of 74

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

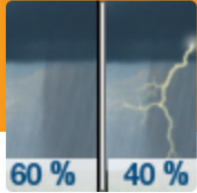


Broton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 17 of 74



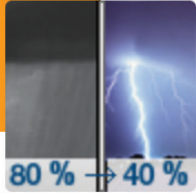
Today



High: 66 °F

Breezy.
Showers
Likely then
Chance
T-storms

Tonight



Low: 48 °F

Breezy.
Showers then
Chance
T-storms

Tuesday



High: 62 °F

Slight Chance
Showers and
Breezy

Tuesday Night



Low: 42 °F

Slight Chance
Showers and
Breezy

Wednesday



High: 64 °F

Chance
Showers



Strong To Severe Storms Possible Today

May 6, 2024
4:37 AM

Late afternoon into the evening

Timing/Location

- Marginal risk (1/5) for strong to severe storms (15-45%) southwest of a line from Mobridge to Brookings



- Between 2:00-9:00 PM CDT

Tornado Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High

Max Hail Size

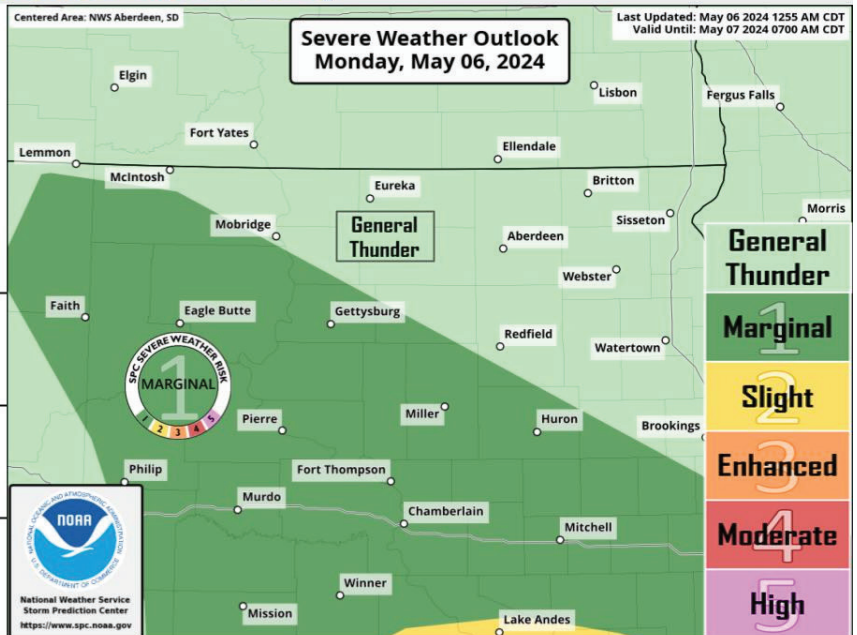
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low Low Medium High



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Areas southwest of a line from Mobridge to Miller are in a marginal (1/5) risk for strong to severe storms. Some strong storms are possible outside of this area, but the threat will mainly be strong winds. Right now, the timing of these threats is between 2 and 9 PM CDT.

Broton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 18 of 74



Wind Gusts and Timing

May 6, 2024
4:57 AM

- Strong southeasterly winds continue across the forecast area today before diminishing Tuesday night.
- Wind gusts could exceed 50 mph through Monday evening.



SECURE ITEMS!!



Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	5/6 Mon			5/7 Tue			5/8 Wed		Maximum	
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am		6am
Aberdeen	43	46	45	39	31	31	29	16	17	46
Britton	43	49	48	41	31	31	26	15	20	49
Brookings	37	43	41	25	25	31	24	15	18	43
Chamberlain	44	46	40	28	30	31	25	15	24	46
Clark	44	47	44	39	30	31	28	18	18	47
Eagle Butte	46	48	47	41	45	41	43	29	25	48
Ellendale	39	44	45	37	30	30	24	14	20	45
Eureka	45	48	48	32	29	30	29	20	17	48
Gettysburg	44	51	47	38	35	36	32	23	23	51
Huron	43	47	45	26	30	33	26	15	20	47
Kennebec	46	48	40	35	35	33	29	20	29	48
McIntosh	47	52	49	30	32	40	45	29	21	52
Milbank	32	40	40	32	25	26	22	15	15	40
Miller	44	48	47	30	36	36	29	18	24	48
Mobridge	43	49	48	31	30	33	33	23	16	49
Murdo	45	45	43	39	38	33	33	22	33	45
Pierre	44	45	40	36	36	35	33	18	23	45
Redfield	46	48	46	28	31	32	30	17	18	48
Sisseton	36	44	44	37	28	28	22	13	16	44
Watertown	37	41	43	32	29	30	28	16	16	43
Webster	45	47	47	37	32	32	31	17	18	47
Wheaton	33	41	44	38	28	23	18	12	15	44



Rain Timing and Amount

May 6, 2024
5:02 AM

Monday morning through Tuesday morning

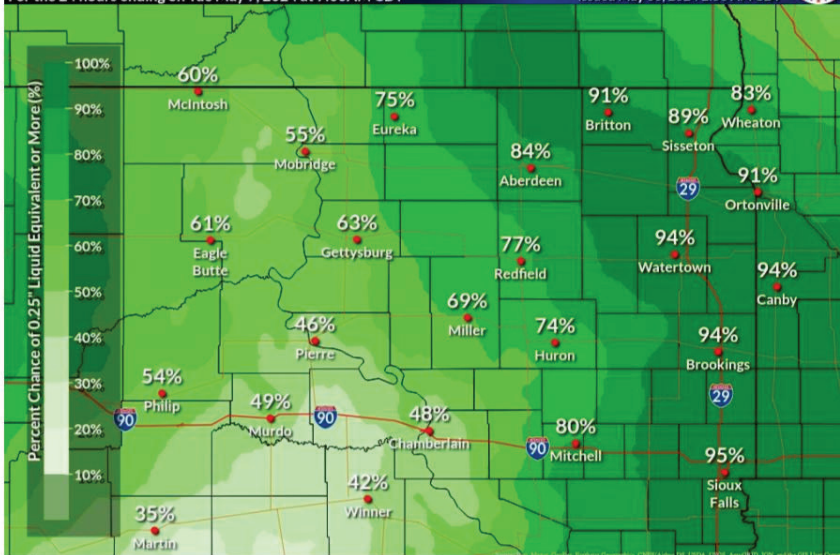
Probability of Precipitation Forecast (%)

	5/6 Mon								5/7 Tue			Maximum
	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am		
Aberdeen	0	40	65	30	55	80	65	40	15	15	82	
Britton	0	5	35	40	50	85	85	65	50	20	84	
Brookings	5	5	10	35	75	95	90	55	15	5	93	
Chamberlain	40	45	35	35	60	40	5	5	10	10	60	
Clark	0	5	55	50	75	80	70	40	15	15	82	
Eagle Butte	50	65	50	40	50	35	20	25	25	20	66	
Ellendale	5	10	65	55	65	95	75	60	35	15	93	
Eureka	15	80	75	25	25	30	30	25	10	15	82	
Gettysburg	35	80	50	20	25	30	25	15	10	15	81	
Huron	10	35	45	35	65	75	55	10	5	10	77	
Kennebec	35	60	45	40	45	25	15	10	10	20	62	
McIntosh	45	55	45	35	55	40	20	20	25	25	57	
Milbank	0	0	0	10	50	80	100	80	65	25	99	
Miller	15	80	65	25	50	40	25	15	10	15	80	
Mobridge	30	70	40	20	25	30	20	15	10	15	69	
Murdo	45	55	30	30	35	25	20	30	30	20	55	
Pierre	45	55	30	20	30	25	15	15	15	20	56	
Redfield	5	70	75	25	45	65	50	20	10	15	75	
Sisseton	0	0	5	10	45	80	100	80	55	30	99	
Watertown	0	0	10	40	60	90	90	65	35	15	92	
Webster	0	0	35	50	65	100	85	70	45	15	99	
Wheaton	0	0	0	10	40	55	90	85	70	65	91	

Percent Chance of 0.25" of Rain or More

For the 24 hours ending on Tue May 7, 2024 at 7:00AM CDT

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued May 06, 2024 2:53 AM CDT



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 19 of 74

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 68 °F at 5:07 PM

Low Temp: 40 °F at 4:44 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 4:01 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 36 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 2016

Record Low: 23 in 1931

Average High: 67

Average Low: 40

Average Precip in May.: 0.65

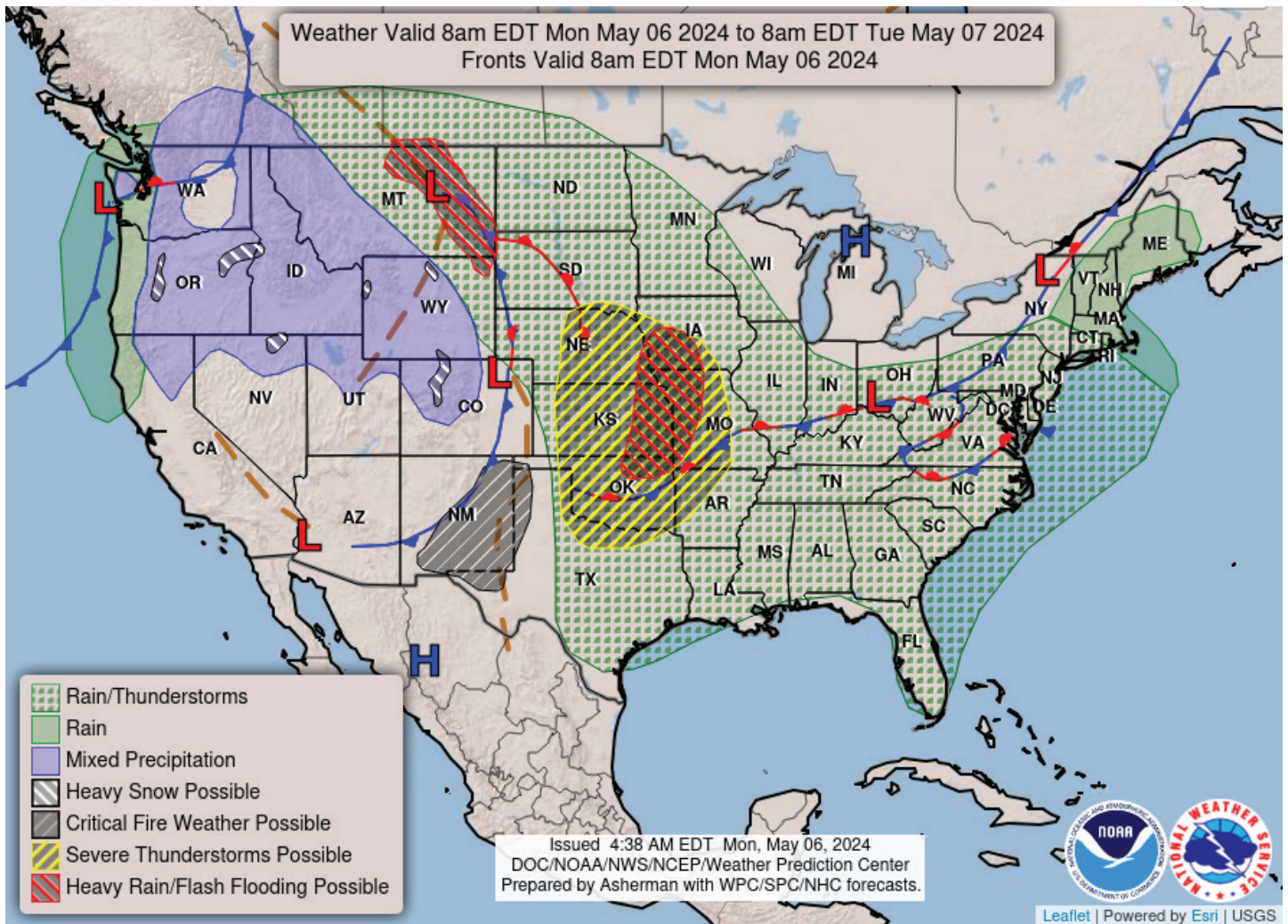
Precip to date in May: 0.18

Average Precip to date: 4.62

Precip Year to Date: 4.71

Sunset Tonight: 8:47:27 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:09:07 am



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 20 of 74

Today in Weather History

May 6, 1988: High winds produced blowing dust which reduced visibilities to less than one-half mile in northeastern South Dakota. Wind gusts of 62 mph were reported at Aberdeen. A small building was destroyed in Gettysburg, and a building was damaged near Timber Lake. Winds also blew over a tractor-trailer injuring a man in Okaton.

May 6, 1999: High winds of 35 to 50 mph, gusting to over 60 mph blew across central and north central South Dakota from the early morning to the late evening hours causing some damage. In Pierre, the high winds blew a large tree down and tore loose a piece of the sheet metal cornice atop a downtown building. At the Legion Memorial Park in Mobridge, the high winds knocked the centerfield lights to the ground. In Jones County, a semi-tractor trailer was blown over and damaged. A fishing tournament at Lake Oahe had to be postponed as a result of the high winds.

1876: A tornado, estimated at F3 intensity, tracked four miles across Chicago, Illinois. The damaged buildings included a candy factory, a hospital, a freight depot, and a church. The tornado moved out over Lake Michigan and was observed to have multiple vortices by a reporter. Further south in Illinois, a tornado blew a moving passenger train off the tracks near Neoga, injuring all 19 people aboard.

1933 - Charleston, SC, was deluged with 10.57 inches of rain, an all-time 24 hour record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1937: The German passenger airship LZ 129 Hindenburg caught fire and was destroyed during its attempt to dock with its mooring mast at Naval Air Station Lakehurst in Manchester Township, New Jersey, United States. Of the 97 people on board (36 passengers and 61 crewmen), there were 35 fatalities (13 passengers and 22 crewmen). One worker on the ground was also killed, making a total of 36 deaths. The Hindenburg was delayed two hours from docking due to thunderstorms in the area.

1975: A massive tornado hit Omaha, Nebraska killing three persons, injuring 133 others, and causing over 250 million dollars damage. The tornado struck during the late afternoon moving northeastward through the industrial and residential areas of west-central Omaha and lifting over the northern section of the city. The twister, which cut a swath ten miles long and as much as a quarter of a mile wide. It was the most costly in U.S. history up till that time.

1987 - Eighteen cities in California and Oregon reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 91 degrees at Portland OR, 101 degrees at Medford OR, and 104 degrees at Sacramento CA, were the warmest of record for so early in the season. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A major storm brought high winds to the western half of the country. A wind gust of 74 mph at Pueblo CO broke their May record established just four days earlier, and winds in the Arapahoe Ski Basin area of Colorado reached 85 mph. In North Dakota, the high winds reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust closing many roads. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Sixteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Morning lows of 17 at Bismarck ND and 26 at Minneapolis MN were the coldest of record for so late in the season. A reading of 43 degrees at the start of the Kentucky Derby was the coldest in 115 years of records. Light snow was reported in the Upper Midwest, with an inch reported at Chicago IL. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Snow and high winds prevailed behind a Pacific cold front crossing the northwestern U.S. Wind gusts above 50 mph were reported in southeastern Idaho, and heavy snow blanketed the Cascade Mountains of Washington State, with twelve inches reported at Stampede Pass. (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 21 of 74

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

EACH ONE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

A vacationer left his beach cottage and was walking along the shoreline. He was amazed when he approached an elderly fisherman who was picking up one starfish after another and throwing them into the water.

Approaching him, he asked, "Why are you doing that?"

"Well," he replied, "these starfish will die if they are left until the morning sun rises. The heat will kill them."

"But," said the vacationer, "the beach goes on for miles and miles and there are hundreds and hundreds of them. What difference will what you are doing make?"

"It makes a difference to this one," he said, as the vacationer looked on.

Crowds followed Jesus. Multitudes came to hear Him speak. But He never lost sight of the individual who needed attention, hope, healing or salvation.

If there was one individual who needed a drink of water, or a person who needed sight, or one who was lame and could not walk, or another who was mentally disturbed and possessed by demons, He stopped everything and met the need of that person.

Today we are impressed by great attractions that receive worldwide attention and draw large crowds. Not so Jesus. It was the "least of these, my brothers and sisters" that opened His heart and caused Him concern.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us tender hearts and sensitive minds that see the needs of those around us. May we show Your love to those who need our help. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And he will answer, "I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me." Matthew 25:45



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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 22 of 74

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 23 of 74



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.03.24

6 13 15 53 56 11

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$306,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 46
Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.24

5 11 25 37 42 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,200,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 1 Mins 36
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.05.24

1 6 10 16 27 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 36
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.24

11 12 20 34 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$85,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 16
Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.24

1 8 27 63 66 26

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins 36
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.24

14 20 23 53 69 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$214,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 45 Mins 36
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Boom! Boom! Pow! Jets hope trio of rookie playmakers' physical approach 'permeates' the entire team

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr. AP Pro Football Writer

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. (AP) — Malachi Corley's eyes light up whenever a defensive player squares up to tackle him.

The New York Jets rookie wide receiver is ready to deliver an even harder hit.

And then he keeps running.

"Every time I get the ball, I'm trying to make something happen with it," the Jets' third-round pick out of Western Kentucky said during the team's rookie minicamp. "And running through guys is just my way of imposing my will."

That physical approach is why the Jets also drafted a pair of bruising running backs in consecutive rounds last week, taking Wisconsin's Braelon Allen in the fourth and South Dakota State's Isaiah Davis in the fifth.

"To have a guy with that mindset, I think it's contagious," coach Robert Saleh said. "To bring in the two big backs, that's contagious. To have that mindset, to bring that physicality, the offensive line, all of it, the hope is that it becomes a contagious trait that permeates throughout the entire building."

Corley led the country with 1,674 yards after the catch and 55 broken tackles during his last two seasons with the Hilltoppers, earning the nickname "YAC King." That penchant for never shying away from contact impressed the Jets during the draft process and made Saleh and his staff consider how that presence could help Aaron Rodgers and the offense.

"Especially in a time of self-preservation, he never runs out of bounds," Saleh said. "That extra 1 or 2 yards, every yard matters. So many times, you'll see ballcarriers run out. It's first-and-10 and they get an 8-yard gain, they run out of bounds. You're thinking, 'Well, second-and-2,' but then it's third-and-1, and then you're punting, versus stick my foot in the ground, get vertical on first-and-10, now it's first-and-10 again, get a whole new set of downs.

"That is a huge difference in football."

Corley is seen as a complement to Garrett Wilson, Mike Williams and Allen Lazard in the Jets' passing game. The 5-foot-11, 215-pound wide receiver has drawn comparisons to San Francisco's Deebo Samuel because of his comparative size — Samuel is 6-feet tall and 215 pounds — and physical approach as a do-it-all playmaker.

"I think it's an amazing honor," Corley said of being mentioned with Samuel. "I think I've hardly scratched the potential of who I am as a player. I think the yards after catch thing is just something that I do. But (I'm) just trying to elevate my game even past that label of just being a gadget player and a weapon and all those things."

Corley could get a crash course this offseason in what he needs to do to succeed in Nathaniel Hackett's offense from Rodgers. The two share business agents and the four-time NFL MVP offered Corley to stay in his guest house — something the rookie intends to take him up on.

"That's going to be my dog while I'm here," a smiling Corley said with a laugh.

At 20 years old, Allen was the youngest player in the draft last weekend. But by no means does he look or play like a kid.

The 6-1, 235-pound running back ran for 3,494 yards and 35 touchdowns in three seasons with the Badgers — and made a reputation for himself as a tough-to-tackle playmaker. He averaged 5.9 yards per carry over his career while using a mix of speed and power.

"It's just been the way I've played my whole life," Allen said. "It was kind of my advantage as a young kid, kind of being a little bit bigger than everybody else."

He wrestled when he was younger and said he learned about using leverage to his advantage, as well as hand fighting and mental discipline. And he carried that with him to the football field.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 25 of 74

The Jets see him as a potential change-of-pace complement to Breece Hall, whose speed allows him to bounce outside and sprint downfield while Allen is more of a between-the-tackles grinder.

Same for Davis, who's 6-1 and 220 pounds and helped South Dakota State win back-to-back FCS national championships. He ran for 4,458 yards and 50 touchdowns, averaging a whopping 6.7 yards per carry in his four seasons with the Jackrabbits.

"I guess it's just a standard you've got to live by, play the game by," Davis said. "I've always played a game (with) physicality. And I thought we did a good job at SDSU of doing that. So, just come in here doing the same thing, you know, assert dominance.

"The NFL is a physical game, so running back, special teams, whatever it may be, just assert dominance and be physical."

Russia announces nuclear weapon drills after angry exchange with senior Western officials

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia plans to hold drills simulating the use of battlefield nuclear weapons, the Defense Ministry announced Monday, days after the Kremlin reacted angrily to comments by senior Western officials about the war in Ukraine and Moscow warned that tensions with the West are deepening.

The drills are in response to "provocative statements and threats of certain Western officials regarding the Russian Federation," the Defense Ministry said in a statement.

It was the first time that Russia has publicly announced drills involving tactical nuclear weapons, though its strategic nuclear forces regularly hold exercises. Tactical nuclear weapons include air bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions and are meant for use on a battlefield. They are less powerful than the massive warheads that arm intercontinental ballistic missiles and are intended to obliterate entire cities.

The Russian announcement appeared to be a warning to Ukraine's Western allies about becoming more deeply involved in the more than two-year war. Some of Ukraine's Western partners have previously expressed concern about stoking the conflict amid fears it could spill beyond Ukraine into a war between NATO and Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron repeated last week that he doesn't exclude sending troops to Ukraine, and U.K. Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Kyiv's forces will be able to use British long-range weapons to strike targets inside Russia. Some other NATO countries providing weapons to Kyiv have balked at that possibility.

The Kremlin branded those comments as dangerous, heightening tension between Russia and NATO. The war already has placed significant strain on relations between Moscow and the West.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday said Macron's recent statement and other remarks by British and U.S. officials had prompted the nuclear drills.

"It's a new round of escalation," Peskov said, referring to what the Kremlin regarded as provocative statements. "It's unprecedented and requires special attention and special measures," Peskov told reporters.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council that's chaired by President Vladimir Putin, said in his typically hawkish fashion that the comments by Macron and Cameron risked pushing the nuclear-armed world toward a "global catastrophe."

It wasn't the first time Europe's military support for Ukraine has irked Russian authorities and prompted nuclear saber-rattling. In March last year, after the U.K. government's decision to provide Ukraine with armor-piercing shells containing depleted uranium, Putin announced that he intends to deploy tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus.

The ministry said the exercise is intended to "increase the readiness of non-strategic nuclear forces to fulfill combat tasks" and will be held on Putin's orders. The maneuvers will involve missile units of the Southern Military District along with the air force and the navy, it said.

Western officials have blamed Russia for threatening a wider war through provocative acts. NATO coun-

tries said last week they are deeply concerned by a campaign of hybrid activities on the military alliance's soil, accusing Russia of being behind them and saying they represent a threat to their security.

Peskov dismissed those claims as "new unfounded accusations leveled at our country."

Meanwhile, Ukrainian drones hit two vehicles Monday in Russia's Belgorod region, killing six people and injuring 35 others, including two children, local authorities said, in an area frequently struck by Kyiv's forces in recent months.

One of the vehicles was a minibus that was carrying farm workers, Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

No other details were immediately available, and it was not possible to independently confirm the report from the border region.

While Ukraine's army is largely pinned down on the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line due to a shortage of troops and ammunition after more than two years of fighting, it has used its long-range firepower to hit targets deep inside Russia. The apparent aim is to disrupt Russia's war logistics system by hitting oil refineries and depots, and unnerve the Russian border regions.

The Belgorod region was a staging ground for Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It has come under regular attack ever since Russian forces retreated there from northeastern Ukraine early in the war following a counteroffensive by Kyiv.

In what has largely been a war of attrition, Russia has also relied heavily on long-range missile, artillery and drones to wreak damage on Ukraine.

At the end of last year, Belgorod officials said 25 people were killed, including five children, and more than 100 were injured in a Ukrainian attack, and regular rocket and drone strikes have continued since then. The area can be reached by relatively simple and mobile weapons such as multiple rocket launchers from forests on the Ukrainian side.

Russian authorities said in March they planned to evacuate about 9,000 children from the area because of continuous shelling, after Putin said he wanted to create a buffer zone to help protect border regions.

Also, the Kremlin's forces kept up their bombardment of Ukraine's power grid, with a nighttime Russian drone attack targeting energy infrastructure in Ukraine's northern region of Sumy. Multiple towns and villages in the region, including Sumy, lost power, regional authorities said.

Russia attacked Ukrainian targets with 13 Shahed drones overnight, 12 of which were intercepted in the Sumy region, Ukraine's air force said.

Macron sets trade and Ukraine as top priority as China's Xi Jinping pays a state visit to France

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — China's President Xi Jinping arrived at the French presidential palace on Monday for a two-day state visit that is expected to focus both on trade disputes and diplomatic efforts to convince Beijing to use its influence to move Russia toward ending the war in Ukraine.

In Paris, Xi first joined a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen meant to address broader EU concerns. Macron said in his introductory remarks the meeting would first address trade issues and how to ensure "fair competition," then the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

"We are at a turning point in our history" as the Europe-China relationship is faced with challenges, Macron said.

The talks are aimed at sharing "both our shared positions and our concerns, to try to overcome them, because the future of our continent will very clearly also depend on our ability to develop balanced relations with China," he said.

Macron, a strong advocate of Europe's economic sovereignty, wants to raise French concerns about a Chinese antidumping investigation into cognac and other European brandy, and tensions over French cosmetics and other sectors.

In a recent speech, he denounced trade practices of both China and the United States as shoring up

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 27 of 74

protections and subsidies.

At the start of the meeting in Paris, Xi said "the world today has entered a new period of turbulence and change."

"As two important forces in the world, China and Europe should ... continuously make new contributions to world peace and development," he said.

The EU launched an investigation last fall into Chinese subsidies and could impose tariffs on electric vehicles exported from China.

"The European Union and China want good relations," von der Leyen said. "We have a substantial EU-China economic relationship. ... But this relationship is also challenged, for example, through state-induced overcapacity, unequal market access and overdependencies."

Paris is the first stop on Xi's European trip, seeking to rebuild relations at a time of global tensions. After France on Monday and Tuesday, he will head to Serbia and Hungary.

France hopes the discussions will help convince China to use its leverage with Moscow to "contribute to a resolution of the conflict" in Ukraine, according to a French presidential official. Russian President Vladimir Putin recently announced plans to visit China this month.

Macron will press Xi over supplies from Chinese companies supporting the Russian war effort despite EU sanctions, he said. China claims neutrality in the Ukraine conflict. France also wants China to maintain a dialogue with Kyiv, added the official, who was not authorized to be identified according to presidential policy.

Last year, Macron appealed to Xi to "bring Russia to its senses," but the call was not followed by any apparent action by Beijing.

"French authorities are pursuing two objectives that are ultimately contradictory," said Marc Julienne, director of the Center for Asian Studies at the French Institute of International Relations. "On the one hand, to convince Xi that it's in his interest to help Europeans to put pressure on Vladimir Putin to end the war and, on the other hand, to dissuade the Chinese president from delivering arms to his Russian friend."

"In short, we think that Xi can help us, but at the same time we fear that he could help Putin," Julienne wrote.

As France prepares to host the Summer Olympics, Macron said he would ask Xi to use his influence to make the Games "a diplomatic moment of peace."

The discussions will also be closely watched from Washington, a month before President Joe Biden is expected to pay his own state visit to France.

Xi's visit marks the 60th anniversary of France-China diplomatic relations, and follows Macron's trip to China in April 2023. Macron prompted controversy on that trip after he said France wouldn't blindly follow the U.S. in getting involved in crises that are not its concern, apparently referring to China's demands for unification with Taiwan.

Several groups — including International Campaign for Tibet and France's Human Rights League — urged Macron to put human rights issues at the heart of his talks with Xi. Protesters demonstrated in Paris as Xi arrived on Sunday, calling for a free Tibet.

Amnesty International called on Macron to demand the release of Uyghur economics professor Ilham Tohti, who was jailed in China for life in 2014 on charges of promoting separatism, and other imprisoned activists.

On Monday morning, media watchdog Reporters Without Borders staged a protest in front of the Arc de Triomphe monument to denounce Xi's visit, calling the Chinese president "one of the greatest predators of press freedom." The group says 119 journalists are imprisoned in the country.

Macron said in an interview published Sunday that he will raise human rights concerns.

Later on Monday, a formal ceremony is to take place at the Invalides monument before bilateral talks at the Elysee presidential palace. Macron and Xi will conclude a nearby French-Chinese economic forum and then join their wives for a state dinner.

The second day of the visit is meant to be a more personal moment.

Macron has invited Xi to visit the Tourmalet Pass in the Pyrenees mountains on Tuesday, where the French leader spent time as a child to see his grandmother. The trip is meant to be a reciprocal gesture after Xi took Macron last year to the residence of the governor of Guangdong province, where his father once lived.

Nervous about falling behind the GOP, Democrats are wrestling with how to use AI

By COURTNEY SUBRAMANIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's campaign and Democratic candidates are in a fevered race with Republicans over who can best exploit the potential of artificial intelligence, a technology that could transform American elections — and perhaps threaten democracy itself.

Still smarting from being outmaneuvered on social media by Donald Trump and his allies in 2016, Democratic strategists said they are nevertheless treading carefully in embracing tools that trouble experts in disinformation. So far, Democrats said they are primarily using AI to help them find and motivate voters and better identify and overcome deceptive content.

"Candidates and strategists are still trying to figure out how to use AI in their work. People know it can save them time — the most valuable resource a campaign has," said Betsy Hoover, director of digital organizing for President Barack Obama's 2012 campaign and co-founder of the progressive venture capital firm Higher Ground Labs. "But they see the risk of misinformation and have been intentional about where and how they use it in their work."

Campaigns in both parties for years have used AI — powerful computer systems, software or processes that emulate aspects of human work and cognition — to collect and analyze data.

The recent developments in supercharged generative AI, however, have provided candidates and consultants with the ability to generate text and images, clone human voices and create video at unprecedented volume and speed.

That has led disinformation experts to issue increasingly dire warnings about the risks posed by AI's ability to spread falsehoods that could suppress or mislead voters, or incite violence, whether in the form of robocalls, social media posts or fake images and video.

Those concerns gained urgency after high-profile incidents that included the spread of AI-generated images of former President Donald Trump getting arrested in New York and an AI-created robocall that mimicked Biden's voice telling New Hampshire voters not to cast a ballot.

The Biden administration has sought to shape AI regulation through executive action, but Democrats overwhelmingly agree Congress needs to pass legislation to install safeguards around the technology.

Top tech companies have taken some steps to quell unease in Washington by announcing a commitment to regulate themselves. Major AI players, for example, entered into a pact to combat the use of AI-generated deepfakes around the world. But some experts said the voluntary effort is largely symbolic and congressional action is needed to prevent AI abuses.

Meanwhile, campaigns and their consultants have generally avoided talking about how they intend to use AI to avoid scrutiny and giving away trade secrets.

The Democratic Party has "gotten much better at just shutting up and doing the work and talking about it later," said Jim Messina, a veteran Democratic strategist who managed Obama's winning reelection campaign.

The Trump campaign said in a statement that it "uses a set of proprietary algorithmic tools, like many other campaigns across the country, to help deliver emails more efficiently and prevent sign up lists from being populated by false information." Spokesman Steven Cheung also said the campaign did not "engage or utilize" any tools supplied by an AI company, and declined to comment further.

The Republican National Committee, which declined to comment, has experimented with generative AI. In the hours after Biden announced his reelection bid last year, the RNC released an ad using artificial intelligence-generated images to depict GOP dystopian fears of a second Biden term: China invading Tai-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 29 of 74

wan, boarded up storefronts, troops lining U.S. city streets and migrants crossing the U.S. border.

A key Republican champion of AI is Brad Parscale, the digital consultant who in 2016 teamed up with scandal-plagued Cambridge Analytica, a British data-mining firm, to hyper target social media users. Most strategists agree that the Trump campaign and other Republicans made better use of social media than Democrats during that cycle.

DEMOCRATS TREADING CAREFULLY

Scarred by the memories of 2016, the Biden campaign, Democratic candidates and progressives are wrestling with the power of artificial intelligence and nervous about not keeping up with the GOP in embracing the technology, according to interviews with consultants and strategists.

They want to use it in ways that maximize its capabilities without crossing ethical lines. But some said they fear using it could lead to charges of hypocrisy — they have long excoriated Trump and his allies for engaging in disinformation while the White House has prioritized reining in abuses associated with AI.

The Biden campaign said it is using AI to model and build audiences, draft and analyze email copy and generate content for volunteers to share in the field. The campaign is also testing AI's ability to help volunteers categorize and analyze a host of data, including notes taken by volunteers after conversations with voters, whether while door-knocking or by phone or text message.

It has experimented with using AI to generate fundraising emails, which sometimes have turned out to be more effective than human-generated ones, according to a campaign official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to publicly discuss AI.

Biden campaign officials said they plan to explore using generative AI this cycle but will adhere to strict rules in deploying it. Among the tactics that are off limits: AI cannot be used to mislead voters, spread disinformation and so-called deepfakes, or deliberately manipulate images. The campaign also forbids the use of AI-generated content in advertising, social media and other such copy without a staff member's review.

The campaign's legal team has created a task force of lawyers and outside experts to respond to misinformation and disinformation, with a focus on AI-generated images and videos. The group is not unlike an internal team formed in the 2020 campaign — known as the "Malarkey Factory," playing off Biden's oft-used phrase, "What a bunch of malarkey."

That group was tasked with monitoring what misinformation was gaining traction online. Rob Flaherty, Biden's deputy campaign manager, said those efforts would continue and suggested some AI tools could be used to combat deepfakes and other such content before they go viral.

"The tools that we're going to use to mitigate the myths and the disinformation is the same, it's just going to have to be at a higher pace," Flaherty said. "It just means we need to be more vigilant, pay more attention, be monitoring things in different places and try some new tools out, but the fundamentals remain the same."

The Democratic National Committee said it was an early adopter of Google AI and uses some of its features, including ones that analyze voter registration records to identify patterns of voter removals or additions. It has also experimented with AI to generate fundraising email text and to help interpret voter data it has collected for decades, according to the committee.

Arthur Thompson, the DNC's chief technology officer, said the organization believes generative AI is an "incredibly important and impactful technology" to help elect Democrats up and down the ballot.

"At the same time, it's essential that AI is deployed responsibly and to enhance the work of our trained staff, not replace them. We can and must do both, which is why we will continue to keep safeguards in place as we remain at the cutting edge," he said.

PROGRESSIVE EXPERIMENTS

Progressive groups and some Democratic candidates have been more aggressively experimenting with AI.

Higher Ground Labs — the venture capital firm co-founded by Hoover — established an innovation hub known as Progressive AI Lab with Zinc Collective and the Cooperative Impact Lab, two political tech coalitions focused on boosting Democratic candidates.

The goal was to create an ecosystem where progressive groups could streamline innovation, organize

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 30 of 74

AI research and swap information about large language models, Hoover said.

Higher Ground Labs, which also works closely with the Biden campaign and DNC, has since funded 14 innovation grants, hosted forums that allow organizations and vendors to showcase their tools and held dozens of AI trainings.

More than 300 people attended an AI-focused conference the group held in January, Hoover said.

Jessica Alter, the co-founder and chair of Tech for Campaigns, a political nonprofit that uses data and digital marketing to fight extremism and help down-ballot Democrats, ran an AI-aided experiment across 14 campaigns in Virginia last year.

Emails written by AI, Alter said, brought in between three and four times more fundraising dollars per work hour compared with emails written by staff.

Alter said she is concerned that the party might be falling behind in AI because it is being too cautious.

"I understand the downsides of AI and we should address them," Alter said. "But the biggest concern I have right now is that fear is dominating the conversation in the political arena and that is not leading to balanced conversations or helpful outcomes."

HARD TO TALK ABOUT AN 'AK-47'

Rep. Adam Schiff, the Democratic front-runner in California's Senate race, is one of few candidates who have been open about using AI. His campaign manager, Brad Elkins, said the campaign has been using AI to improve its efficiency. It has teamed up with Quiller, a company that received funding from Higher Ground Labs and developed a tool that drafts, analyzes and automates fundraising emails.

The Schiff campaign has also experimented with other generative AI tools. During a fundraising drive last May, Schiff shared online an AI-generated image of himself as a Jedi. The caption read, "The Force is all around us. It's you. It's us. It's this grassroots team. #MayThe4thBeWithYou."

The campaign faced blowback online but was transparent about the lighthearted deepfake, which Elkins said is an important guardrail to integrating the technology as it becomes more widely available and less costly.

"I am still searching for a way to ethically use AI-generated audio and video of a candidate that is sincere," Elkins said, adding that it's difficult to envision progress until there's a willingness to regulate and legislate consequences for deceptive artificial intelligence.

The incident highlighted a challenge that all campaigns seem to be facing: even talking about AI can be treacherous.

"It's really hard to tell the story of how generative AI is a net positive when so many bad actors — whether that's robocalls, fake images or false video clips — are using the bad set of AI against us," said a Democratic strategist close to the Biden campaign who was granted anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly. "How do you talk about the benefits of an AK-47?"

Israeli army tells Palestinians to evacuate parts of Gaza's Rafah ahead of an expected assault

By SAM MEDNICK, JOSEF FEDERMAN and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli army on Monday ordered tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza's southern city of Rafah to start evacuating from the area, signaling that a long-promised ground invasion there could be imminent.

The announcement complicates last-ditch efforts by international mediators, including the director of the CIA, to broker a cease-fire. The militant Hamas group and Qatar, a key mediator, have warned that invading Rafah — along the border with Egypt — could derail the talks, and the United States has repeatedly urged Israel against the invasion.

However, Israel has described Rafah as the last significant Hamas stronghold after seven months of war, and its leaders have repeatedly said the invasion is necessary to defeat the Islamic militant group.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an army spokesman, said some 100,000 people were being ordered to move to a nearby Israel-declared humanitarian zone called Muwasi. He said Israel was preparing a "limited scope

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 31 of 74

operation" and would not say whether this was the beginning of a broader invasion of the city. But after Oct. 7 and the unprecedented attack on southern Israel by Hamas, Israel did not formally announce the launch of a ground invasion that continues to this day.

Overnight, Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, told U.S. Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin that Israel had no choice but to act in Rafah. On Sunday, Hamas carried out a deadly rocket attack from the Rafah area that killed four Israeli soldiers.

Shoshani said Israel published a map of the evacuation area, and that orders were being issued through air-dropped leaflets, text messages and radio broadcasts. He said Israel has expanded humanitarian aid into Muwasi, including field hospitals, tents, food and water.

Israel's army said on the social platform X that it would act with "extreme force" against militants, and urged the population to evacuate immediately for their safety.

Israel's plan to invade Rafah has raised global alarm because of the potential for harm to more than a million Palestinian civilians sheltering there.

About 1.4 million Palestinians — more than half of Gaza's population — are jammed into the city and its surroundings. Most of them fled their homes elsewhere in the territory to escape Israel's onslaught and now face another wrenching move or the danger of staying under a new assault. They live in densely packed tent camps, overflowing U.N. shelters or crowded apartments, and are dependent on international aid for food, with sanitation systems and medical facilities infrastructure crippled.

The U.N. agency that has helped millions of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank for decades, known as UNRWA, warned Monday of devastating consequences of a Rafah offensive, including more civilian suffering and deaths. The agency said it would not leave but stay in Rafah as long as possible to continue providing lifesaving assistance.

Egypt's Rafah crossing, a main transfer point for aid going into Gaza, lies in the evacuation zone. The crossing remained open on Monday after the Israeli order.

But even as the U.S., Egypt and Qatar have pushed for a cease-fire agreement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated last week that the military would move on the city "with or without a deal" to achieve its goal of destroying the Hamas militant group.

On Monday, Netanyahu accused Hamas of "torpedoing" the hostage deal and not budging from its "extreme demands" while vowing to stop the militants from retaking control of Gaza. In a fiery speech Sunday evening marking the country's annual Holocaust memorial day, he rejected international pressure to halt the war, saying that "if Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone."

A Hamas official told The Associated Press that Israel is trying to pressure the group into making concessions on the cease-fire, but that it won't change its demands. Hamas wants a full end to the war, withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and the eventual reconstruction of the strip in exchange for the Israeli hostages held by the militants.

Shoshani would not say whether the upcoming Rafah operation is a response to Sunday's attack by Hamas that forced Israel's key border crossing for aid to close. He said it would not affect how much aid enters Gaza as other crossing points remain operational.

He wouldn't comment, however, on U.S. warnings not to invade and wasn't clear on whether Monday's evacuation order was coordinated with Egypt.

Egypt, a strategic partner of Israel, has said that an Israeli military seizure of the Gaza-Egypt border — which is supposed to be demilitarized — or any move to push Palestinians into Egypt would threaten its four-decade-old peace treaty with Israel.

In Rafah, people received flyers Monday morning in Arabic detailing which neighborhood blocks needed to leave and where humanitarian zones had expanded to. The flyers said that aid services would spread from Deir al Balah in the north to the center of Khan Younis city in the middle of the Gaza Strip.

"Anyone found near (militant) organizations endangers themselves and their family members. For your safety, the (army) urges you to evacuate immediately to the expanded humanitarian area", it read.

Palestinians in Rafah said people gathered to discuss their options after receiving the flyers. Most said they did not want to move alone and preferred to travel in groups.

"So many people here are displaced and now they have to move again, but no one will stay here it's not safe," Nidal Alzaanin told The Associated Press by phone.

A father of five, Alzaanin works for an international aid group and was displaced to Rafah from Beit Hanoun in the north at the start of the war. He said people are concerned since Israeli troops shot at Palestinians as they moved during previous evacuation orders.

Alzaanin said he has packed his documents and bags but will wait 24 hours to see what others do before relocating. He said he has a friend in Khan Younis whom he hopes can pitch a tent for his family.

But some people say they're too tired and fed up of months of devastation to flee again.

Sahar Abu Nahel was displaced to Rafah with 20 of her family, her husband is being held by Israel, her son-in-law is missing, she said.

"Where am I going to go? I have no money or anything. I am seriously tired as are (my) children," she said wiping tears from her cheeks. "Maybe it's more honorable for us to die. We are being humiliated," she said.

With help from AI, Randy Travis got his voice back. Here's how his first song post-stroke came to be

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

With some help from artificial intelligence, country music star Randy Travis, celebrated for his timeless hits like "Forever and Ever, Amen" and "I Told You So," has his voice back.

In July 2013, Travis was hospitalized with viral cardiomyopathy, a virus that attacks the heart, and later suffered a stroke. The Country Music Hall of Famer had to relearn how to walk, spell and read in the years that followed. A condition called aphasia limits his ability to speak — it's why his wife Mary Travis assists him in interviews. It's also why he hasn't released new music in over a decade, until now.

"What That Came From," which released Friday, is a rich acoustic ballad amplified by Travis' immediately recognizable, soulful vocal tone.

Cris Lacy, Warner Music Nashville co-president, approached Randy and Mary Travis and asked: "What if we could take Randy's voice and recreate it using AI?" Mary Travis told The Associated Press over Zoom last week, Randy smiling in agreement right next to her. "Well, we were all over that, so we were so excited."

"All I ever wanted since the day of a stroke was to hear that voice again."

Lacy tapped developers in London to create a proprietary AI model to begin the process. The result was two models: One with 12 vocal stems (or song samples), and another with 42 stems collected across Travis' career — from 1985 to 2013, says Kyle Lehning, Travis' longtime producer. Lacy and Lehning chose to use "Where That Came From," a song written by Scotty Emerick and John Scott Sherrill that Lehning co-produced and held on to for years. He believed it could best articulate the humanity of Travis' idiosyncratic vocal style.

"I never even thought about another song," Lehning said.

Once he input the demo vocal (sung by James Dupree) into the AI models, "it took about five minutes to analyze," says Lehning. "I really wish somebody had been here with a camera because I was the first person to hear it. And it was stunning, to me, how good it was sort of right off the bat. It's hard to put an equation around it, but it was probably 70, 75% what you hear now."

"There were certain aspects of it that were not authentic to Randy's performance," he said, so he began to edit and build on the recording with engineer Casey Wood, who also worked closely with Travis over a few decades.

The pair cherry-picked from the two models, and made alterations to things like vibrato speed, or slowing and relaxing phrases. "Randy is a laid-back singer," Lehning says. "Randy, in my opinion, had an old soul quality to his voice. That's one of the things that made him unique, but also, somehow familiar."

His vocal performance on "What That Came From" had to reflect that fact.

"We were able to just improve on it," Lehning says of the AI recording. "It was emotional, and it's still

emotional.”

Mary Travis says the “human element,” and “the people that are involved” in this project, separate it from more nefarious uses of AI in music.

“Randy, I remember watching him when he first heard the song after it was completed. It was beautiful because at first, he was surprised, and then he was very pensive, and he was listening and studying,” she said. “And then he put his head down and his eyes were a little watery. I think he went through every emotion there was, in those three minutes of just hearing his voice again.”

Lacy agrees. “The beauty of this is, you know, we’re doing it with a voice that the world knows and has heard and has been comforted by,” she says.

“But I think, just on human terms, it’s a very real need. And it’s a big loss when you lose the voice of someone that you were connected to, and the ability to have it back is a beautiful gift.”

They also hope that this song will work to educate people on the good that AI can do — not the fraudulent activities that so frequently make headlines. “We’re hoping that maybe we can set a standard,” Mary Travis says, where credit is given where credit is due — and artists have control over their voice and work.

Last month, over 200 artists signed an open letter submitted by the Artist Rights Alliance non-profit, calling on artificial intelligence tech companies, developers, platforms, digital music services and platforms to stop using AI “to infringe upon and devalue the rights of human artists.” Artists who co-signed included Stevie Wonder, Miranda Lambert, Billie Eilish, Nicki Minaj, Peter Frampton, Katy Perry, Smokey Robinson and J Balvin.

So, now that “Where That Came From” is here, will there be more original Randy Travis songs in the future?

“There may be others,” says Mary Travis. “We’ll see where this goes. This is such a foreign territory. There’s likely more on the horizon.”

“We do have other tracks,” says Lacy, but Warner Music is being as selective. “This isn’t a stunt, and it’s not a parlor trick,” she added. “It was important to have a song worthy of him.”

Heavy rains ease around Houston but flooding remains after hundreds of rescues and evacuations

By JAMIE STENGLE and LEKAN OYEKANMI Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Floodwaters closed some Texas schools on Monday after days of heavy rains pummeled the Houston area and led to hundreds of rescues including people who were stranded on rooftops.

A 5-year-old boy died after riding in a car that was swept away in fast waters, authorities said.

Although forecasters expected storms to begin tapering off in southeastern Texas, high waters continued to close some roads and left residents facing lengthy cleanups in neighborhoods where rising river levels led to weekend evacuation orders.

Houston is one of the most flood-prone metro areas in the country. Hurricane Harvey in 2017 dumped historic rainfall that flooded thousands of homes and resulted in more than 60,000 rescues.

In one soggy area of Houston, school officials in Channelview canceled classes and said a survey of their employees found many of them had experienced circumstances that would prevent them from coming to work.

“These folks have suffered much, people,” Trinity County Sheriff Woody Wallace said Sunday during a Facebook livestream as he rode a boat through a rural flooded neighborhood. Partially submerged cars and street signs peeked above the water around him.

Areas near Lake Livingston, located northeast of Houston, received upwards of 23 inches (58 centimeters) of rain over the past week, National Weather Service meteorologist Jimmy Fowler said.

In Johnson County, south of Fort Worth, a 5-year-old boy died when he was swept away after the vehicle he was riding in became stuck in swift-moving water near the community of Lillian just before 2 a.m. Sunday, an official said.

The child and two adults were trying to reach dry ground when they were swept away. The adults were

rescued around 5 a.m. and taken to a hospital, while the child was found dead around 7:20 a.m. in the water, Johnson County Emergency Management Director Jamie Moore wrote in a social media post.

Storms brought 9 inches (23 centimeters) of rain in a span of six to eight hours in some areas from central Texas to the Dallas-Fort Worth area, National Weather Service meteorologist Matt Stalley said.

Since last week, storms have forced numerous high-water rescues in the Houston area, including some from the rooftops of flooded homes.

Greg Moss, 68, stayed put in his recreational vehicle on Sunday after leaving his home in the community of Channelview in eastern Harris County near the San Jacinto River. A day earlier, he had packed up many of his belongings and left before the road to his home flooded.

"I would be stuck for four days," Moss said. "So now at least I can go get something to eat."

Moss moved his belongings and vehicle to a neighbor's home, where he planned to stay until the waters recede. The floodwaters had already gone down by a couple of feet and he wasn't worried his home would flood because it's located on higher ground, Moss said Sunday.

On D-Day, 19-year-old medic Charles Shay was ready to give his life, and save as many as he could

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

BRETTEVILLE-L'ORGUEILLEUSE, France (AP) — On D-Day, Charles Shay was a 19-year-old U.S. Army medic who was ready to give his life — and save as many as he could.

Now 99, he's spreading a message of peace with tireless dedication as he's about to take part in the 80th anniversary commemorations of the landings in Normandy that led to the liberation of France and Europe from Nazi Germany occupation.

"I guess I was prepared to give my life if I had to. Fortunately, I did not have to," Shay said in an interview with The Associated Press.

A Penobscot tribe citizen from Indian Island in the U.S. state of Maine, Shay has been living in France since 2018, not far from the shores of Normandy where many world leaders are expected to come next month. Solemn ceremonies will be honoring the nearly 160,000 troops from Britain, the U.S., Canada and other nations who landed on June 6, 1944.

Nothing could have prepared Shay for what happened that morning on Omaha Beach: bleeding soldiers, body parts and corpses strewn around him, machine-gun fire and shells filling the air.

"I had been given a job, and the way I looked at it, it was up to me to complete my job," he recalled. "I did not have time to worry about my situation of being there and perhaps losing my life. There was no time for this."

Shay was awarded the Silver Star for repeatedly plunging into the sea and carrying critically wounded soldiers to relative safety, saving them from drowning. He also received France's highest award, the Legion of Honor, in 2007.

Still, Shay could not save his good friend, Pvt. Edward Morozewicz. The sad memory remains vivid in his mind as he describes seeing his 22-year-old comrade lying on the beach with a serious stomach wound.

"He had a wound that I could not help him with because I did not have the proper instruments ... He was bleeding to death. And I knew that he was dying. I tried to comfort him. And I tried to do what I could for him, but there was no help," he said. "And while I was treating him, he died in my arms."

"I lost many close friends," he added.

A total of 4,414 Allied troops were killed on D-Day itself, including 2,501 Americans. More than 5,000 were wounded.

Shay survived. At night, exhausted, he eventually fell asleep in a grove above the beach.

"When I woke up in the morning. It was like I was sleeping in a graveyard because there were dead Americans and Germans surrounding me," he recalled. "I stayed there for not very long and I continued on my way."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 35 of 74

Shay then pursued his mission in Normandy for several weeks, rescuing those wounded, before heading with American troops to eastern France and Germany, where he was taken prisoner in March 1945 and liberated a few weeks later.

After World War II, Shay reenlisted in the military because the situation of Native Americans in his home state of Maine was too precarious due to poverty and discrimination.

"I tried to cope with the situation of not having enough work or not being able to help support my mother and father. Well, there was just no chance for young American Indian boys to gain proper labor and earn a good job," he said.

Maine would not allow individuals living on Native American reservations to vote until 1954.

Shay continued to witness history — returning to combat as a medic during the Korean War, participating in U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands and later working at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria.

For over 60 years, he did not talk about his WWII experience.

But he began attending D-Day commemorations in 2007 and in recent years, he has seized many occasions to give his powerful testimony. A book about his life, "Spirits are guiding" by author Marie-Pascale Legrand, is about to be released this month.

In 2018, he moved from Maine to Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse, a French small town in the Normandy region to stay at a friend's home.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, coming from his nearby home, he was among the few veterans able to attend commemorations. He stood up for all others who could not make the trip amid restrictions.

Shay also used to lead a Native American ritual each year on D-Day, burning sage in homage to those who died. In 2022, he handed over the remembrance task to another Native American, Julia Kelly, a Gulf War veteran from the Crow tribe, who since has performed the ritual in his presence.

The Charles Shay Memorial on Omaha Beach pays tribute to the 175 Native Americans who landed there on D-Day.

Often, Shay expressed his sadness at seeing wars still waging in the world and what he considers the senseless loss of lives.

Shay said he had hoped D-Day would bring global peace. "But it has not, because you see that we go from one war to the next. There will always be wars. People and nations cannot get along with each other."

Brad Parscale helped Trump win in 2016 using Facebook ads. Now he's back, and an AI evangelist

By GARANCE BURKE and ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Donald Trump's former campaign manager looked squarely into the camera and promised his viewers they were about to witness a bold new era in politics.

"You're going to see some of the most amazing new technology in artificial intelligence that's going to replace polling in the future across the country," said Brad Parscale in a dimly lit promotional video accentuated by hypnotic beats.

Parscale, the digital campaign operative who helped engineer Trump's 2016 presidential victory, vows that his new, AI-powered platform will dramatically overhaul not just polling, but campaigning. His AI-powered tools, he has boasted, will outperform big tech companies and usher in a wave of conservative victories worldwide.

It's not the first time Parscale has proclaimed that new technologies will boost right-wing campaigns. He was the digital guru who teamed up with scandal-plagued Cambridge Analytica and helped propel Trump to the White House eight years ago. In 2020, he had a public blowup then a private falling out with his old boss after the Capitol riot. Now he's back, playing an under-the-radar role to help Trump, the presumptive GOP nominee, in his race against Democratic President Joe Biden.

Parscale says his company, Campaign Nucleus, can use AI to help generate customized emails, parse oceans of data to gauge voter sentiment and find persuadable voters, then amplify the social media posts

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 36 of 74

of “anti-woke” influencers, according to an Associated Press review of Parscale’s public statements, his company websites, slide decks, marketing materials and other documents not previously made public.

Since last year, Campaign Nucleus and other Parscale-linked companies have been paid more than \$2.2 million by the Trump campaign, the Republican National Committee and their related political action and fundraising committees, campaign finance records show.

While his firms have received only a small piece of Trump’s total digital spending, Parscale remains close to top Republicans, as well as senior officials at the campaign and at the RNC, according to a GOP operative familiar with Parscale’s role who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal dynamics.

Lara Trump, the RNC’s new co-chair and Trump’s daughter-in-law, once worked as a consultant to a company co-owned by Parscale. And U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson’s campaign recently hired Campaign Nucleus, campaign finance records show.

Parscale, however, is not involved in day-to-day Trump campaign operations, the GOP operative said.

Parscale’s ability to use AI to micro target supporters and tap them for campaign cash could prove critical for Trump’s campaign and other fundraising organizations. They have seen a falloff in contributions from smaller donors and a surge in spending — at least \$77 million so far — on attorneys defending the former president in a slew of criminal and civil cases.

Beyond Trump, Parscale has said he’s harnessed AI to supercharge conservative candidates and causes across the globe, including in Israel, the Balkans and Brazil.

NEW AI-POWERED CAMPAIGN TOOLS

Parscale is hardly alone in using machine learning to try to give candidates an edge by predicting, pinpointing and motivating likely supporters to vote and donate money. Politicians at all levels are experimenting with chatbots and other generative AI tools to write speeches, ad copy and fundraising appeals.

Some Democrats have voiced concern over being outmaneuvered by Republicans on AI, much like they were on social media advertising eight years ago. So far, the Biden campaign and other Democrats said they are using AI to help them find and motivate voters and to better identify and defeat disinformation.

Election experts say they are concerned about AI’s potential to upend elections around the world through convincing deepfakes and other content that could mislead voters. Free and low-cost generative AI services have grown in sophistication, and officials worry they can be used to smear a candidate or steer voters to avoid the polls, eroding the public’s trust in what they see and hear.

Parscale has the financial backing to experiment to see what works in ways that other AI evangelists may not. That is thanks, in part, to his association with an evangelical Texas billionaire who is among the state’s most influential political donors.

Parscale did not respond to multiple messages from AP seeking comment. The RNC declined comment as well.

AI IS ‘SO SCARY’

Trump has called artificial intelligence “so scary” and “dangerous.” His campaign, which has shied away from highlighting Parscale’s role, said in an emailed statement that it did not “engage or utilize” tools supplied by any AI company.

“The campaign uses a set of proprietary algorithmic tools, like many other campaigns across the country, to help deliver emails more efficiently and prevent sign up lists from being populated by false information,” said campaign spokesman Steven Cheung.

While political consultants often hype their tactics to land new contracts, they can also be intensely secretive about the details of that work to avoid assisting rivals. That makes it difficult to precisely track how Parscale is deploying AI for the Trump campaign, or more broadly.

Parscale has said Campaign Nucleus can send voters customized emails and use data analytics to predict voters’ feelings. The platform can also amplify “anti-woke” influencers who have large followings on social media, according to his company’s documents and videos.

Parscale said his company also can use artificial intelligence to create “stunning web pages in seconds” that produce content that looks like a media outlet, according to a presentation he gave last month at a

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 37 of 74

political conference, where he was not advertised in advance as a speaker.

"Empower your team to create their own news," said another slide, according to the presentation viewed by AP.

Soon, Parscale says, his company will deploy an app that harnesses AI to assist campaigns in collecting absentee ballots in the same way DoorDash or Grubhub drivers pick up dinners from restaurants and deliver them to customers.

Chris Wilson, a Republican strategist who recently worked for a SuperPAC backing Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' failed presidential bid, said he has seen Campaign Nucleus' platform and was "envious" of its capabilities and simplicity.

"Somebody could download Nucleus, start working with it and really begin to use it," said Wilson.

Other political consultants, however, called Parscale's AI-infused sales pitch largely a rehash of what campaigns already have mastered through data scraping, ad testing and modeling to predict voter behavior.

"Some of this stuff is just simply not new, it's been around for a long time. The only thing new is that we're just calling it AI," said Amanda Elliott, a GOP digital strategist.

FROM UNKNOWN TO TRUMP CONFIDANT

Parscale, a relatively unknown web designer in San Antonio, got his start working for Trump when he was hired to build a web presence for the business mogul's family business.

That led to a job on the future president's 2016 campaign. He was one of its first hires and spearheaded an ambitious and unorthodox digital initiative that relied on an extensive database of social media accounts and content to target voters with Facebook ads.

"I pretty much used Facebook to get Trump elected in 2016," Parscale said in a 2022 podcast interview.

To better target Facebook users, in particular, the campaign teamed up with Cambridge Analytica, a British datamining firm bankrolled by Robert Mercer, a wealthy and influential GOP donor. After the election, Cambridge Analytica dissolved, facing investigations over its role in a breach of 87 million Facebook accounts.

Following Trump's surprise win, Parscale's influence grew. He was promoted to manage Trump's reelection bid and enjoyed celebrity status. A towering figure at 6 feet, 8 inches with a Viking-style beard, Parscale was frequently spotted at campaign rallies taking selfies with Trump supporters and signing autographs.

Parscale was replaced as campaign manager not long after a rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, drew an unexpectedly small crowd, enraging Trump.

His personal life unraveled, culminating in a standoff with police at his Florida home after his wife reported he had multiple firearms and was threatening to hurt himself. One of the responding officers reported he saw bruising on the arms of Parscale's wife. Parscale complied with a court order to turn in his firearms and was not charged in connection with the incident.

Parscale briefly decided to quit politics and privately expressed regret for associating with Trump after the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot. In a text to a former campaign colleague, he wrote he felt "guilty for helping him win" in 2016, according to the House committee that investigated the Capitol attack.

His disgust didn't last long. Campaign Nucleus set up Trump's website after Silicon Valley tech companies throttled his access to their platforms.

By the summer of 2022, Parscale had resumed complimenting his old boss on a podcast popular among GOP politicians.

"With President Trump, he really was the guy driving the message. He was the chief strategist of his own political uprising and management," Parscale said. "I think what the family recognized was: I had done everything that really the campaign needs to do."

PARSCALE'S PLATFORM

Trump's 2024 campaign website now links directly to Parscale's company and displays that it's "Powered by Nucleus," as Parscale often refers to his new firm. The campaign and its related political action and campaign committees have paid Campaign Nucleus more than \$800,000 since early 2023, according to Federal Election Commission filings.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 38 of 74

Two other companies — Dyspatchit Email and Text Services and BCVM Services — are listed on campaign finance records as being located at the same Florida address used by Campaign Nucleus. The firms, which are registered in Delaware and whose ownership is unclear, have received \$1.4 million from the Trump campaign and related entities, FEC records show.

When an AP reporter last month visited Campaign Nucleus' small, unmarked office in a tony section of Fort Lauderdale, an employee said she did not know anything about Dyspatchit or BCVM.

"We don't talk to reporters," the employee said.

The three companies have been paid to host websites, send emails, provide fundraising software and provide digital consulting, FEC records show.

Parscale markets Campaign Nucleus as a one-stop shop for conservative candidates who want to automate tasks usually done by campaign workers or volunteers.

The company says it has helped its clients raise \$119 million and has sent nearly 14 billion emails on their behalf, according to a promotional video.

At his recent appearance at the political conference, Parscale presented a slide that said Campaign Nucleus had raised three times as much as tech giant Salesforce in head-to-head tests for email fundraising.

Campaign Nucleus specializes in mining information from a politician's supporters, according to a recent presentation slide.

For example, when someone signs up to attend an event, Nucleus uses AI to analyze reams of personal data to assign that person a numerical score. Attendees who have been to past events receive a high score, for example, ranking them as most likely to show up, according to a company video posted online.

Campaign Nucleus also can track where people who sign up live and can send them customized emails asking for donations or solicit their help on the campaign, the video shows.

Parscale said two years ago in a podcast that he had received more than 10,000 requests about Campaign Nucleus from nearly every country with a conservative party. More recently, he said his team has been active in multiple countries, including in India and Israel, where he's been "helping over there a lot with the war with Hamas."

The company says it has offices in Texas, Florida and North Carolina and has been on a recruiting tear. Recent job listings have included U.S. and Latin America-based intelligence analysts to use AI for framing messages and generating content, as well as a marketer to "coordinate influencer campaigns."

Campaign Nucleus has also entered into partnerships with other companies with an AI focus. In 2022, the firm announced it was teaming up with Phunware, a Texas-based company that built a cellphone app for Trump's 2020 bid that allowed staff to monitor the movements of his millions of supporters and mobilize their social networks.

Since then, Phunware obtained a patent for what a company official described as "experiential AI" that can locate people's cellphones geographically, predict their travel patterns and influence their consumer behavior.

Phunware did not answer specific questions about the partnership with Nucleus, saying the company's client engagements were confidential.

"However, it is well-known that we developed the 2020 Trump campaign app in collaboration with Campaign Nucleus. We have had discussions with Trump campaign leadership about potentially developing their app for the 2024 election," said spokeswoman Christina Lockwood.

PARSCALE'S VISION

Last year, Parscale bought property in Midland, Texas, in the heart of the nation's highest-producing oil and gas fields. It is also the hometown of Tim Dunn, a billionaire born-again evangelical who is among the state's most influential political donors.

Over the years, the organizations and campaigns Dunn has funded have pushed Texas politics further to the right and driven successful challenges to unseat incumbent Republican officials deemed too centrist.

In April 2023, Dunn invested \$5 million in a company called AiAdvertising that once bought one of Parscale's firms under a previous corporate name. The San Antonio-based ad firm also announced that Parscale was joining as a strategic adviser, to be paid \$120,000 in stock and a monthly salary of \$10,000.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 39 of 74

"Boom!" Parscale tweeted. "(AiAdvertising) finally automated the full stack of technologies used in the 2016 election that changed the world."

In June, AiAdvertising added two key national figures to its board: Texas investor Thomas Hicks Jr. -- former co-chair of the RNC and longtime hunting buddy of Donald Trump Jr. -- and former GOP congressman Jim Renacci. In December, Dunn also gave \$5 million to MAGA Inc., a pro-Trump super PAC and Campaign Nucleus client. And in January, SEC filings show Dunn provided AiAdvertising an additional \$2.5 million via his investment company. A company press release said the cash infusion would help it "generate more engaging, higher-impact campaigns."

Dunn declined to comment, although in an October episode of his podcast he elaborated on how his political work is driven by his faith.

"Jesus won't be on the ballot, OK? Now, eventually, he's going to take over the government and we can look forward to that," Dunn told listeners. "In the meanwhile, we're going to have to settle."

In business filings, AiAdvertising said it has developed AI-created "personas" to determine what messages will resonate emotionally with its customers' target audience. Parscale said last year in a promotional video that Campaign Nucleus was using AI models in a similar way.

"We actually understand what the American people want to hear," Parscale said.

AiAdvertising did not respond to messages seeking comment.

Parscale occasionally offers glimpses of the AI future he envisions. Casting himself as an outsider to the Republican establishment, he has said he sees AI as a way to undercut elite Washington consultants, whom he described as political parasites.

In January, Parscale told a crowd assembled at a grassroots Christian event at a church in Pasadena, California, that their movement needed "to have our own AI, from creative large language models and creative imagery, we need to reach our own audiences with our own distribution, our own email systems, our own texting systems, our own ability to place TV ads, and lastly we need to have our own influencers."

To make his point plain, he turned to a metaphor that relied on a decidedly 19th-century technology.

"We must not rely on any of their rails," he said, referring to mainstream media and companies. "This is building our own train tracks."

Panama's new president-elect, José Raúl Mulino, was a late entry in the race

By JUAN ZAMORANO Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — José Raúl Mulino said he was practically retired from politics just over six months ago.

Now, he'll be Panama's president for the next five years.

Standing before a pack of supporters Sunday night, Mulino said: "I never imagined this."

In a historic and tumultuous election, preliminary results put Mulino on top to lead the normally sleepy Central American nation through a moment of political tension, historic migration and a struggling economy.

The 64-year-old lawyer, whose last position in politics was as minister of security in then President Ricardo Martinelli's 2009-2014 administration, was initially tapped by the popular former leader to be his running mate after Martinelli's wife declined.

But then Martinelli was disqualified from running after he was sentenced to more than 10 years in prison for a money laundering conviction. Mulino took his place, and ended up winning Sunday's presidential election with 35% of the vote and a nine-point lead over his nearest opponent after dodging constitutional challenges to his own candidacy.

The president-elect got there with strong support from Martinelli, arguably the most important tool in Mulino's campaign as he rode the fiery ex-leader's popularity to victory.

While he lacks Martinelli's charisma, the economic boom seen under his ally pushed many voters to support Mulino at a time that Panama's economy has lagged.

The former president, who has been sheltering in the Nicaraguan Embassy since February after receiv-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 40 of 74

ing political asylum, said his trust for Mulino dates back 30 years.

"Mulino seems a little tough, but he is a good guy, serious, and is the only one prepared to take on this great challenge and knows how the economy works to lift the country," Martinelli said in a video broadcast to supporters at Mulino's campaign close.

A maritime law attorney who graduated from Tulane University in New Orleans, Mulino became known as a private business leader who took part in a civil movement against the dictatorship of Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, who was ousted by an American invasion on Dec. 20, 1989.

He acted as vice minister of foreign affairs in the 1989-1994 administration of President Guillermo Endara, who took office after the fall of Noriega and the end of the Panamanian military regime. Mulino later remained in charge of the country's international policy in the last part of that administration.

Mulino remained active in politics and more than a decade later backed Martinelli in the election that the supermarket magnate won in 2009. Mulino was appointed minister of the interior and justice, later taking the reins of the public security office.

Mulino says one of the achievements during that time was to "recover" a swath of Panama on the border with Colombia, known as the Darien Gap, which "was in the hands of the narco-guerrillas" of the neighboring country.

As president, he has promised to stop soaring levels of migration through the Darien jungles, where more than a half million people crossed last year, though experts question the viability of his plan due to the sheer quantities of vulnerable people traveling through the passage.

"I will make the effort to end this migratory crisis in our territory with respect for human rights and with sincere international participation," Mulino said at the closing of his campaign last week.

As security minister, he was also the target of harsh criticisms following police repression of a protest of Indigenous banana growers in the northern provinces of Bocas del Toro and Chiriqui in 2010. The crackdown left two dead and more than 100 injured by pellet shots, among them some with eye injuries.

"He was quite severe in controlling social protests," Panamanian political analyst Rodrigo Noriega told The Associated Press before the election. "There are a lot of unknowns about him."

Prosecutors move deeper into Trump's orbit as testimony in hush money trial enters a third week

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, JENNIFER PELTZ, ERIC TUCKER and JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Prosecutors in Donald Trump's hush money trial are moving deeper into his orbit following an inside-the-room account about the former president's reaction to a politically damaging recording that surfaced in the final weeks of the 2016 campaign.

Hope Hicks, a former White House official and for years a top aide, is by far the closest Trump associate to have taken the witness stand in the Manhattan trial.

Her testimony Friday was designed to give jurors an insider's view of a chaotic and pivotal stretch in the campaign, when a 2005 recording showing Trump talking about grabbing women without their permission was made public and when he and his allies sought to prevent the release of other potentially embarrassing stories. That effort, prosecutors say, included hush money payments to a porn actor and Playboy model who both have said they had sexual encounters with Trump before he entered politics.

"I had a good sense to believe this was going to be a massive story and that it was going to dominate the news cycle for the next several days," Hicks said of the "Access Hollywood" recording, first revealed in an October 2016 Washington Post story. "This was a damaging development."

The trial enters its third week of testimony Monday with prosecutors building toward their star witness, Michael Cohen, Trump's former lawyer and personal fixer who pleaded guilty to federal charges related to the hush money payments. Cohen is expected to undergo a bruising cross-examination from defense attorneys seeking to undermine his credibility with jurors.

Trump faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with payments made to stifle potentially embarrassing stories. Prosecutors say Trump's company, the Trump Organization, reimbursed

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 41 of 74

Cohen for payments to porn actor Stormy Daniels and gave Cohen bonuses and extra payments. Prosecutors allege that those transactions were falsely logged in company records as legal expenses.

Trump has pleaded not guilty and denied sexual encounters with any of the women, as well as any wrongdoing.

So far, jurors have heard from witnesses including a tabloid magazine publisher and Trump friend who bought the rights to several sordid tales about Trump to prevent them from coming out and a Los Angeles lawyer who negotiated hush money deals on behalf of both Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal.

Trump's lawyers have tried to chip away at the prosecution's theory of the case and the credibility of some witnesses. They've raised questions during cross-examinations about whether Trump was possibly a target of extortion, forced to arrange payouts to suppress harmful stories and spare his family embarrassment and pain. Prosecutors maintain the payments were about preserving his political viability as he sought the presidency.

The case is one of four Trump prosecutions and possibly the only one that will reach trial before the November election. Other felony indictments charge him with plotting to subvert the 2020 presidential election after he lost to Democrat Joe Biden and illegally hoarding classified documents after he left the White House.

As China and Iran hunt for dissidents in the US, the FBI is racing to counter the threat

By ERIC TUCKER, DIDI TANG and NATHAN ELLGREN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a participant in the historic Tiananmen Square protests entered a 2022 congressional race in New York City, a Chinese intelligence operative wasted little time enlisting a private investigator to hunt for any mistresses or tax problems that could upend the candidate's bid, prosecutors say.

"In the end," the operative ominously told his contact, "violence would be fine too."

As an Iranian journalist and activist living in exile in the United States aired criticism of Iran's human rights abuses, Tehran was listening too. Members of an Eastern European organized crime gang scouted her Brooklyn home and plotted to kill her in a murder-for-hire scheme directed from Iran, according to the Justice Department, which foiled the plan and brought criminal charges.

The episodes reflect the extreme measures taken by countries like China and Iran to intimidate, harass and sometimes plot attacks against political opponents and activists who live in the U.S. They show the frightening consequences that geopolitical tensions can have for ordinary citizens as governments historically intolerant of dissent inside their own borders are increasingly keeping a threatening watch on those who speak out thousands of miles away.

"We're not living in fear, we're not living in paranoia, but the reality is very clear — that the Islamic Republic wants us dead, and we have to look over our shoulder every day," the Iranian journalist, Masih Alinejad, said in an interview.

The issue has grabbed the attention of the Justice Department, which has built cases against dozens of suspects. Senior FBI officials say the tactics have grown more sophisticated, with countries more willing to cross "serious red lines" from harassment into violence as they seek to project power abroad.

"This is a huge priority for us," said Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, the Justice Department's top national security official.

The trend is all the more worrisome because of an ever-deteriorating relationship with Iran and tensions with China over everything from trade and theft of intellectual property to election interference.

A leading culprit, officials and advocates say, has been China. The Chinese Embassy in Washington disputed that the country engages in the practice and said in a statement that the government "strictly abides by international law."

"We resolutely oppose 'long-arm jurisdiction,'" the statement said.

Yet U.S. officials say China created a program to do exactly that, launching "Operation Fox Hunt" to track

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 42 of 74

down Chinese expatriates wanted by Beijing, with a goal of coercing them into returning to face charges.

A former city government official in China living in New Jersey found a note in Chinese characters taped to his front door that said: "If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison your wife and children will be all right. That's the end of this matter!" according to a 2020 Justice Department case charging a group of Chinese operatives and an American private investigator.

Though most defendants charged in transnational repression plots are based in their home country, making arrests and prosecutions rare, that particular case led to U.S. convictions of the private investigator and two Chinese citizens.

Bob Fu, a Chinese American Christian pastor whose organization, ChinaAid, advocates for religious freedom in China, said he has endured far-ranging harassment campaigns for years. Large crowds of demonstrators have amassed for days at a time outside his West Texas home in well-coordinated actions he believes can be linked to the Chinese government.

Phony hotel reservations have been made in his name, along with bogus bomb threats to police stating that he planned to detonate explosives. Flyers depicting him as the devil have been distributed to neighbors. He said he's learned to take precautions when he travels.

"I'm not really feeling safe," Fu told AP.

Wu Jianmin, a former student leader in China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, was targeted in 2020 by a group of protesters outside his home in Irvine, California.

"They shouted slogans outside my home and made verbal abuses," he said. "They paraded in the neighborhood, distributed all sorts of pictures and flyers, and put them in the neighbors' mailboxes."

Last year, the Justice Department charged about three dozen officers in China's national police force with using social media to target dissidents inside the U.S. and arrested two men who it says had helped establish a secret Chinese police outpost in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood.

The year before, federal prosecutors disclosed a series of wide-ranging plots to silence dissidents.

Besides the little-known and unsuccessful congressional candidate about whom China wanted to dig up dirt, other victims of harassment in the case included American figure skater Alysa Liu and her father, Arthur, a political refugee who prosecutors say was surveilled by a man who posed as an Olympics committee member and asked them for their passport information.

"We should be under no illusion that somehow these are rogue actors or people that are unaffiliated with the Chinese government," Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat and member of a special House committee on China, said of the Chinese operatives who have been charged.

Alinejad, the Iranian journalist, was targeted even before the Justice Department last year revealed the plot against her involving the organized crime proxies. Prosecutors in 2021 charged a group of Iranians said to be working at the behest of the country's intelligence services with planning to kidnap her.

She remains active as a journalist and activist and says she's determined to keep speaking out. But the details of the crime are chillingly etched in her mind, with the criminal cases laying bare the gravity of the threat.

The FBI disrupted the plot but also encouraged her to move, which she has done. But that also meant saying goodbye to her garden, which had brought her joy as she gave homegrown cucumbers and other vegetables to neighbors.

"They didn't kill me physically, but they killed my relationship with my garden, with my neighbors," she said.

Commercial jet maker Airbus is staying humble even as Boeing flounders. There's a reason for that

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — In the latest round of their decades-long battle for dominance in commercial aircraft, Europe's Airbus established a clear sales lead over Boeing even before the American company encountered more fallout from manufacturing problems and ongoing safety concerns.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 43 of 74

Airbus has outpaced Boeing for five straight years in plane orders and deliveries, and just reported a 28% quarterly increase in net profit. It was already winning market share by beating Boeing to develop a line of fuel-efficient, mid-sized aircraft that are cheaper for airlines to fly.

And now Boeing is facing a government-mandated production cap on its best-selling plane.

Yet the European company is unlikely to extend its advantage in the Airbus-Boeing duopoly much further despite having customers clamoring for more commercial aircraft, according to aviation analysts. The reason: Airbus already is making planes as fast as it can and has a backlog of more than 8,600 orders to fill.

Its ability to leverage Boeing's troubles therefore is "very limited," according to Jonathan Berger, managing director at Alton Aviation Consultancy. Between strained supply chains and the long lead times for a hugely complex and highly regulated product, a jetliner ordered from Airbus today may not arrive until the end of the decade.

Boeing also has a huge order backlog for more than 5,660 commercial planes. The mismatch between the post-COVID demand for flights and the aircraft supply pipeline is bad news for travelers as well as airlines.

"This has been an incredibly strong market recovery, and people need more jets than they're getting," said Richard Aboulafia, a managing director at AeroDynamic Advisory. "And until they get those jets, you don't have enough capacity. Guess what goes up? Ticket prices."

At the beginning of the year, Boeing seemed finally to be recovering from two crashes of Max jets in 2018 and 2019 that killed 346 people in Indonesia and Ethiopia. Then, on Jan. 5, a door plug blew out of an Alaska Airlines 737 Max 9, and the company has been reeling ever since.

Boeing has since slowed manufacturing at the order of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration. It lost \$355 million in the first quarter because of a decline in aircraft deliveries and compensation it paid to airlines for a temporary grounding of Max 9s. The Max was Boeing's answer to Airbus' A320 family of planes.

Airbus, which is registered in the Netherlands but has its main headquarters in France, is taking a conspicuously cautious and even modest stance toward its recent success and its rival's woes. CEO Guillaume Faury has said he's "not happy" about Boeing's troubles and they're not good for the industry as a whole.

In an April 25 call with journalists, Faury was reserved about how much the company could speed up production, even with 8.7 billion euros in cash on hand. Airbus was managing "a diversity of challenges" in getting the parts it needs, he said, and must "make sure that we ramp up at a pace that is compatible with the weakest suppliers."

Faury stressed that any moves to expand production would be done with an eye to "our core pillars of safety, quality, integrity, compliance and security."

Airbus and Boeing have manufacturing constraints in part because the two companies are not so much aircraft makers as "aircraft assemblers" that rely on thousands of parts made by other companies, from the fuselage and engines to electronics and interiors, Alton Aviation's Berger noted. Since "the supply chains are going as fast as they can," Airbus is not in a position to swoop in and take Boeing's customers.

The European company scored a symbolic win, however, when United Airlines lined up leases for 35 Airbus jets because of delays that Boeing faces in getting its new, larger Max 10 approved by U.S. regulators.

Given that, "Airbus is playing it well. They're being very, very humble. It's smart because they can't exploit it," Berger said.

Airbus last year topped Boeing for the fifth straight year in the orders race, with 2,094 net orders and 735 delivered planes. Boeing had 1,314 net orders and delivered 528 aircraft.

Airbus currently leads Boeing in sales of large single-aisle planes 80%-20%, according to figures from Alton Aviation Consultancy. The matchup between the smaller Airbus A320 and Boeing's 737 Max 7 and Max 8 is more even; Airbus is ahead on delivered planes but Boeing is ahead 54%-46% when the European company's order backlog is counted.

Airbus' success is not just due to Boeing's missteps. The company is benefiting from its decision to launch the A321neo, a single-aisle aircraft with 180 to 230 seats. "Neo" stands for new engine option, meaning highly fuel efficient engines that save airlines money on one of their biggest costs. Boeing rushed to match with the Max, a 737 equipped with new, more efficient engines, only to run into trouble with the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 44 of 74

crashes and door plug.

Airbus also benefited from a deal to take over the smaller A220 developed by Canada's Bombardier. Boeing is without a competing product in that niche. Analysts say Airbus has a further edge with the forthcoming A321XLR, a model that will allow airlines to use cheaper narrow-body jets on long-haul flights.

Yet the company already has pushed its deadline to produce 75 A320 and A321 jets per month from 2025 to 2026, and it moved the promised delivery date for the A321XLR from the second quarter of 2024 to the third.

"Boeing is winning some orders because Airbus can't supply the airplanes," Scott Hamilton, managing director of the Leeham Company consultancy, said. "So Airbus really can't gain much more in the way of market share because they are sold out."

The current pace of production at the two companies means older, less fuel-efficient planes are going to have to fly longer before being retired so airlines won't be able to reduce fuel costs. And older planes require more maintenance to keep flying, which costs money but doesn't affect safety if the maintenance is done right. For travelers, it means discounted tickets will be harder to come by.

Could another entrant shake up the duopoly, as Tesla did for autos? Not for years to come, analysts said.

Brazil's Embraer makes smaller regional jets, and so far has not moved to compete with Boeing and Airbus. China's COMAC has taken more than 1,000 orders for its narrow-body C919 plane but is "at least a decade or two" away from presenting a strong competitor, according to Berger.

That means a two-company race remains the game for now - even if one of them is under-performing.

"The airlines need at least two," Berger said. "They don't want to put themselves in a monopolistic situation. So everybody's cheering for Boeing to get their act together."

As China and Iran hunt for dissidents in the US, the FBI is racing to counter the threat

By ERIC TUCKER, DIDI TANG and NATHAN ELLGREN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a student leader of the historic Tiananmen Square protests entered a 2022 congressional race in New York, a Chinese intelligence operative wasted little time enlisting a private investigator to hunt for any mistresses or tax problems that could upend the candidate's bid, prosecutors say.

"In the end," the operative ominously told his contact, "violence would be fine too."

As an Iranian journalist and activist living in exile in the United States aired criticism of Iran's human rights abuses, Tehran was listening too. Members of an Eastern European organized crime gang scouted her Brooklyn home and plotted to kill her in a murder-for-hire scheme directed from Iran, according to the Justice Department, which foiled the plan and brought criminal charges.

The episodes reflect the extreme measures taken by countries like China and Iran to intimidate, harass and sometimes plot attacks against political opponents and activists who live in the U.S. They show the frightening consequences that geopolitical tensions can have for ordinary citizens as governments historically intolerant of dissent inside their own borders are increasingly keeping a threatening watch on those who speak out thousands of miles away.

"We're not living in fear, we're not living in paranoia, but the reality is very clear — that the Islamic Republic wants us dead, and we have to look over our shoulder every day," the Iranian journalist, Masih Alinejad, said in an interview.

The issue has grabbed the attention of the Justice Department, which in the past five years has charged dozens of suspects with acts of transnational repression. Senior FBI officials told The Associated Press that the tactics have grown more sophisticated, including the hiring of proxies like private investigators and organized crime leaders, and countries are more willing to cross "serious red lines" from harassment into violence as they seek to project power abroad and stifle dissent.

Foreign adversaries are increasingly making well-funded intimidation campaigns a priority for their intelligence services, and more countries — including some not seen as traditionally antagonistic to the U.S. — have targeted critics in America and elsewhere in the West, said the officials, who spoke on condition

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 45 of 74

of anonymity to discuss their investigations.

The Justice Department, for instance, announced a disrupted plot last November to kill a Sikh activist in New York that officials said was directed by an Indian government official. Rwanda kidnapped Paul Rusesabagina of "Hotel Rwanda" fame from Texas and returned him to the country before releasing him, and Saudi Arabia has harassed critics online and in person, the FBI has said.

"This is a huge priority for us," said Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen, the Justice Department's top national security official, describing an "alarming rise" in government-directed harassment.

He said the prosecutions are meant not only to hold harassers accountable but to send a message that the actions are "unacceptable from the perspective of United States sovereignty and defending American values — values around free expression and free association."

Other nations also have seen a spike in cases.

An April report from Reporters Without Borders called London a "hotspot" for Iranian attacks on Persian-language broadcasters, with British counterterrorism police investigating an attack one month earlier on an Iranian television presenter outside his home in London. In Britain and elsewhere in Europe, harassment and attacks targeting Russians, including a journalist who fell ill from a suspected poisoning in Germany, have long been blamed on Russia's intelligence operatives despite denials from Moscow.

Inside the U.S., the trend is all the more worrisome because of an ever-deteriorating relationship with Iran and tensions with China over everything from trade and theft of intellectual property to election interference. And emerging technologies like generative AI are likely to be exploited for future harassment, U.S. intelligence officials said in a recent threat assessment.

"Transnational repression is a manifestation of the broader conflict between authoritarian regimes and democratic countries," Olsen said. "It's been a consistent theme of the way the world is changing from a geopolitical standpoint over the last decade."

'I'M NOT REALLY FEELING SAFE'

Two of the leading culprits, officials and advocates say, are China and Iran.

Emails to the Iranian mission at the United Nations were not returned. A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington disputed that the country engages in the practice, saying in a statement that the government "strictly abides by international law, and fully respects the law enforcement sovereignty of other countries."

"We resolutely oppose 'long-arm jurisdiction,'" the statement said.

Yet U.S. officials say China created a program to do exactly that, launching "Operation Fox Hunt" to track down Chinese expatriates wanted by Beijing, with a goal of bullying them into returning to face charges.

A former city government official in China living in New Jersey found a note in Chinese characters taped to his front door that said: "If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison your wife and children will be all right. That's the end of this matter!" according to a 2020 Justice Department case charging a group of Chinese operatives and an American private investigator.

Though most defendants charged in transnational repression plots are based in their home country, making arrests and prosecutions infrequent, that particular case led to convictions last year of the private investigator and two Chinese citizens living in the U.S.

Bob Fu, a Chinese American Christian pastor whose organization, ChinaAid, advocates for religious freedom in China, said he has endured far-ranging harassment campaigns for years. Large crowds of demonstrators have amassed for days at a time outside his west Texas home, arriving in well-coordinated actions he believes can be linked to the Chinese government.

Phony hotel reservations have been made in his name, along with bogus bomb threats to police stating that he planned to detonate explosives. Flyers depicting him as the devil have been distributed to neighbors. He said he's learned to take precautions when he travels, including asking his staff not to post his itinerary in advance, and relocated from his home at what he said was law enforcement's urging.

"I'm not really feeling safe," Fu told AP. When it comes to returning to China, where he was raised and left more than 25 years ago as a religious refugee, he said: "I may be able to travel back, but it's a one-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 46 of 74

way ticket. I'm sure I'm on their wanted list."

Wu Jianmin, a former student leader in China's 1989 pro-democracy movement, was targeted in 2020 by a group of protesters outside his home in Irvine, California. The harassment lasted more than two months.

"They shouted slogans outside my home and made verbal abuses," he said. "They paraded in the neighborhood, distributed all sorts of pictures and flyers, and put them in the neighbors' mailboxes."

The perpetrators of harassment plots, Wu believes, include retired Communist Party members living in the U.S., their children, members of Chinese associations with close links to the Chinese government and even fugitives seeking bargains with Beijing.

"The end goal is the same," Wu said in an interview in Mandarin Chinese. "Their task, as assigned by the Communist Party, is to suppress overseas pro-democracy activists."

Last year, the Justice Department charged about three dozen officers in China's national police force with using social media to target dissidents inside the U.S., including by creating fake accounts that shared harassing videos and comments, and arrested two men who it says had helped establish a secret police outpost in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood on behalf of the Chinese government.

The year before, federal prosecutors in New York disclosed a series of wide-ranging plots to silence dissidents, like the scheme to dig up dirt about the little-known and ultimately unsuccessful congressional candidate.

Other targets have included American figure skater Alysa Liu and her father, Arthur, a political refugee who prosecutors say was surveilled by a man who posed as an Olympics committee member and asked them for their passport information.

A sculpture created by a dissident artist in California that depicted the coronavirus with the face of Chinese President Xi Jinping also was dismantled and burned to the ground.

"We should be under no illusion that somehow these are rogue actors or people that are unaffiliated with the Chinese government," Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat and member of a special House committee on China, said of the Chinese operatives who have been charged.

'ERASE HIS HEAD FROM HIS TORSO'

Sometimes violence has been planned in response to world events.

Prosecutors in 2022 charged an Iranian operative with offering \$300,000 to "eliminate" Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton as payback for an airstrike that killed Iran's most powerful general.

A fresh Tehran threat was disclosed this year when the Justice Department charged an Iranian whom officials identified as a drug trafficker and intelligence operative as well as two Canadians — one a "full-patch" member of the Hells Angels motorcycle gang — in a murder-for-hire plot against two Iranians who had fled the country and were living in Maryland.

"We gotta erase his head from his torso," one of the hired Canadians is accused of saying. Law enforcement disrupted the threat.

Alinejad, the Iranian journalist, was targeted even before the murder-for-hire plot was announced by the Justice Department last year. Prosecutors in 2021 charged a group of Iranians said to be working at the behest of the country's intelligence services with planning to kidnap her.

Alinejad remains a prominent journalist and vocal opposition activist and says she's determined to keep speaking out, including at a sentencing hearing last year for a woman who prosecutors say unwittingly funded the kidnapping plot.

But the details of the plots are chillingly etched in her mind. The criminal cases laid bare the gravity of the threat she faced and the grisly preparations involved, including researching how to spirit Alinejad out of New York on a military-style speedboat and taking her to Venezuela, and discussing lures for getting her from her home — such as asking for flowers from the garden outside.

One of the defendants in the murder-for-hire plot was arrested in 2022 after he was found driving around Alinejad's Brooklyn neighborhood with a loaded rifle and rounds of ammunition. Another suspect was extradited from the Czech Republic in February to face charges. Two others also have been arrested.

The FBI disrupted the plot but also encouraged Alinejad to move, which she has done. But that also

meant saying goodbye to her beloved garden, which had brought her joy as she gave homegrown cucumbers and other vegetables to neighbors.

"They didn't kill me physically, but they killed my relationship with my garden, with my neighbors," Alinejad said.

Want to show teachers appreciation? This top school gives them more freedom

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) — When teachers at A.D. Henderson School, one of the top-performing schools in Florida, are asked how they succeed, one answer is universal: They have autonomy.

Nationally, most teachers report feeling stressed and overwhelmed at work, according to a Pew Research Center survey of teachers last fall. Waning job satisfaction over the last two decades has accompanied a decline in teachers' sense of autonomy in the classroom, according to a recent study out of Brown University and the University of Albany.

But at this South Florida school, administrators allow their staff high levels of classroom creativity — and it works.

A public school of 636 kindergartners to eighth graders on the campus of Florida Atlantic University, Henderson scored in the top 1% to 3% in every subject and grade level on the state's latest standardized tests, with the exception of sixth grade math, where students scored in the top 7%. In almost every subject, 60% or more of Henderson students score significantly above the state average.

"There is a lot of our own individual input allowed in doing the activities that we want to do in the classroom," said Vanessa Stevenson, a middle school science teacher finishing her third year at the school. She plans to start an equine medicine class next fall even though the school has no stables — she believes she will find a way.

"It's a bit of trial and error because there's nothing being handed to you saying, 'Do it this way.' You just have to figure it out," she said.

Joel Herbst, superintendent of Henderson and its sibling FAU High School, calls the faculty his "secret sauce" and argues the school's success can be duplicated anywhere — if administrators cede some control.

When that happens, he said, teachers create hands-on programs that help students "not only show their understanding, but gain more depth."

"Give (teachers) the freedom to do what they do best, which is to impart knowledge, to teach beyond the textbook," he said.

Portland State University education professor Madhu Narayanan, who studies teacher autonomy, said independence has a high correlation to faculty morale and success. But autonomy must be paired with administrative support.

"It can't be, 'Here is the classroom, here is the textbook, we'll see you in six months.' Those teachers have tremendous autonomy, but feel lost," he said.

'THAT LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA'

Henderson emphasizes science, technology and math, using arts and humanities to help with those lessons. About 2,700 families enter a lottery each year for the 60 spots in Henderson's kindergarten class and openings in other grades. There is no screening — some children entering Henderson are prodigies, most are average learners and some have learning disabilities like dyslexia.

The only tweaking is to comply with a Florida law requiring the student population at university-run "laboratory" schools match state demographics for race, gender and income. Because families apply to attend, parental involvement is high — an advantage Herbst and his staff concede.

Selected kindergartners are tested months before arrival so any needs can be immediately addressed.

"Some of them come in reading and some know five letters — and it is not just reading, but all subjects," said Lauren Robinson, the elementary program's vice principal. "We are going to provide every opportunity to close those gaps before those gaps grow and grow, instead of waiting until a certain grade level and

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 48 of 74

saying, 'Now we'll try to close them.' It's Day One."

In Jenny O'Sullivan's art and technology classroom, kindergartners learn computer coding basics by steering a robot through a maze. Fourth and fifth graders make videos celebrating Earth Day. Students learn design by building cardboard arcade games like Skee-Ball for their classmates. Legos teach engineering.

While her new classroom has the latest technology, she insists such classes can be taught anywhere if the teacher is allowed creativity.

"My grandmother is from Louisiana and there's a (Cajun) saying: 'Lagniappe,' that little something extra," O'Sullivan said. "I get to be the lagniappe in (the student's) education. Could you do without it? Yes. But would you want to? No."

Working in small groups while dressed in white lab coats and goggles, the sixth graders in Amy Miramontes' Medical Detectives class solve a mystery daily. They have examined strands of rabbit muscle under a microscope, using safe chemicals to determine what neurological disease each animal had. They have tested fake neurotoxins to determine which ailments afflicted their imaginary patients.

Miramontes hopes the class not only piques the students' interest in medicine, but implants knowledge needed in two years when they take the state's eighth-grade science test.

"They're always learning by having their hands on something," Miramontes said. "If they mess up, it's OK — we start over. But then we learn a great life lesson that we have to be very diligent."

Marisha Valbrun, 12, took Medical Detectives because she might want to be a doctor. She's learned that while science is challenging, by seeking assistance she can overcome obstacles.

"I feel like if I just ask any person in this room for help, they can give you that right answer," she said.

USING ART TO TEACH SCIENCE

Even at a school where teachers exude enthusiasm, elementary art teacher Lindsey Wuest stands out — she can't stand still while describing how her lessons center on science.

On this afternoon in her Science as Art class, Wuest and a visiting artist are showing third graders how to make clay bobblehead dolls of endangered species — while also teaching the chemistry of why glazes change color in the kiln.

"Hopefully those students who love art can also develop a love of science," she said. "Project-based learning sticks with the kids for longer."

Third grader Maximus Mallow said that by working on his leopard bobblehead, he learned how the animal's camouflage works.

"We have fun while we create stuff about science," the 9-year-old said.

Henderson's success leads to grants — and nowhere shows that better than the middle school's drone program, which recently won a national competition in San Diego.

Henderson's drone teams have a room to practice flying the 3-inch-by-3-inch (75 millimeter), four-rotor devices through an obstacle course, plus flight simulators donated by the local power company.

The drone program is a chance to compete while using the physics and aeronautics learned in the classroom, teacher James Nance said. While expensive equipment is a benefit, Nance said, drone classes can be taught on a shoestring. At a previous school, he made a flying course out of PVC pipe and balloons.

Eighth grader Anik Sahai pulls out his cell phone in Stevenson's science classroom, an act at Henderson that usually means a trip to the office. But he is demonstrating an app he created that uses the camera to diagnose diabetic retinopathy, an eye disease that is a leading cause of blindness worldwide. It took first place in the state's middle school science fair and is being considered for commercial use.

The 14-year-old credits his success to his years at Henderson, beginning in the preschool program.

"The teachers here, they're amazing," he said. "They've been trained on how to get us to the next level."

3 bodies in Mexican well identified as Australian and American surfers killed for truck's tires

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Relatives have identified three bodies found in a well as those of two Australian surfers and one American who went missing last weekend, Mexican authorities said Sunday.

Baja California state prosecutors said the relatives had viewed the corpses recovered from a remote well about 50 feet (15 meters) deep and recognized them as their loved ones.

Thieves apparently killed the three, who were on a surfing trip to Mexico's Baja peninsula, to steal their truck because they wanted the tires. They then allegedly got rid of the bodies by dumping them in a well near the coast.

The well was located some 4 miles (6 kilometers) from where the foreigners were killed, and also contained a fourth cadaver that had been there much longer.

Three suspects are being held in connection with the case, which locals said was solved far more quickly than the disappearances of thousands of Mexicans.

The three men were on a camping and surfing trip along a stretch of coast south of the city of Ensenada, posting idyllic photos on social media of waves and isolated beaches, before they went missing last weekend.

Chief state prosecutor María Elena Andrade Ramírez described what likely would have been moments of terror that ended the trip for brothers Jake and Callum Robinson from Australia and American Jack Carter Rhoad.

She theorized the killers drove by and saw the foreigners' pickup truck and tents and wanted to steal their tires. But "when (the foreigners) came up and caught them, surely, they resisted."

She said that's when the killers would have shot the tourists.

The thieves then allegedly went to what she called "a site that is extremely hard to get to" and allegedly dumped the bodies into a well they apparently were familiar with. She said investigators were not ruling out the possibility the same suspects also dumped the first, earlier body in the well as part of previous crimes.

"They may have been looking for trucks in this area," Andrade Ramírez said.

The thieves allegedly covered the well with boards. "It was literally almost impossible to find it," Andrade Ramírez said, and it took two hours to winch the bodies out of the well.

Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers expressed sympathy for the Robinson family. "I think the whole country's heart goes out to all of their loved ones. It has been an absolutely horrendous, absolutely horrific ordeal and our thoughts are with all of them today," he said at a news conference Monday in the capital, Canberra.

The site where the bodies were discovered near the township of Santo Tomás was near the remote seaside area where the missing men's tents and truck were found Thursday along the coast. From their last photo posts, the trip looked perfect. But even experienced local expatriates are questioning whether it is safe to camp along the largely deserted coast anymore.

The moderator of the local Talk Baja internet forum, who has lived in the area for almost two decades, wrote in an editorial Saturday that "the reality is, the dangers of traveling to and camping in remote areas are outweighing the benefits anymore."

But in a way, adventure was key to the victims' lifestyle.

Callum Robinson's Instagram account contained the following slogan: "If you're not living on the edge, you're taking up too much room."

At the news conference, Andrade Ramírez was questioned by one reporter who expressed approval that such a massive and rapid search was mounted for the foreigners, but asked why, when local people disappear in the area, little is often done for weeks, months, or years.

"Do you have to be a foreigner in Baja California in order for there to be an investigation if something happens to you?" asked the reporter, who did not identify herself by name. "Every investigation is different," Andrade Ramírez replied.

As if to underscore that point, dozens of mourners, surfers and demonstrators gathered in a main plaza in Ensenada, the nearest city, to voice their anger and sadness at the deaths.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 50 of 74

"Ensenada is a mass grave," read one placard carried by protesters. "Australia, we are with you," one man scrawled on one of the half-dozen surf boards at the demonstration.

A woman held up a sign that read "They only wanted to surf — we demand safe beaches."

Gabriela Acosta, a surfer, attended the protest "to show love, solidarity and respect for the three lives that were lost." Acosta said that surfers in Baja are aware of the dangers.

"We are women and we would sometimes like to surf alone," Acosta said. "But we never do that, because of the situation. We always have to go accompanied."

"I think that what happened to them is just an example of the lack of safety in this state," she said.

Surfers later performed a "paddle-out" ceremony where they formed a circle on their boards in the ocean.

Baja California prosecutors had said they were questioning three people in the killings, two of them because they were caught with methamphetamines. Prosecutors said the two were being held pending drug charges but continue to be suspects in the killings.

A third man was arrested on charges of a crime equivalent to kidnapping, but that was before the bodies were found. It was unclear if he might face more charges.

The third suspect was believed to have directly participated in the killings. In keeping with Mexican law, prosecutors identified him by his first name, Jesús Gerardo, alias "el Kekas," a slang word that means "quesadillas," or cheese tortillas. Andrade Ramírez said he had a criminal record, and that more people may have been involved.

Last week, the mother of the missing Australians, Debra Robinson, posted on a local community Facebook page, appealing for help in finding her sons. Robinson said Callum and Jake had not been heard from since April 27. They had booked accommodation in the city of Rosarito, not far from Ensenada.

Robinson said Callum was diabetic. She also mentioned that the American who was with them was named Jack Carter Rhoad, but the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City did not immediately confirm that. The U.S. State Department said it was aware of reports of a U.S. citizen missing in Baja, but gave no further details.

In 2015, two Australian surfers, Adam Coleman and Dean Lucas, were killed in western Sinaloa state, across the Gulf of California — also known as the Sea of Cortez — from the Baja peninsula. Authorities said they were victims of highway bandits. Three suspects were arrested in that case.

Last-minute candidate José Raúl Mulino wins Panama's presidential election

By JUAN ZAMORANO and MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP) — José Raúl Mulino, the stand-in for former President Ricardo Martinelli in Panama's presidential election, was set to become the new leader of the Central American nation as authorities unofficially called the race Sunday night after his three nearest rivals conceded.

The 64-year-old former security minister had nearly 35% of the votes with more than 92% of the votes counted, giving him a nine-point lead over his nearest competitor.

Mulino replaced Martinelli as candidate after the firebrand former leader was banned from running after being sentenced to 10 years in prison for money laundering.

"Mission accomplished," Mulino told a crowd of supporters, adding an expletive for emphasis. "This is perhaps the most important date of my life, and the greatest responsibility of a Panamanian falls on my shoulders and my family to lead the destiny of the nation."

In his speech, he nodded to Martinelli, saying: "When you invited me to be vice president, I never imagined this."

Mulino, a less charismatic politician, coasted on Martinelli's popularity and the booming economy seen under the former leader as Martinelli campaigned while staying in the Nicaraguan Embassy, where he had sought asylum.

Now, following one of the most tumultuous elections in Panama's recent history, Mulino is about to become the new leader of a country with pressing challenges and simmering discontent among many.

The president will grapple with a slowed economy, historic levels of migration, a drought that is handi-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 51 of 74

capping transit in the Panama Canal and the economic aftermath of mass anti-mining protests last year.

"It's a very bizarre situation, unprecedented. I haven't seen anything quite like this, not only in Panama but any other Latin American country that I could think of," said Michael Shifter, a senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue. "Panama is in for a tumultuous period."

Preliminary results showed that more than 77% of eligible voters cast ballots, a historic turnout in a country where voting is not obligatory, further underscoring the importance of the election in the minds of Panamanians.

Panama doesn't have a runoff system, so the candidate with the biggest share of votes wins.

Mulino, running under the Achieving Goals and Alliance parties, faced off against anti-corruption candidate Ricardo Lombana, who trailed in second, former President Martín Torrijos and former candidate Rómulo Roux.

All three conceded Sunday evening, and outgoing President Laurentino Cortizo's office said he called Mulino to offer congratulations and pledge to work with him for an orderly transition.

Mulino's ties with Martinelli are what seemed to pull him across the finish line. Mulino ran on the promise to usher in another wave of economic prosperity, and stop migration through the Darien Gap, the perilous jungle region overlapping Colombia and Panama that was traversed by half a million migrants last year.

The lawyer also vowed to help his ally in his legal woes. After voting Sunday, Mulino strolled into the Nicaraguan Embassy trailed by photographers and wrapped Martinelli in a big hug, saying, "Brother, we're going to win!"

Before even half of the votes had been counted, supporters in Mulino's campaign headquarters erupted in celebration, singing and waving flags.

Martinelli posted a blurry photo of his own face on the X social media platform, writing: "This is the face of a happy and content man." Now that Mulino is on his way in, what remains unclear is if the president-elect will become "Martinelli's puppet" or if he'll chart his own path, Shifter said.

Despite the fatigue of endemic corruption in Panama, many voters like Juan José Tinoco were willing to overlook the other corruption scandals plaguing their former leader in favor of the humming economy seen during his presidency. The 63-year-old bus driver voted for Mulino from his working-class area of small, concrete houses surrounded by extravagant skyscrapers.

"We have problems with health services, education, we have garbage in the streets ... and corruption that never goes away," Tinoco said. "We have money here. This is a country that has lots of wealth, but we need a leader who dedicates himself to the needs of Panama."

The presidential race had been in uncertain waters until Friday morning, when Panama's Supreme Court ruled that Mulino was permitted to run. It said he was eligible despite allegations that his candidacy wasn't legitimate because he wasn't elected in a primary.

Mulino faces an uphill battle moving forward, on the economy especially. Last year, the Central American nation was roiled for weeks by mass anti-government protests, which came to encapsulate deeper discontent among citizens.

The protests targeted a government contract with a copper mine, which critics said endangered the environment and water at a time when drought has gotten so bad that it has effectively handicapped trade transit through the Panama Canal.

While many celebrated in November when the country's Supreme Court declared the contract unconstitutional, the mine closure and slashed canal transit will put Panama's new leader in a tight spot.

Meanwhile, the country's debt is skyrocketing and much of the economy has slowed, said Shifter, of Inter-American Dialogue, making it even harder for Mulino to regularize canal transit and staunch soaring levels of migration through the Darien Gap.

"Panama is at a very different moment than it's been over the last 30 years," Shifter said. Mulino "is going to face formidable obstacles. I mean, it's going to be a daunting task for him."

As storms move across Texas, 1 child dies after being swept away in floodwaters

By JAMIE STENGLE and LEKAN OYEKANMI Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Storms in Texas brought additional rain Sunday to the already saturated Houston area where hundreds of people have been rescued from flooded homes and roads, while to the north in the Fort Worth area, a child died after being swept away when the car he was traveling in got stuck in floodwaters.

Over the last week, areas near Lake Livingston, located northeast of Houston, have gotten upwards of 23 inches (58 centimeters) of rain, National Weather Service meteorologist Jimmy Fowler said on Sunday afternoon. Meanwhile, he said, areas in northeastern Harris County, the nation's third-largest county that includes Houston, had a range of 6 inches (15 centimeters) to almost 17 inches (43 centimeters) of rain in that same period.

Scattered showers in the Houston area on Sunday brought light to moderate rainfall, he said.

"With the rainfall that fell overnight plus this morning it just kind of prolonged the river flooding that we were experiencing," Fowler said.

He said the rain would taper off in the evening, with no heavy rain events expected in the next week or so.

CHILD DIES IN FLOODWATERS

In Johnson County, located south of Fort Worth, a 5-year-old boy died when he was swept away after the vehicle he was riding in became stuck in swift-moving water near the community of Lillian just before 2 a.m. Sunday, an official said.

The child and two adults were trying to get to dry ground when they were swept away, Jamie Moore, the Johnson County Emergency Management director, wrote in a Facebook post.

The two adults were rescued around 5 a.m. and taken to a hospital, while the child was found dead around 7:20 a.m. in the water, Moore said.

Storms brought as 9 inches (23 centimeters) of rain in a span of six to eight hours in some areas from central Texas to the Dallas-Fort Worth area overnight, said National Weather Service meteorologist Matt Stalley. He said the rains washed out some roads west of Waco.

HOUSTON-AREA RIVER LEVELS

Over the last few days, storms have forced numerous high-water rescues in the Houston area, including some from the rooftops of flooded homes.

Jeff Lindner, a meteorologist with the Harris County Flood Control District, said Sunday afternoon that "things are improving slowly."

"We have water going down on our river systems," said Lindner. The San Jacinto River crested on Saturday, with its east and west forks and main stem below Lake Houston falling from 1 foot (0.30 meters) to 3 feet (0.91 meters) overnight, he said.

Lindner said that so far, Sunday's additional rain did not seem to be causing any new flooding. He urged people to still be cautious, noting that many areas are still flooded.

"We really need everybody to give it just another day before we feel comfortable that conditions are safe," Lindner said.

Greg Moss, 68, was staying put in his recreational vehicle on Sunday after leaving his home in the community of Channelview in eastern Harris County near the San Jacinto River. On Saturday, he packed up many of his belongings and left before the road to his home flooded.

"I would be stuck for four days," Moss said. "So now at least I can go get something to eat."

Moss moved his belongings and vehicle to a neighbor's home, where planned to stay until the waters recede. He said Sunday that the floodwaters had already gone down by a couple of feet and that he wasn't worried his home would flood because it's located on higher ground.

"It'll be OK to go in there in the morning," he said.

HOUSTON PRONE TO FLOODING

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 53 of 74

Houston is one of the most flood-prone metro areas in the country. The city of more than 2 million people has long experience dealing with devastating weather.

Hurricane Harvey in 2017 dumped historic rainfall that flooded thousands of homes and resulted in more than 60,000 rescues by government personnel across Harris County.

The greater Houston area covers about 10,000 square miles (25,900 square kilometers), a footprint slightly bigger than New Jersey. It is crisscrossed by about 1,700 miles (2,700 kilometers) of channels, creeks and bayous draining into the Gulf of Mexico, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of downtown.

The system of bayous and reservoirs was built to drain heavy rains, but the engineering initially designed nearly 100 years ago has struggled to keep up with the city's growth and bigger storms.

Anti-war protesters leave USC after police arrive, while Northeastern ceremony proceeds calmly

By NICK PERRY and PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

Students protesting the war in Gaza abandoned their camp at the University of Southern California early Sunday after being surrounded by police and threatened with arrest, while Northeastern University's commencement ended peacefully at Boston's Fenway Park.

Developments in both places were being watched closely following scores of arrests last month — more than 90 people at USC in Los Angeles and about 100 at Northeastern in Boston.

Dozens of Los Angeles Police Department officers arrived about 4 a.m. at USC to assist campus safety officers. The university had warned of arrests on social media and in person. Video showed some protesters packing up and leaving, while officers formed lines to push others away from the camp as it emptied out. The university said there were no reports of any arrests.

USC President Carol Folt said it was time to draw a line because "the occupation was spiraling in a dangerous direction" with areas of campus blocked and people being harassed.

"The operation was peaceful," Folt wrote in an update. "Campus is opening, students are returning to prepare for finals, and commencement set-up is in full swing."

USC earlier canceled its main graduation ceremony while allowing other commencement activities to continue.

Across town at the University of California, Los Angeles, officials announced the creation of a new chief safety officer position to oversee campus security operations. The announcement Sunday came after UCLA was criticized for its handling of demonstrations that culminated in a mob attack on a pro-Palestinian student encampment last week.

At the Northeastern commencement Sunday, some students waved small Palestinian and Israeli flags, but were outnumbered by those waving the flags of India and the U.S., among others. Undergraduate student speaker Rebecca Bamidele drew brief cheers when she called for peace in Gaza.

The Associated Press has tallied about 2,500 people arrested at about 50 campuses since April 18, based on its reporting and statements from universities and law enforcement.

Arrests continued apace over the weekend. At the University of Virginia, there were 25 arrests Saturday for trespassing after police clashed with protesters who refused to remove tents. At the Art Institute of Chicago campus, police cleared a pro-Palestinian encampment hours after it was set up Saturday and arrested 68 people, saying they would be charged with criminal trespass.

ARRESTS IN VIRGINIA

In Charlottesville, Virginia, student demonstrators began their protest on a lawn outside the school chapel Tuesday. Video on Saturday showed police in riot gear and holding shields lined up on campus, while protesters chanted "Free Palestine."

As police moved in, students were pushed to the ground, pulled by their arms and sprayed with a chemical irritant, Laura Goldblatt, an assistant professor who has been helping the demonstrators, told The Washington Post. The university said protesters were told that tents were banned under school policy and were asked to remove them.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 54 of 74

Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares told Fox News on Sunday the police response was justified because students had been warned repeatedly to leave, were violating the school's conduct code, and that outsiders who were not students provided protesters with supplies like wooden barriers.

"We've seen folks that are not students show up in riot gear with bull horns to direct the protesters on how to flank our officers," Miyares said.

He said some had put bear spray into water bottles and thrown them at officers.

It was the latest clash in weeks of protests and tension at U.S. colleges and universities.

Tent encampments of protesters urging universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies they say support the war in Gaza have spread in a student movement unlike any other this century. Some schools reached agreements with protesters to end the demonstrations and reduce the possibility of disrupting final exams and commencements.

DEMONSTRATIONS AMID COMMENCEMENT

The University of Michigan was among the schools that had braced for protests during commencement this weekend, as were Indiana University, Ohio State University and Northeastern. More ceremonies are planned in the coming weeks.

In Ann Arbor, there was a protest at the beginning of the event at Michigan Stadium. About 75 people, many wearing traditional Arabic kaffiyehs along with their graduation caps, marched up the main aisle toward the stage.

They chanted "Regents, regents, you can't hide! You are funding genocide!" while holding signs, including one that read: "No universities left in Gaza."

Overhead, planes pulled banners with competing messages. "Divest from Israel now! Free Palestine!" and "We stand with Israel. Jewish lives matter."

Officials said no one was arrested, and the protest didn't seriously interrupt the nearly two-hour event, attended by tens of thousands of people, some of them waving Israeli flags.

OTHER PROTESTS CONTINUE

At Indiana University, protesters urged supporters to wear their kaffiyehs and walk out during remarks by school President Pamela Whitten on Saturday evening. The Bloomington campus designated a protest zone outside Memorial Stadium, where the ceremony was held.

At Princeton University in New Jersey, 18 students began a hunger strike to try to push the university to divest from companies tied to Israel. Students at other colleges, including Brown and Yale, launched similar hunger strikes this year before the more recent wave of demonstrations.

The protests stem from the conflict that started Oct. 7 when Hamas militants attacked southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking roughly 250 hostages. Vowing to destroy Hamas, Israel launched an offensive in Gaza that has killed more than 34,500 Palestinians, about two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. Israeli strikes have devastated the enclave and displaced most of its inhabitants.

Sierra Nevada records snowiest day of the season from brief but potent California storm

TRUCKEE, Calif. (AP) — A weekend spring storm that drenched the San Francisco Bay area and closed Northern California mountain highways also set a single-day snowfall record for the season on Sunday in the Sierra Nevada.

The wet weather system had mostly moved out of the state by Sunday morning, but officials warned that roads would remain slick after around two feet (60 centimeters) of snow fell in some areas of the Sierra.

"Did anyone have the snowiest day of the 2023/2024 season being in May on their winter bingo card?" the University of California, Berkeley Central Sierra Snow Lab asked on the social platform X.

The 26.4 inches (67 centimeters) of snowfall on Sunday beat the second snowiest day of the season — March 3rd — by 2.6 inches (6.6 centimeters), according to the lab.

Treacherous driving conditions on Saturday forced the closure of several highways near Lake Tahoe,

including Interstate 80 over the Donner Summit.

Flood advisories were issued for parts of the Bay Area, where up to an inch (2.5 centimeters) of rain fell while temperatures dipped into the low 40s (around 5 degrees Celsius), the National Weather Service said. Wind gusts reaching 40 mph (64 kph) were reported Saturday near San Francisco.

The storm brought light rain and gusty winds to Southern California.

Drier and warmer conditions were expected throughout the week.

Netanyahu uses Holocaust ceremony to brush off international pressure against Gaza offensive

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday rejected international pressure to halt the war in Gaza in a fiery speech marking the country's annual Holocaust memorial day, declaring: "If Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone."

The message, delivered in a setting that typically avoids politics, was aimed at the growing chorus of world leaders who have criticized the heavy toll caused by Israel's military offensive against Hamas militants and have urged the sides to agree to a cease-fire.

Netanyahu has said he is open to a deal that would pause nearly seven months of fighting and bring home hostages held by Hamas. But he also says he remains committed to an invasion of the southern Gaza city of Rafah, despite widespread international opposition because of the more than 1 million civilians huddled there.

"I say to the leaders of the world: No amount of pressure, no decision by any international forum will stop Israel from defending itself," he said, speaking in English. "Never again is now."

Yom Hashoah, the day Israel observes as a memorial for the 6 million Jews killed by Nazi Germany and its allies in the Holocaust, is one of the most solemn dates on the country's calendar. Speeches at the ceremony generally avoid politics, though Netanyahu in recent years has used the occasion to lash out at Israel's archenemy Iran.

The ceremony ushered in Israel's first Holocaust remembrance day since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that sparked the war, imbuing the already somber day with additional meaning.

Hamas militants killed some 1,200 people in the attack, making it the deadliest violence against Jews since the Holocaust.

Israel responded with an air and ground offensive in Gaza, where the death toll has soared to more than 34,500 people, according to local health officials, and about 80% of Gaza's 2.3 million people are displaced. The death and destruction has prompted South Africa to file a genocide case against Israel in the U.N.'s world court. Israel strongly rejects the charges.

On Sunday, Netanyahu attacked those accusing Israel of carrying out a genocide against the Palestinians, claiming that Israel was doing everything possible to ensure the entry of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

The 24-hour memorial period began after sundown on Sunday with a ceremony at Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust memorial, in Jerusalem.

There are approximately 245,000 living Holocaust survivors around the world, according to the Claims Conference, an organization that negotiates for material compensation for Holocaust survivors. Approximately half of the survivors live in Israel.

On Sunday, Tel Aviv University and the Anti-Defamation League released an annual Antisemitism Worldwide Report for 2023, which found a sharp increase in antisemitic attacks globally.

It said the number of antisemitic incidents in the United States doubled, from 3,697 in 2022 to 7,523 in 2023.

While most of these incidents occurred after the war erupted in October, the number of antisemitic incidents, which include vandalism, harassment, assault, and bomb threats, from January to September was already significantly higher than the previous year.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 56 of 74

The report found an average of three bomb threats per day at synagogues and Jewish institutions in the U.S., more than 10 times the number in 2022.

Other countries tracked similar rises in antisemitic incidents. In France, the number nearly quadrupled, from 436 in 2022 to 1,676 in 2023, while it more than doubled in the United Kingdom and Canada.

"In the aftermath of the October 7 war crimes committed by Hamas, the world has seen the worst wave of antisemitic incidents since the end of the Second World War," the report stated.

Netanyahu also compared the recent wave of protests on American campuses to German universities in the 1930s, in the runup to the Holocaust. He condemned the "explosion of a volcano of antisemitism spitting out boiling lava of lies against us around the world."

Nearly 2,500 students have been arrested in a wave of protests at U.S. college campuses, while there have been smaller protests in other countries, including France. Protesters reject antisemitism accusations and say they are criticizing Israel. Campuses and the federal government are struggling to define exactly where political speech crosses into antisemitism.

Floods in southern Brazil kill at least 75 people over 7 days, with 103 people missing

By ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Massive floods in Brazil's southern Rio Grande do Sul state have killed at least 75 people over the last seven days, and another 103 were reported missing, local authorities said Sunday.

At least 155 people were injured, while damage from the rains forced more than 88,000 people from their homes. Approximately 16,000 took refuge in schools, gymnasiums and other temporary shelters.

The floods left a wake of devastation, including landslides, washed-out roads and collapsed bridges across the state. Operators reported electricity and communications cuts. More than 800,000 people are without a water supply, according to the civil defense agency, which cited figures from water company Corsan.

A rescue team pulled an elderly man in serious medical condition into a helicopter from a remote area in the Bento Gonçalves municipality, according to footage from military firefighters. Torrents of brown water poured over a nearby dam.

On Saturday evening, residents in the town of Canoas stood up to their shoulders in muddy water and formed a human chain to pull boats carrying people to safety, according to video footage shared by local UOL news network.

The Guaíba river reached a record level of 5.33 meters (17.5 feet) on Sunday morning at 8 a.m. local time, surpassing levels seen during a historic 1941 deluge, when the river reached 4.76 meters.

"I repeat and insist: the devastation to which we are being subjected is unprecedented," state Gov. Eduardo Leite said Sunday morning. He had previously said the state will need a "kind of 'Marshall Plan' to be rebuilt."

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva visited Rio Grande do Sul for a second time on Sunday, accompanied by Defense Minister José Múcio, Finance Minister Fernando Haddad and Environment Minister Marina Silva, among others. The leftist leader and his team surveyed the flooded streets of Porto Alegre from a helicopter.

"We need to stop running behind disasters. We need to see in advance what calamities might happen and we need to work," Lula told journalists afterwards.

During Sunday mass at the Vatican, Pope Francis said he was praying for the state's population. "May the Lord welcome the dead and comfort their families and those who had to abandon their homes," he said.

The downpour started Monday and was expected to last through Sunday. In some areas, such as valleys, mountain slopes and cities, more than 300 millimeters (11.8 inches) of rain fell in less than a week, according to Brazil's National Institute of Meteorology, known by the Portuguese acronym INMET, on Thursday.

The heavy rains were the fourth such environmental disaster in the state in a year, following floods in July, September and November 2023 that killed 75 people.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 57 of 74

Weather across South America is affected by the climate phenomenon El Niño, a periodic, naturally occurring event that warms surface waters in the Equatorial Pacific region. In Brazil, El Niño has historically caused droughts in the north and intense rainfall in the south.

This year, the impacts of El Niño have been particularly dramatic, with a historic drought in the Amazon. Scientists say extreme weather is happening more frequently due to human-caused climate change.

"These tragedies will continue to happen, increasingly worse and more frequent," said Suely Araújo, a public policy coordinator at the Climate Observatory, a network of dozens of environmental and social groups.

Brazil needs to adjust to the effects of climate change, she said in a Friday statement, referring to a process known as adaptation.

A look at commencement ceremonies as US campuses are roiled by protests over the Israel-Hamas war

The Associated Press undefined

Commencement ceremonies are being held at colleges and universities across the U.S. As many campuses have been roiled by protests over the Israel-Hamas war, some school administrations have taken steps to contain disruptions during their commencement activities.

The University of Michigan's commencement was held early Saturday with a few interruptions. Ahead of the ceremony, the school had said staff and security officers were ready to respond and that interfering with commencement would not be considered free speech.

Here is a look at some of the commencement ceremonies:

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

In Boston, commencement ceremonies for Northeastern University were held peacefully in the rain Sunday at Fenway Park.

Some students waved small Palestinian and Israeli flags, but those were dotted among flags from India, the U.S. and other nations.

Undergraduate student speaker Rebecca Bamidele drew brief cheers when she called for peace in Gaza.

Police last month arrested about 100 protesters at Northeastern when they broke up an encampment on the Boston campus.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Police officers stood nearby as some graduates holding Palestinian flags and shouting pro-Palestinian messages protested during commencement at the University of Michigan on Saturday, where tens of thousands of people gathered inside Michigan Stadium. One banner said, "No universities left in Gaza."

The protests were away from the stage and didn't stop the nearly two-hour event. But U.S. Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro paused a few times during remarks and at one point said, "Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, if you can please draw your attention back to the podium."

Del Toro administered an oath to graduates in the armed forces. He said they would "protect the freedoms that we so cherish," including the "right to protest peacefully."

Protesters have been demanding that Michigan cut financial ties with any companies connected to Israel. The university has allowed protesters to set up an encampment in the middle of campus.

Police assisted in breaking up a large gathering Friday night outside a campus art museum where a dinner was held for recipients of honorary degrees. At least one person was arrested.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

A person fell from the stands to their death Sunday during the graduation ceremony for Ohio State University, according to university officials.

The fall happened around midday near where the last graduates were filing into Ohio Stadium, the Columbus Dispatch reported.

Police cordoned off the area. Whether the fall was an accident or intentional, or involved a student or someone else, wasn't immediately clear.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 58 of 74

University spokesman Benjamin Johnson said in an emailed statement the university was aware of the death but had no additional information to share about what happened.

Some students and others at the ceremony were visibly upset. The commencement continued and speakers did not mention what happened.

Denial and uncertainty are looming over a Biden-Trump rematch 6 months out from Election Day

By STEVE PEOPLES and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WILMINGTON, N.C. (AP) — This North Carolina voter is nervous.

Will Rikard, a 49-year-old father of two, was among several hundred Democrats who stood and cheered for Joe Biden as the first-term president delivered a fiery speech recently about the billions of dollars he has delivered to protect the state's drinking water.

But afterward, the Wilmington resident acknowledged he is worried about Biden's political standing in the looming rematch with former Republican President Donald Trump.

"There's not enough energy," Rikard said of Biden's coalition. "I think people are gonna need to wake up and get going."

Exactly six months before Election Day, Biden and Trump are locked in the first contest in 112 years with a current and former president competing for the White House. It's a race that is at once deeply entrenched and highly in flux as many voters are only just beginning to embrace the reality of the 2024 campaign.

Wars, trials, the independent candidacy of Robert Kennedy Jr. and deep divisions across America have injected extraordinary uncertainty into a race for the White House in which either man would be the oldest president ever sworn in on Inauguration Day. At the same time, policy fights over abortion, immigration and the economy are raging on Capitol Hill and in statehouses.

VOTERS IN DENIAL

Hovering over it all is the disbelief of many voters, despite all evidence to the contrary, that Biden and Trump — their respective parties' presumptive nominees — will ultimately appear on the general election ballot this fall.

"I think we have an electorate that's going through the stages of grief about this election," said Sarah Longwell, who conducts regular focus groups with voters across the political spectrum as co-founder of Republican Voters Against Trump. "They've done denial — 'Not these two, can't possibly be these two.' And I think they're in depression now. I'm waiting for people to hit acceptance."

Trump is in the midst of the first of potentially four criminal trials and facing felony charges. The Constitution does not prevent him from assuming the presidency if convicted — or even if he is in prison.

Biden, who will turn 82 years old just weeks after Election Day, Nov. 5, is already the oldest president in U.S. history; Trump is 77.

Privately, Democratic operatives close to the campaign worry constantly about Biden's health and voters' dim perceptions of it. In recent weeks, aides have begun walking at Biden's side as he strolls to and from Marine One, the presidential helicopter, on the White House South Lawn in an apparent effort to help mask the president's stiff gait.

Still, neither party is making serious contingency plans. Whether voters want to believe it or not, the general election matchup is all but set.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, said many voters are recovering from what he called "a knock-down, drag-out fight" that was the 2020 presidential election.

"Many of them have not wrapped their heads around the fact that it is, in fact, going to be a rematch," Cooper said in an interview. "When they do, I don't think there's any question that Joe Biden is going to win the day."

GETTING TO 270 ELECTORIAL VOTES — THE BATTLEGROUND STATES

Even before voters begin paying close attention, the political map in the fight for the 270 electoral votes

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 59 of 74

needed to win the presidency is already taking shape.

Biden's campaign is increasingly optimistic about North Carolina, a state he lost by just 1 percentage point in 2020. Overall, the Democratic president's reelection campaign has several hundred staff in more than 133 offices in the seven most critical states: Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin and North Carolina.

Trump's team has barely begun to roll out swing-state infrastructure, although he campaigned in Wisconsin and Michigan over the past week, sending a clear signal that he wants to block Biden's path to reelection via the Democrats' Midwestern "blue wall."

Trump campaign senior adviser Chris LaCivita said Trump is making plans to invest new resources in at least two other Democratic-leaning states.

At a private donor retreat in Florida on Saturday, LaCivita discussed the campaign's plans to expand its electoral map into Virginia and Minnesota, based on the Trump team's growing optimism that both states are within reach.

"We have a real opportunity to expand the map here," LaCivita told The Associated Press. "The Biden campaign has spent tens of millions of dollars on TV ads and in their 'vaunted ground game'. And they have nothing to show for it."

Biden's campaign welcomed Trump's team to spend money in Democratic states. "The Biden campaign is going to relentlessly focus on the pathway to 270 electoral votes, and that's what our efforts represent," campaign communications director Michael Tyler said.

Biden has been spending far more aggressively on election infrastructure and advertising heading into the six-month stretch toward Election Day.

In the eight weeks since Trump essentially clinched the Republican nomination, his campaign has spent virtually nothing on television advertising, according to the media tracking firm AdImpact. Outside groups aligned with Trump have spent just over \$9 million.

Over the same period, AdImpact found, Biden and his allies have spent more than \$29 million spread across Michigan, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Trump's team has been unusually conservative, in part, to avoid the perceived mistakes of 2020, when his campaign essentially ran out of money and was forced to cut back on advertising in the election's critical final days, but also because it has struggled to reignite its appeal with small donors and because of the diversion of some dollars to the former president's legal defense.

Trump's team insists it will soon ramp up its advertising and on-the-ground infrastructure, although LaCivita refused to offer any specifics.

VOTERS UNDERWHELMED WITH THEIR OPTIONS

It is clear that Biden and Trump have serious work to do to improve their standing with voters.

While optimistic in public, Biden allies privately acknowledge that his approval ratings may be lower than Democrat Jimmy Carter's numbers at this point in his presidency. Trump's ratings are not much better.

Public polling consistently shows that voters don't like their 2024 options.

Only about 2 in 10 Americans say they would be excited by Biden (21%) or Trump (25%) being elected president, according to an AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in March. Only about one-quarter of voters in the survey say they would be satisfied about each.

A CNN poll conducted in April found that 53% of registered voters say they are dissatisfied with the presidential candidates they have to choose from in this year's election.

Another major wild card is Kennedy, a member of the storied political dynasty and an anti-vaccine conspiracy theorist who is running as an independent. Both major campaigns are taking him seriously as a potential spoiler, with Trump's allies notably ramping up their criticism of Kennedy in recent days.

BIDEN'S PLAN: REMIND VOTERS WHAT TRUMP'S PRESIDENCY WAS LIKE

For now, Biden's team is most focused on reminding voters of Trump's divisive leadership. Three years after Trump left office, there is a sense that some voters may have forgotten what it was like with the former reality television star in the Oval Office — or his efforts to overturn the 2020 election that have landed him in legal peril.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 60 of 74

"The plan is reminding voters of what life was like with Trump and also demonstrating to voters that the ways in which the world feels uncertain to them now are not, in fact, caused by the president, but can actually be navigated by this president," Biden pollster Mary Murphy told the AP. "Voters will trust his leadership and stewardship, knowing that things can be a lot worse if it's Donald Trump."

Biden's team is also betting that fierce backlash to new restrictions on abortion, which Trump and Republicans have largely championed, will drive voters to Democrats like it did in the 2022 midterm election and 2023 state races.

But Biden's success also is dependent on the Democrat's ability to reassemble his winning coalition from 2020 at a time when enthusiasm is lagging among critical voting blocs, including Blacks, young voters and Arab Americans unhappy over the president's handling of the war in Gaza.

TRUMP'S PLAN: TURN HIS LEGAL WOES TO HIS ADVANTAGE

Trump has been forced to adapt his campaign to his first criminal trial in New York. Prosecutors allege he committed financial fraud to hide hush money payments to a porn actor, Stormy Daniels, who says she had a sexual encounter with Trump. He denies her claim and has pleaded not guilty.

For now, Trump is forced to attend the trial most weekdays. A verdict is likely still weeks away. And after that, he faces the prospect of more trials related to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election and his handling of classified documents. The Supreme Court is weighing whether Trump should be granted immunity, or partial immunity, for the actions he took while in office.

Trump over the past week wedged in campaign stops around his court schedule, rallying voters in Wisconsin and Michigan, where the abortion debate is raging.

Trump seemed to be searching for a way to lessen the political sting from the upheaval over the Supreme Court's overturning of national abortion rights. The former president suggested the issue will ultimately bring the country together as states carve out differing laws.

"A lot of bad things will happen beyond the abortion issue if you don't win elections, with your taxes and everything else," he told Michigan voters.

Trump's camp privately maintains that his unprecedented trial in New York will dominate the news — and voters' attention — for the foreseeable future. His campaign has largely stopped trying to roll out unrelated news during the trial.

Even if Trump were to be convicted by the New York jury, his advisers insist the fundamentals of the election will not change. Trump has worked aggressively to undermine public confidence in the charges against him. Meanwhile, more traditional issues work in his favor, including stubbornly high inflation and the situation at the U.S.-Mexico border, in the view of the Trump team.

LaCivita said that such issues constantly reinforce Biden's weakness as "the news of the day keeps getting worse."

Both sides seem to agree that the dynamics of the race may yet shift dramatically based on any number of factors, from how the economy fares or the course of the wars in Gaza and Ukraine to crime or migration trends or other foreseen events. Potential candidate debates this fall could be another wild card.

Such uncertainty, said Biden's battleground states director Dan Kanninen, can play to their favor.

"That dynamic is an opportunity as much as a challenge for us," he said, "because we will have the resources, the infrastructure and the operation built to be engaging voters throughout all those difficult waters."

Hamas says latest cease-fire talks have ended. Israel vows military operation in 'very near future'

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The latest round of Gaza cease-fire talks ended in Cairo after "in-depth and serious discussions," the Hamas militant group said Sunday, reiterating key demands that Israel again rejected. After earlier signs of progress, the outlook appeared to dim as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to resist international pressure to halt the war.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 61 of 74

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant claimed Hamas wasn't serious about a deal and warned of "a powerful operation in the very near future in Rafah and other places across all of Gaza" after Hamas attacked Israel's main crossing point for delivering badly needed humanitarian aid, killing three soldiers. Israel's military said it believed Hamas was targeting soldiers massed on the Gaza border in preparation for a possible Rafah invasion. Hamas said it targeted soldiers in the area.

But Israeli media reported that CIA chief William Burns, a main mediator in the talks, would meet with Netanyahu on Monday. An official familiar with the matter told The Associated Press that Burns was traveling to meet the prime minister of Qatar, which along with Egypt has been an intermediary dealing with Hamas. It was not clear whether a subsequent trip to Israel that had been planned would happen. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations.

Israel didn't send a delegation to the latest talks. Egyptian state media reported that the Hamas delegation went for discussions in Qatar, where the group has a political office, and will return to Cairo for further negotiations on Tuesday.

Another threat to talks came as Israel ordered the local offices of Qatar's Al Jazeera satellite news network to close, accusing it of broadcasting anti-Israel incitement. The ban did not appear to affect the channel's operations in Gaza or the West Bank.

Netanyahu, under pressure from hard-liners in his government, continued to lower expectations for a cease-fire deal, calling the key Hamas demands "extreme" — including the withdrawal of Israel forces from Gaza and an end to the war. That would equal surrender after the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 that triggered the fighting, he said.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in a statement earlier said the militant group was serious and positive about the negotiations and that stopping Israeli aggression in Gaza is the main priority.

But Israel's government again vowed to press on with a military operation in Rafah, the southernmost Gaza city on the border with Egypt where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million residents now seek shelter from Israeli attacks. Rafah is a key entry point for aid.

Kerem Shalom, now closed, is another. The Israeli military reported 10 projectiles were launched at the crossing in southern Israel and said its fighter jets later struck the source. Israel's Channel 12 TV channel said 10 soldiers remained hospitalized. It was unclear how long the crossing would be closed.

The head of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, called for an independent investigation and "accountability for the blatant disregard of humanitarian workers." He also said Israel this week denied him entry to Gaza for a second time.

The closing of Kerem Shalom came shortly after the head of the U.N. World Food Program asserted "full-blown famine" in devastated northern Gaza, one of the most prominent warnings yet of the toll of restrictions on aid entering the territory. It was not a formal famine declaration.

In the full NBC interview, WFP chief Cindy McCain said famine was "moving its way south" in Gaza and that Israel's efforts to allow in more aid were not enough. "We have right now a mass on the outside border, about enough trucks and enough food for 1.1 million people for about three months. We need to get that in," she said.

Gaza's vast humanitarian needs put pressure on cease-fire talks. The proposal that Egyptian mediators put to Hamas sets out a three-stage process that would bring an immediate, six-week cease-fire and partial release of Israeli hostages taken on Oct. 7, and would include some sort of Israeli pullout. The initial stage would last for 40 days. Hamas would start by releasing female civilian hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Netanyahu claimed that Israel has shown willingness to make concessions but "will continue fighting until all of its objectives are achieved." That includes the stated aim of crushing Hamas. Israel says it must target Rafah to strike remaining fighters there despite warnings from the U.S. and others about the danger to civilians.

In a fiery speech for Israel's annual Holocaust memorial day, Netanyahu added: "I say to the leaders of the world, no amount of pressure, no decision by any international forum will stop Israel from defending itself."

An Israeli strike Sunday on a house in an urban refugee camp near Rafah killed four children, including a baby, and two adults, all from the same family, according to Abu Youssef al-Najjar Hospital. Another Israeli strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza killed at least five people, according to Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. Israel's military said it struck a Hamas command center in central Gaza. It didn't mention casualties.

The Hamas cross-border attack on Oct. 7 killed some 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. Israel says militants still hold around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others. Netanyahu is under pressure from some hostages' families to make a deal to end the war and get hostages freed.

Israeli's air and ground offensive has killed over 34,500 people, according to Palestinian health officials, who don't differentiate between civilians and combatants but say women and children make up a majority of those killed.

Israel blames Hamas for civilian deaths, accusing it of embedding in residential and public areas. The Israeli military says it has killed 13,000 militants, without providing evidence to back up the claim.

As US spotlights those missing or dead in Native communities, prosecutors work to solve their cases

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — It was a frigid winter morning when authorities found a Native American man dead on a remote gravel road in western New Mexico. He was lying on his side, with only one sock on, his clothes gone and his shoes tossed in the snow.

There were trails of blood on both sides of his body and it appeared he had been struck in the head.

Investigators retraced the man's steps, gathering security camera footage that showed him walking near a convenience store miles away in Gallup, an economic hub in an otherwise rural area bordered on one side by the Navajo Nation and Zuni Pueblo on the other.

Court records said the footage and cell phone records showed the victim — a Navajo man identified only as John Doe — was "on a collision course" with the man who would ultimately be accused of killing him.

A grand jury has indicted a man from Zuni Pueblo on a charge of second-degree murder in the Jan. 18 death, and prosecutors say more charges are likely as he is the prime suspect in a series of crimes targeting Native American men in Gallup, Zuni and Albuquerque. Investigators found several wallets, cell phones and clothing belonging to other men when searching his vehicle and two residences.

As people gathered around the nation on Sunday to spotlight the troubling number of disappearances and killings in Indian Country, authorities say the New Mexico case represents the kind of work the U.S. Department of Justice had aspired to when establishing its Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons outreach program last summer.

Special teams of assistant U.S. attorneys and coordinators have been tasked with focusing on MMIP cases. Their goal: Improve communication and coordination across federal, tribal, state and local jurisdictions in hopes of bridging the gaps that have made solving violent crimes in Indian Country a generational challenge.

Some of the new federal prosecutors were participating in MMIP Awareness Day events. From the Arizona state capitol to a cultural center in Albuquerque and the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina, marches, symposiums, art exhibitions and candlelight vigils were planned for May 5, which is the birthday of Hanna Harris, who was only 21 when she was killed on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana in 2013.

It was an emotional day in Albuquerque, where family members and advocates participated in a prayer walk. They chanted: "What do we want? Answers! What do we want? Justice!" There were tears and long embraces as they shared their stories and frustrations. They talked about feeling forgotten and the lack of resources in Native communities.

Geraldine Toya of Jemez Pueblo marched with other family members to bring awareness to the death of her daughter Shawna Toya in 2021. She said she and her husband are artists who make pottery and

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 63 of 74

never dreamed they would end up being investigators in an effort to determine what happened to their daughter.

"Our journey has been rough, but you know what, we're going to make this journey successful for all of our people that are here in this same thing that we're struggling through right now," she said, vowing to support other families through their heartbreak as they seek justice.

Alex Uballez, the U.S. attorney for the District of New Mexico, told The Associated Press on Friday that the outreach program is starting to pay dividends.

"Providing those bridges between those agencies is critical to seeing the patterns that affect all of our communities," Uballez said. "None of our borders that we have drawn prevents the spillover of impacts on communities — across tribal communities, across states, across the nation, across international borders."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Eliot Neal oversees MMIP cases for a region spanning New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah and Nevada.

Having law enforcement agencies and attorneys talking to each other can help head off other crimes that are often precursors to deadly violence. The other pieces of the puzzle are building relationships with Native American communities and making the justice system more accessible to the public, Neal said.

Part of Neal's work includes reviewing old cases: time-consuming work that can involve tracking down witnesses and resubmitting evidence for testing.

"We're trying to flip that script a little bit and give those cases the time and attention they deserve," he said, adding that communicating with family members about the process is a critical component for the MMIP attorneys and coordinators.

The DOJ over the past year also has awarded \$268 million in grants to tribal justice systems for handling child abuse cases, combating domestic and sexual violence and bolstering victim services.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Bree Black Horse was dressed in red as she was sworn in Thursday during a ceremony in Yakima, Washington. The color is synonymous with raising awareness about the disproportionate number of Indigenous people who have been victims of violence.

She prosecutes MMIP cases in a five-state region across California and the Pacific Northwest to Montana. Her caseload is in the double digits, and she's working with advocacy groups to identify more unresolved cases and open lines of communication with law enforcement.

An enrolled member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and a lawyer for more than a decade, Black Horse said having 10 assistant U.S. attorneys and coordinators focusing solely on MMIP cases is unprecedented.

"This is an issue that has touched not only my community but my friends and my family," she said. "I see this as a way to help make sure that our future generations, our young people don't experience these same kinds of disparities and this same kind of trauma."

In New Mexico, Uballez acknowledged the federal government moves slowly and credited tribal communities with raising their voices, consistently showing up to protest and putting pressure on politicians to improve public safety in tribal communities.

Still, he and Neal said it will take a paradigm shift to undo the public perception that nothing is being done.

The man charged in the New Mexico case, Labar Tsethlikai, appeared in court Wednesday and pleaded not guilty while standing shackled next to his public defender. A victim advocate from Uballez's office was there, too, sitting with victims' family members.

Tsethlikai's attorney argued that evidence had yet to be presented tying her client to the alleged crimes spelled out in court documents. Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew McGinley argued that no conditions of release would keep the community safe, pointing to cell phone data and DNA evidence allegedly showing Tsethlikai had preyed on people who were homeless or in need of alcohol so he could satisfy his sexual desires.

Tsethlikai will remain in custody pending trial as authorities continue to investigate. Court documents list at least 10 other victims along with five newly identified potential victims. McGinley said prosecutors wanted to focus on a few of the cases "to get him off the street" and prevent more violence.

A driver dies after crashing into a security barrier around the White House complex, authorities say

WASHINGTON (AP) — A driver died after a vehicle crashed into an outer perimeter gate of the White House complex, and the incident late Saturday was being investigated as a traffic crash, police said. President Joe Biden was spending the weekend in Delaware, and the Secret Service said there was no threat to the White House.

The male driver, who was not immediately identified, was found dead in the vehicle following the crash shortly before 10:30 p.m., according to a Secret Service statement.

The Metropolitan Police Department said the vehicle crashed into a security barrier at the intersection of 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Police were called to the scene at 10:46 p.m. and said one adult male was pronounced dead from the crash into a security barrier around the complex.

The Secret Service said security protocols were put in place and that there was no threat to the White House. The Secret Service and police will continue to investigate.

Ukraine marks its third Easter at war as it comes under fire from Russian drones and troops

By SUSIE BLANN and ELISE MORTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As Ukraine marked its third Easter at war, Russia on Sunday launched a barrage of drones concentrated in Ukraine's east, wounding more than a dozen people, and claimed its troops took control of a village they had been targeting.

Ukraine's air force said that Russia had launched 24 Shahed drones overnight, of which 23 were shot down.

Six people, including a child, were wounded in a drone strike in the eastern Kharkiv region, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. Fourteen more were wounded in an airstrike Sunday afternoon on the Kharkiv regional capital, also called Kharkiv, the regional prosecutor's office said. Syniehubov said the city was attacked by an aerial bomb.

Fires broke out when debris from drones that were shot down fell on buildings in the neighboring Dnipropetrovsk region. No casualties were reported.

The Russian Ministry of Defense announced Sunday that its troops had taken control of the village of Ocheretyne, which has been in the crosshairs of Russian forces in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. Drone footage obtained by The Associated Press showed the village battered by fighting. Not a single person is seen in the footage obtained late Friday, and no building in Ocheretyne appears to have been left untouched by the fighting.

Officials in Kyiv urged residents to follow Orthodox Easter services online due to safety concerns. Serhiy Popko, head of the Kyiv city administration, warned that "even on such bright days of celebration, we can expect evil deeds from the aggressor."

In his Easter address, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on Ukrainians to be "united in one common prayer."

In a video filmed in front of Kyiv's Saint Sophia Cathedral, wearing a traditional Vyshyvanka embroidered shirt, Zelenskyy said that God "has a chevron with the Ukrainian flag on his shoulder." With "such an ally," Zelenskyy said, "life will definitely win over death."

A majority of Ukrainians identify as Orthodox Christians, though the church is divided. Many belong to the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The rival Ukrainian Orthodox Church was loyal to the patriarch in Moscow until splitting from Russia after the 2022 invasion and is viewed with suspicion by many Ukrainians.

In Moscow, worshippers including President Vladimir Putin packed Moscow's landmark Christ the Savior Cathedral late Saturday for a nighttime Easter service led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and an outspoken supporter of the Kremlin.

Eastern Orthodox Christians usually celebrate Easter later than Catholic and Protestant churches, because they use a different method of calculating the date for the holy day that marks Christ's resurrection.

China's president arrives in Europe to reinvigorate ties at a time of global tensions

PARIS (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping kicked off a three-country trip to Europe on Sunday with the continent divided over how to deal with Beijing's growing power and the U.S.-China rivalry.

European carmakers are losing ground to subsidized Chinese electric vehicles. Diplomats fret about alleged Chinese spies in European capitals. And China's continued defense trade with Russia worries anyone in Europe who supports war-ravaged Ukraine and fears that the Russian army won't stop there.

But Europe and China have hefty economic ties — EU-China trade is estimated at 2.3 billion euros per day — and Xi appears determined to rebuild and deepen relations with European leaders after a prolonged absence prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Xi started Sunday in France, whose president wants Europe to have more economic and strategic independence from other world powers. Then the Chinese president heads to Serbia and Hungary, both seen as China-friendly and close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, and recipients of substantial Chinese investment.

Xi's trip will be closely watched in Washington for signs of diminishing European support for its key foreign policy goals. At the same time, there's increasing uncertainty in Europe about future U.S. support for trans-Atlantic allies.

Xi was greeted at Paris' Orly Airport by French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal — and by protests by groups demanding that France pressure China to respect Tibetan and Uyghur minority rights. Activists seeking a free Tibet attempted to unfurl a banner Saturday beneath the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, and protested in the French capital around the same time as Xi's plane landed.

After arriving, Xi said he hoped the visit would bring "strategic convergence" between China and France, and that further developing their relations would contribute to "stability and positive energy in an turbulent world," according to a text provided to reporters at the airport.

On Monday French President Emmanuel Macron will treat the Chinese leader to formal honors of a full state visit. They will also meet with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who is expected to join Macron in pushing for fairer trade policies and for China to use its leverage with Russia to push it toward ending the war in Ukraine.

The EU launched an investigation last fall into Chinese subsidies and could impose tariffs on electric vehicles exported from China.

China claims neutrality in the Ukraine conflict but has refused to call the full-blown Russian assault on its neighbor an invasion, and has been accused of bolstering Russia's capacity to produce weapons.

Biden has rebuilt the refugee system after Trump-era cuts. What comes next in an election year?

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A church volunteer stood at an apartment door, beckoning inside a Congolese family for their first look at where they would live in America.

"Your new house!" volunteer Dan Davidson exclaimed as the couple and the woman's brother stepped into the two-bedroom apartment in South Carolina's capital, smiling tentatively at what would come next.

Inside, church volunteers had made quilts for the beds and set out an orange and yellow plastic dump truck and other toys for the couple's son. The family watched closely as a translator showed them key features in their apartment: which knob matched which burner on the stovetop, how the garbage disposal and window blinds worked. They practiced working the thermostat and checked the water in the shower.

"We are so happy to get this place," Kaaskile Kashindi said through a translator.

Now 28, Kashindi was born in Congo and fled with his family at age 3 to a refugee camp in Tanzania, where he lived until this spring. That's when he, his wife, little boy and brother-in-law moved to Columbia, a university town of 140,000 people.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 66 of 74

"We're still new. We just need help right now," Kashindi said.

Scenes like this are becoming more common as the American refugee program, long a haven for people fleeing violence around the world, rebounds from years of cutbacks under Donald Trump's administration. The Biden administration has worked to streamline the process of screening and placing people in America while refugee resettlement agencies have opened new sites across the country.

If President Joe Biden meets his target of 125,000 refugees admitted this year, it would be the highest number of arrivals in more than three decades.

Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee in a 2020 rematch with Biden this fall, has pledged to bar refugees from Gaza and reinstate his Muslim ban if elected, while also putting in place "ideological screening" for all immigrants. Trump's website highlights his first-term decision to temporarily suspend the refugee program.

Even with immigration — legal or not — a divisive campaign issue, many who help refugees settle in the United States say the growing numbers of refugees have been generally welcomed by communities and employers in need of workers.

The word refugee is sometimes broadly used to refer to anyone fleeing war or persecution. Often it's conflated with asylum-seekers who come directly to the U.S.-Mexico border. People like the family from Congo are coming through a different process, starting with an application abroad and with thorough vetting that can take years.

Usually they are referred to U.S. officials by the U.N. refugee agency, then interviewed by American immigration officials. There are background checks and medical screening.

The lucky few who are approved fly to towns across America to start new lives with the help of a nationwide network of resettlement agencies. They are eligible to become citizens eventually.

For decades, America led the world in refugee admissions in a program that had wide bipartisan support. Trump cut the program to the quick. By the time he left office in January 2021, he had set a record low goal of 15,000 refugees admitted a year. But even that mark wasn't hit: Only 11,814 refugees came to the U.S. in Trump's last year, compared with 84,994 at the end of the Obama administration.

Biden said he would reestablish the U.S. as a haven for refugees. It took a while.

His administration is now admitting more refugees and added about 150 new resettlement sites nationwide, said Sarah Cross, deputy assistant secretary for the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

To reach a goal of 125,000 refugees admitted this year — the highest number since 1992 — the department has been increasing its overseas processing and making changes that streamline all the checks refugees undergo while keeping screening rigorous, Cross said. It has hired more staff and is doing more trips to interview prospective refugees overseas.

In 2020, Lutheran Services Carolinas resettled about 40 refugees in Columbia. This year, the organization expects to welcome about 440, said Seth Hershberger, the nonprofit's refugee resettlement and immigration director. It has opened new sites in Charleston, Greenville and Myrtle Beach.

"It is chaotic sometimes," Hershberger said from the agency's office, tucked into a Lutheran church. "But with the support we've had ... it's been a good, good journey."

The office is a bustle of case managers, employment specialists and other staffers; some were once refugees themselves. These staff and volunteers usually meet arriving refugees, making sure a meal they recognize is waiting for them.

From there, it's a whirlwind of medical appointments, registration at government offices, opening a bank account, enrolling kids in school and eventually moving into permanent housing such as the Kashindi family's apartment. They take classes in what is called "survival English" — how to call 911 if someone is sick, for example, or remembering your address so you can tell someone if you get lost.

In one recent class, five refugees sat at desks at a local church. Down the hall, a volunteer watched their kids so they could work on learning a new language.

The lesson was focused on calendars and days of the week, interspersed with a bit of American culture.

"In America, the calendar is very important. ... There's a lot of dates you'll need to know," said teacher

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 67 of 74

Sarah Lewis, such as their children's birthdays, doctor's appointments and much more.

Two students were sisters from Honduras who had fled their homes and traveled to Mexico, where they lived for about a year until they learned they had been approved to come to South Carolina.

Leliz Bonilla Castro said she didn't know much about Columbia when she arrived but she liked the warm weather and welcoming people. She said the refugee program had given her and her three children a future.

"For those who want and have the opportunity to come (to this country), it is the best way to save your life and to have a better future for your kids, which are the ones we think about the most as parents," she said through a translator.

It wasn't too long ago that South Carolina was one of many Republican-leaning states that balked at efforts to bring in Syrian refugees.

Hershberger, the Lutheran Services resettlement chief, pointed to another event — the U.S. evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans from Kabul during the 2021 troop withdrawal — as a game-changer. It led to an outpouring from Americans wanting to help.

"When they saw people grabbing onto the planes and fleeing for their lives, I think that really struck a chord with a lot of people," he said.

The nonprofit also hears from employers eager for workers, Hershberger said.

One of them is Jordan Loewen, whose Columbia-based company cleans facilities or fleets like big garbage trucks. It's "dirty, hard work," he said.

During the pandemic when it was tough to find workers, someone suggested he hire refugees. Loewen gave it a shot, and now refugees account for nearly half his staff. He also recommends the resettlement program to other employers.

In addition to getting workers, he said, "It's amazing hearing what these guys have come out of and the struggles that they've gone through in their life to get to this point of being in America."

Global Refuge, one of 10 national resettlement agencies that work with local networks like the one in Columbia, is preparing for what a Trump presidency might mean for its work.

"It's a huge cloud. We feel like we may be running up against a cliff here," said Megan Bracy, the organization's resettlement director.

Cross, from the State Department, said the focus is on the momentum in bringing more refugees and the nationwide support that's followed.

"It's also a program that we see so many Americans eager to continue," she said.

Methodists end anti-gay bans, closing 50 years of battles over sexuality for mainline Protestants

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — It took just a few days for United Methodist delegates to remove a half-century's worth of denominational bans on gay clergy and same-sex marriages.

But when asked at a news conference about the lightning speed of the changes, the Rev. Effie McAvoy took a longer view.

"Oh, it didn't take days, honey," she said.

It took decades of activism for a change that was "so very healing," said McAvoy, pastor of Shepherd of the Valley United Methodist Church in Hope, Rhode Island. A member of the Queer Delegate Caucus at last week's UMC General Conference in Charlotte, she was grateful to be part of the historic moment.

The reversals can be seen as marking the end of a half-century of epic battles and schisms over LGBTQ involvement — not only in the United Methodist Church but in U.S. mainline Protestant denominations overall. Those are the tall-steeple churches in myriad town squares and rural crossroads, traditionally "big-tent" and culturally mainstream congregations — some predating America's independence.

The nation's largest Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Lutheran denominations have all now removed barriers to LGBTQ participation in the pulpit and at the altar. But this comes amid long-term declines in membership and influence.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 68 of 74

Surely there will be skirmishes to come. Individual congregations, and entire regions across the world, will sort out the implications. Controversies have grown among some conservative evangelical churches and colleges, which largely avoided past battles.

But for mainline Protestants, last week's General Conference looks like a landmark. It was a relatively quiet coda to what had been an almost annual scene on America's religious calendar — impassioned show-downs at legislative assemblies of Protestant denominations, marked by protests, political maneuverings and earnest prayers.

Across the decades, there were many cases of ecclesiastical civil disobedience — clergy doing ordinations and marriages that defied church bans, some of whom were tried for heresy or other infractions.

"A part of me still doesn't believe it," said the Rev. Frank Schaefer, one of the last United Methodist ministers to face church discipline after presiding at the same-sex wedding of his son. Schaefer was restored to ministry in 2014 by a Methodist appellate panel after a lower tribunal had defrocked him.

"We've fought for it so long and hard, and there were so many disappointments along the way," said Schaefer, now a pastor in California. "Our tears have turned into tears of joy."

But the UMC faces the same dire challenges as Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal and smaller mainline denominations that took similar routes.

All lost large numbers of congregations in schisms, and they have had to navigate fraught relations with partner churches in Africa and elsewhere.

Retired United Methodist Bishop Will Willimon, a professor at Duke Divinity School, supported greater LGBTQ inclusion in the church — but said bigger issues loom.

"We're an aging denomination," he said. "We share that with so many mainline denominations. Unfortunately I don't see how this vote addresses any of that."

Willimon said even conservative breakaway groups like the new Global Methodist Church, comprised of many former UMC congregations, face similar challenges with predominately white, aging memberships.

In the U.S., mainline churches have lost millions of members since their peak in the 1960s — some to schism and many to underlying demographics. Their members are aging and don't have many children, and they struggle to retain the children they do have, said Ryan Burge, associate professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University.

"There is no silver bullet" for reversing mainline decline, said Burge, who studies religious demographics.

The United Methodists counted 5.4 million U.S. members in 2022 — less than half their 1960s peak, and the recent departure of about 7,600 mostly conservative congregations will lower that number further. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s 1.1 million membership is barely a quarter its 1960s peak. Other denominations have similar trends.

The mainline battles over LGBTQ issues began heating up in the early 1970s, before those initials were used.

A United Methodist General Conference in 1972 declared homosexual practice "incompatible with Christian teaching." Other denominations issued similar teachings. Some imposed explicit bans on gay clergy.

An Episcopal bishop was tried and acquitted of heresy in 1996 for ordaining a gay pastor. The 2003 ordination of the first openly gay Episcopal bishop, Gene Robinson, ignited long-simmering controversies.

Conservative and liberal groups formed their own church caucuses for denominational legislative sessions, where Scriptures and slogans flew back and forth between proclamations of Robert's Rules of Order.

Progressive Presbyterians blocked an entrance to a General Assembly in 2000 and were arrested. As the United Methodists steadily tightened LGBTQ bans, progressives disrupted General Conferences with protests, drums and songs. A conservative United Methodist leader, the Rev. Bill Hinson, roiled the 2004 General Conference in Pittsburgh with a call for denominational divorce — even though his side had won all its legislative battles.

"Why do we go on hurting each other?" asked Hinson. Others quickly tamped down the idea, but it was a foreshadowing.

By the second decade of the 21st century, Presbyterians, Lutherans and Episcopalians had largely dis-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 69 of 74

mantled their bans. They navigated major strains with partner churches elsewhere in the world.

Substantial minorities of their U.S. congregations joined more conservative denominations, saying the sexuality debates were symptoms of a deeper theological chasm.

The United Methodist Church is unique because it is international, with many delegates from countries with conservative sexual values and laws. A special legislative session in 2019 reinforced LGBTQ bans. That result proved short-lived.

U.S. churches increasingly defied the bans and elected more progressive delegates for this year's gathering. Many churches began disaffiliating under a temporary measure approved in 2019 that let churches keep their properties under favorable conditions.

To Willimon, that process was devastating. Whether the congregation stayed or left, peoples' relationships were ruptured, he said.

Many churches went independent, but thousands joined the new Global Methodist Church, which pledges to enforce restrictions on LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage.

Now attention turns to Africa, where the UMC counts 4.6 million members.

One group of African delegates protested outside the General Conference and said their members would discuss whether to disaffiliate.

"The General Conference did not listen to us," said the Rev. Jerry Kulah of the conservative group, Africa Initiative, contending the denomination departed from biblical teaching on marriage. "We do not believe we know better than Jesus."

Bishop John Wesley Yohanna of Nigeria said he would likely leave the denomination after his term ends, though he is staying for now to help heal a rift in the local church. "From the tradition of the church in Africa," he added, "marriage is between a man and a woman, period."

But other African delegates are heartened by a plan that expands regional autonomy on such matters. They said African churches will keep the marriage and ordination bans in their region while remaining in the denomination.

"Our decision to stay in the United Methodist Church is not conditioned by what happens in America," said the Rev. Ande Emmanuel of Southern Nigeria. "God has called us to a church, and the church is not a property of the United States."

Bishop Eben Nhwatiwa of Zimbabwe the majority of the African bishops at General Conference agree the regionalization plan respects local cultures.

The United Methodist Church was the last of the major U.S. mainline groups to liberalize its policies on sexuality in part because of its large presence in rural, small-town and Southern areas, where a more conservative sexual ethos prevails, said James Hudnut-Beumler, a professor of American Christian History at Vanderbilt University. He is a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) minister and co-author of "The Future of Mainline Protestantism."

"That's why they're the last to go," he said.

And it won't automatically bring back the more-accepting younger generations who left over the bans, said Hudnut-Beumler, adding that conservative evangelical congregations are not exempt.

"Some conservative megachurch pastor may be thinking to himself, 'We won this. Look what happened to the Methodists and Presbyterians and Episcopalians,'" said Hudnut-Beumler, "Don't be so smug."

Hush money, catch and kill and more: A guide to unique terms used at Trump's New York criminal trial

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump's New York criminal trial is full of terms you don't typically hear in a courtroom.

Centering on allegations Trump falsified his company's records to conceal the nature of hush money reimbursements, it's the first ever criminal trial of a former U.S. president and the first of Trump's four

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 70 of 74

indictments to go to trial. It also has some unique terminology.

Here are some examples:

HUSH MONEY

DEFINITION: According to Merriam-Webster, it's money paid so that someone will keep information secret. In other words, money that a person pays someone to hush up something.

EXAMPLE: Three payments that prosecutors say were made on Trump's behalf to bury marital infidelity claims during his 2016 presidential campaign. They are the National Enquirer's \$30,000 payment to a Trump Tower doorman and \$150,000 payment to former Playboy model Karen McDougal, and the \$130,000 that Trump's then-lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen arranged to pay porn actor Stormy Daniels.

Paying hush money isn't illegal on its own, but authorities say the payments made to suppress stories about Trump amounted to illegal campaign contributions. Cohen pleaded guilty in 2018 to a federal campaign violation, among other unrelated crimes. The National Enquirer's parent company, American Media Inc., entered into a nonprosecution agreement in exchange for its cooperation with prosecutors. The Federal Election Commission fined the company \$187,500, declaring that the McDougal deal was a "prohibited corporate in-kind contribution."

'CATCH AND KILL'

DEFINITION: As prosecutor Matthew Colangelo told jurors in his opening statement, "catch-and-kill" is when a tabloid newspaper such as the National Enquirer "buys up damaging information about someone, demands that the source sign a nondisclosure agreement to prevent them from taking that information or that story anywhere else, and then the tabloid declines to publish the story to prevent it from ever seeing the light of day." A nondisclosure agreement is also known as a confidentiality agreement.

EXAMPLE: Tabloids typically pay sources and story subjects for information they end up publishing. But sometimes they pay for stories to prevent their publication. Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker testified that he agreed, at a Trump Tower meeting in August 2015, to be the "eyes and ears" of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Under the arrangement, Pecker said he would notify Cohen of women who were seeking to sell stories about Trump so Trump's team could "take them off the market or kill them in some manner."

Pecker testified that he had suppressed stories about other celebrities and politicians over the years using the same "catch and kill" methods, including actor and ex-California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and golfer Tiger Woods. Pecker said he sometimes suppressed stories simply to help a friend or further his business interests, but often he did so to leverage the story subject into doing something else, like agreeing to an interview or posing for a magazine cover.

FALSIFYING BUSINESS RECORDS

DEFINITION: This is the criminal charge that's being decided at Trump's New York trial. He is charged with 34 counts of falsifying business records in the first degree. It is a felony punishable by up to four years in prison, though there is no guarantee Trump would be sentenced to any time if convicted. He has pleaded not guilty.

Under New York law, a person is guilty of falsifying business records in the first degree when he makes or causes a false entry to be made in a company's business records and does so with an intent to defraud, including intent to commit or hide another crime.

EXAMPLE: Prosecutors allege Trump misrepresented payments to Cohen in Trump's company records as legal fees when they were actually a reimbursement for the \$130,000 that Cohen arranged to pay Daniels. The records at issue include general ledger entries, invoices and checks. Prosecutors argue Trump's actions were a way of hiding the hush money scheme and concealing other crimes arising from it, including alleged election law violations. Trump denies the allegations. His lawyers have said the payments to Cohen were for legitimate legal expenses.

CONSPIRACY

DEFINITION: Trump isn't charged with the crime of conspiracy, but prosecutors at his New York trial have used the term repeatedly to describe his "eyes and ears" agreement with Pecker and the hush money

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 71 of 74

arrangements that ensued.

According to Merriam-Webster, conspiring involves joining "in a secret agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act or an act which becomes unlawful as a result of the secret agreement." Under New York law, a conspiracy involves at least two people acting with intent to commit a crime.

EXAMPLE: Colangelo, the prosecutor, said in his opening statement that Trump's trial involves "an illegal conspiracy to undermine the integrity of a presidential election." To convict Trump of felony falsifying business records, prosecutors must show that he had intent to commit another crime. Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass said in court that one of the crimes Trump intended to commit was a violation of a New York election law — a misdemeanor involving a conspiracy to promote or prevent an election.

ELECTION INTERFERENCE

DEFINITION: Any attempt to alter the outcome of an election through nefarious means, such as fraud, voter intimidation or efforts to overturn the outcome of a race.

EXAMPLE: Prosecutors allege the hush money scheme amounted to election interference because it involved a concerted effort to hide important information from voters in order to boost Trump's chances in the 2016 race.

Not only was the National Enquirer acting as the "eyes and ears" of Trump's campaign, identifying negative stories so they could be suppressed, Pecker testified that the tabloid, at Cohen's behest, printed stories that tarred Trump's opponents. It also published stories that boosted Trump's image.

It's a different kind of election interference allegation from what Trump is charged with in his Washington and Georgia cases, where he's accused of attempting to subvert his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden. Meanwhile, Trump claims that being put on trial while he's campaigning as this year's presumptive Republican nominee is its own form of election interference.

GAG ORDER

DEFINITION: Generally speaking, a gag order is "a judicial ruling barring public disclosure or discussion (as by the press) of information related to a case," according to Merriam-Webster. In Trump's case, it's known as an Order Restricting Extrajudicial Statements, with extrajudicial meaning outside of court.

EXAMPLE: Judge Juan M. Merchan, acting on a request from prosecutors, imposed a limited gag order on Trump on March 26. It bars the former president from making or directing other people to make public statements on his behalf about potential witnesses regarding their participation in the case. It also prohibits comments about jurors, prosecutors other than District Attorney Alvin Bragg, and any statements meant to interfere with or harass the court's staff, prosecution team or their families.

Merchan expanded the order on April 1, barring Trump from commenting about his family or Bragg's family. The change came after Trump assailed the judge's daughter and made false claims about her on social media.

Last Tuesday, Trump was assessed a \$9,000 fine — \$1,000 for each of nine separate gag order violations that the judge identified. Prosecutors later requested an additional \$4,000 penalty for what they said were additional breaches of the order.

Merchan lamented that \$1,000 per violation is the maximum fine allowed by law and floated the possibility of jailing Trump if he continues to run afoul of the gag order, an unprecedented outcome for a former American president.

Trump's lawyers insist he needs leeway to respond to criticism, including from witnesses like Cohen and Daniels, and that the gag order impedes his ability to answer questions and defend himself amid a crush of media coverage of his case and his candidacy.

What a judge's gag order on Trump means in his hush money case

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Virtually every day of his hush money criminal trial, former President Donald Trump talks about how he can't talk about the case.

A gag order bars Trump from commenting publicly on witnesses, jurors and some others connected to

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 72 of 74

the matter. The New York judge already has found that Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, repeatedly violated the order, fined him \$9,000 and warning that jail could follow if he doesn't comply.

But the order doesn't stop Trump from talking about the allegations against him or commenting on the judge or the elected top prosecutor. And despite a recent Trump remark, it doesn't stop him from testifying in court if he chooses.

As he fights the felony charges against him while running for president, Trump has at times stirred confusion about what he can and can't do in the case. He has pleaded not guilty.

So what does the order do, what doesn't it and where did it come from?

WHAT IS A GAG ORDER?

Generally speaking, a gag order is a judge's directive prohibiting someone or people involved in a court case from publicly commenting about some or all aspects of it. In Trump's case, it's titled an "Order Restricting Extrajudicial Statements," with "extrajudicial" meaning outside of court.

Gag orders, particularly in high-profile cases, are intended to prevent information presented outside a courtroom from affecting what happens inside.

Trump also is subject to a gag order in his federal criminal election interference case in Washington. That order limits what he can say about witnesses, lawyers in the case and court staff, though an appeals court freed him to speak about special counsel Jack Smith, who brought the case.

In his recent New York civil fraud trial, Trump was fined a total of \$15,000 for comments he made about that judge's law clerk after a gag order barred participants in the trial from "posting, emailing or speaking publicly" about the court's staff.

The U.S. Supreme Court has acknowledged that gag orders can pit fair trial rights against free speech rights. The court has struck down some orders that barred the press from reporting on certain cases or court proceedings and rejected as too vague a Nevada court rule that limited what all lawyers could say out of court.

IS TRUMP FIGHTING THE GAG ORDER?

Yes. Before the trial, he asked a state appeals court to postpone the trial while he appeals the gag order, but the court refused. His appeal of the order itself is ongoing.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE GAG ORDER ON TRUMP?

Initially imposed March 26, the gag order bars Trump from making or directing others to make public statements about any juror and about any "reasonably foreseeable" witness' participation in the investigation or the trial.

It also bars any statements about lawyers in the case, court staffers, prosecution aides and relatives of all of the above, to the extent that the statements are intended to "materially interfere with, or to cause others to materially interfere with" their work on the case "or with the knowledge that such interference is likely to result."

The order doesn't apply to Judge Juan M. Merchan or to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, whose office is bringing the case. It does apply to comments about their family members, however. Merchan added that provision on April 1 after Trump lashed out on social media at the judge's daughter, a Democratic political consultant, and made a claim about her that was later repudiated by court officials.

Trump is also allowed to talk about his political opponents, as Merchan made clear on Thursday.

The order also doesn't bar witnesses from commenting on Trump. Michael Cohen, Trump's ex-lawyer and an expected witness, has routinely attacked his former boss, leading Trump to complain about not being able to respond in kind.

CAN TRUMP TESTIFY?

Yes. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that criminal defendants have a constitutional right to take the stand in their own defense — or not to.

There was some confusion after Trump said Thursday that because of the gag order, he was "not allowed to testify." In context, it appeared he was actually referring to his ability to respond to a reporter's

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 73 of 74

court-hallway question about a witness' testimony that afternoon.

Trump clarified to reporters Friday that he understood the order wasn't a bar on testifying. Merchan emphasized the same in court.

"I want to stress, Mr. Trump, you have an absolute right to testify at trial, if that's what you decide to do after consultation with your attorneys," Merchan said.

WHY DID TRUMP GET FINED? WHAT CAN'T HE SAY?

Merchan found that Trump violated the gag order with social media posts that laid into Cohen. Among the offending posts: one that asked whether "disgraced attorney and felon Michael Cohen been prosecuted for LYING," a repost of a New York Post article that described Cohen as a "serial perjurer," and a Trump post referring to Fox News host Jesse Watters' claim that liberal activists were lying to infiltrate the jury.

Merchan noted that Trump's comment on the Watters segment misstated what the host had actually said, making the comment "the words of Defendant himself."

On the other hand, Merchan declined to sanction Trump for an April 10 post that referred to Cohen and Stormy Daniels, the porn performer who got a \$130,000 hush money payment that's at the heart of the case, as "sleaze bags."

Trump contended that he was responding to previous comments by Cohen, and the judge said the back-and-forth gave him pause as to whether that post met the bar for a violation.

COULD TRUMP REALLY GO TO TO JAIL OVER THE GAG ORDER?

When Merchan fined Trump \$1,000 apiece for nine violations — the maximum fine allowed by law — he wrote that "jail may be a necessary punishment" for some wealthy defendants who won't be deterred by such a sum.

Merchan added that he "will not tolerate continued willful violations" of the gag order and that, if "necessary and appropriate," he "will impose an incarceratory punishment," meaning jail.

It's unclear what would rise to the level of "necessary and appropriate."

Defense lawyer Todd Blanche indicated in court Friday that he plans to appeal the judge's finding this past week that Trump violated the gag order.

Prosecutors have asked Merchan to hold Trump in contempt again and fine him \$1,000 for each of four alleged violations from April 22-25. But the prosecution isn't asking for the former president to be locked up over those comments because they happened before Merchan's jail warning and because "we'd prefer to minimize disruption to this proceeding," prosecutor Christopher Conroy said.

Today in History: May 6

The Hindenburg crashes in flames in New Jersey, killing 97

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, May 6, the 127th day of 2024. There are 239 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 6, 1937, the hydrogen-filled German airship Hindenburg caught fire and crashed while attempting to dock at Lakehurst, New Jersey; 35 of the 97 people on board were killed along with a crewman on the ground.

On this date:

In 1882, President Chester Alan Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred Chinese immigrants from the U.S. for 10 years (Arthur had opposed an earlier version with a 20-year ban).

In 1910, Britain's Edwardian era ended with the death of King Edward VII; he was succeeded by George V.

In 1935, the Works Progress Administration began operating under an executive order signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1941, Josef Stalin assumed the Soviet premiership, replacing Vyacheslav (VEE'-chuh-slav) M. Molotov.

In 1942, during World War II, some 15,000 American and Filipino troops on Corregidor island surrendered

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, May 6, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 315 ~ 74 of 74

to Japanese forces.

In 1954, medical student Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile during a track meet in Oxford, England, in 3:59.4.

In 1994, former Arkansas state worker Paula Jones filed suit against President Bill Clinton, alleging he'd sexually harassed her in 1991. (Jones reached a settlement with Clinton in November 1998.)

In 2004, President George W. Bush apologized for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers, calling it "a stain on our country's honor"; he rejected calls for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's resignation.

In 2006, Lillian Gertrud Asplund, the last American survivor of the sinking of the Titanic, died in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, at age 99.

In 2010, a computerized sell order triggered a "flash crash" on Wall Street, sending the Dow Jones industrials to a loss of nearly 1,000 points in less than half an hour.

In 2013, kidnap-rape victims Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus and Michelle Knight, who went missing separately about a decade earlier while in their teens or early 20s, were rescued from a house just south of downtown Cleveland. (Their captor, Ariel Castro, hanged himself in prison in September 2013 at the beginning of a life sentence plus 1,000 years.)

In 2018, actor Ashley Judd sued disgraced producer Harvey Weinstein, alleging sexual harassment and defamation.

In 2021, Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a 48-page elections bill that Republicans said would guard against fraud and vote harvesting; Democrats and voting rights advocates said it was an attempt to make it harder for some people to vote.

In 2023, King Charles III was crowned at Westminster Abbey, in a coronation ceremony steeped in ancient ritual and at a time when the monarchy was striving to remain relevant in a fractured modern Britain.

Today's Birthdays: Baseball Hall of Famer Willie Mays is 93. Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., is 90. Rock singer Bob Seger is 79. Singer Jimmie Dale Gilmore is 79. Gospel singer-comedian Lulu Roman is 78. Actor Alan Dale is 77. Actor Richard Cox is 76. Actor Gregg Henry is 72. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair is 71. TV personality Tom Bergeron is 69. Actor Roma Downey is 64. Rock singer John Flansburgh (They Might Be Giants) is 64. Actor Julianne Phillips is 64. Actor-director George Clooney is 63. Actor Clay O'Brien is 63. Rock singer-musician Tony Scalzo (Fastball) is 60. Actor Leslie Hope is 59. Actor Geneva Carr (TV: "Bull") is 58. Rock musician Mark Bryan (Hootie and the Blowfish) is 57. Rock musician Chris Shiflett (Foo Fighters) is 54. Actor Stacey Oristano is 46. Model/TV personality Tiffany Coyne is 42. Actor Adrienne Palicki is 41. Actor Gabourey Sidibe (GA'-bah-ray SIH'-duh-bay) is 41. Actor-comedian Sasheer Zamata is 38. Rapper Meek Mill is 37. Houston Astros infielder Jose Altuve is 34. Actor-singer Naomi Scott is 31. Actor Noah Galvin is 30.