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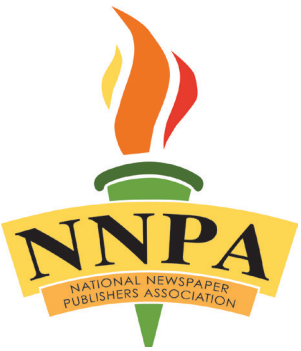
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BREAKING NEWS: IN ADDRESS TO CONGRESS, ZELENSKY URGES NO-FLY ZONE OVER UKRAINE

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White House warns COVID-19 response will soon scale down due to lack of funding

By Daniel Uria
UPI

The White House on Tuesday warned it will begin to wind down portions of its COVID-19 response as early as next week as efforts to approve additional funding in Congress have faltered.

In a letter to congressional leaders, White House COVID-19 response coordinator Jeff Zients and acting director of the Office of Management and Budgets Shalanda Young warned that a lack of funding would lead to shuttering of programs providing testing, treatment and vaccination to the uninsured and a shortage of booster doses and monoclonal antibody treatments among other consequences.

"We continue to urge Congress to provide critical funds needed to



The White House on Tuesday sent a letter to congressional leaders warning it will be forced to scale back various COVID-19 programs due to a lack of funding as early as next week. **Photo by John Angelillo/UPI**

prevent severe disruptions to our COVID response," they wrote. The White House said some of the most immediate impacts would

See COVID, page 4

Idaho passes new restrictive abortion law, banning procedure after six weeks

By Simon Druker
UPI

Lawmakers in Idaho passed a bill Monday night that would ban abortions following the detection of a fetal heartbeat.

Senate Bill 1309 will now head to the desk of Republican Gov. Brad Little to be signed into law.

The state's House of Representatives passed the 51-14, almost entirely along party lines.

The bill is dubbed the Fetal Heartbeat, Pre-born Child Protection Act and would ban abortions after six weeks, a point when many women don't yet know they're pregnant.

It would also allow family members of the fetus to take legal action against any medical professional performing an abortion. Unlike a similar abortion law passed by Texas, unrelated private citizens are not allowed to file lawsuits.

The Idaho bill, which is the first to copy the Texas law, does contain exceptions in case of incest or rape.

In those cases, women who want an abortion are required to file a police report and show it to a medical provider.

Family members can sue for a minimum of \$20,000 within four years of an abortion.

See ABORTION, page 3

Senate approves daylight saving time

By Daniel Uria
UPI

The Senate on Tuesday approved a measure to make daylight saving time permanent throughout the United States.

The measure was approved by unanimous consent and if signed into law, the bill would halt the practice of turning clocks back an hour in the fall, preserving an hour of daylight in the afternoon.

The bill's lead sponsor, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., touted potential benefits such as reduced seasonal affective disorder in the fall when darkness falls earlier in the day and more time for children to take part in outdoor activities after school. He said he had no assurance the House would take up the measure but said "it's an idea whose time has come."

"There's strong science behind it that is now showing and making people aware of the harm that clock switching has, there's an increase in heart attacks, car accidents and pedestrian accidents," he said on the Senate floor.

"The benefits of daylight saving time has been accounted for in the research: Reduced crime as there is light later in the day, decreases in seasonal depression that many feel during standard time."

Rubio said the bill would not be able to take effect until Nov. 20, 2023, stating that airlines and other

See SENATE, page 3



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OPINION

'Breadbasket of Europe': War in Ukraine drives up food prices

By Alfons Weersink & Michael von Massow
University of Guelph

Even before the Russian army crossed into Ukraine, food prices had been on the rise for the past year. But the world has seen large jumps in the cost of food over the last two months.

Globally, food is 20% more expensive than it was a year ago, with prices rising 4% since January. In Canada, the annual food inflation rate hit 6.5% in January, the highest in more than a decade.

A variety of factors have caused these price increases, including rising transportation costs, supply chain disruptions and rising commodity prices, such as corn and wheat.

The war in Ukraine will continue to push up food prices as the supply from the "breadbasket of Europe" is cut in the short term and, possibly, the long term depending on how the conflict plays out.

War and wheat prices

Ukraine and Russia represent around 10% and 20%, respectively, of global wheat production, and nearly 30% of all wheat exports come from these two countries. Most of this wheat is imported by countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

For example, Lebanon and Tunisia, two countries with vulnerable economies, import more than half of their wheat from Ukraine. Consequently, production from Ukraine, or lack thereof, influences global food security. While Ukraine has been a consistent supplier in the past, we've seen global shortages impact food security before.

The wheat export supply chains from Ukraine have been disrupted by the conflict. Port facilities in Ukraine have suspended commercial operations, preventing the outflow of the wheat crop harvested in 2021.

While the 2022 wheat crop was planted last fall, other crops need to be planted soon. Final production for all crops in Ukraine depends on farmers being in their fields, not fighting a war, to fertilize, harvest and move the crop, if the supply chain is sturdy enough.

Since Russia invaded the Ukraine, concerns about supply disruptions have pushed up wheat prices on the Chicago Board of Trade by over 50% to nearly \$13 per bushel. Prices rose by the maximum possible allowed by the board for the first five trading days of March -- an unprecedented increase.

Domestic, international impacts

Higher wheat prices will translate into higher food prices for all. But the impact will depend on the farmer share of their food dollar, and the percentage of an individual's income spent on food.

A significant increase in the price of wheat won't mean an equally large increase in the price of bread in Canada and the United States. This is because the average farmer's share for every dollar spent on a loaf of bread is 4 cents (4%). For flour, which is less processed than bread, the farmer's share is 19 cents (19%).

Overall, the farmer share of the food dollar in the United States is approximately 15%, and it's slightly higher in Canada. The greater degree of value added to the product beyond the farm gate, the lower the farm share.

In contrast, there is a strong correlation between wheat price and bread price in developing countries, where the farmer share of the food dollar can be close to 50%. Wheat price increases will have a significant impact on the price paid for wheat-based products.

Where's Biden's Comprehensive Strategy?

President Joe Biden lacks a comprehensive strategy. In 24 hours, yet another breathless flip-flop on one element of the Russian-Ukraine policy crisis. Recently, the Biden administration claimed they will restrict Russian oil exports to the United States. Or is it to the West in general? Or is it just to limit the purchasing of 500,000 barrels per day from Russia here in America? Whatever the case, the administration needs to be clear on their strategy to the American people and our allies.

The daily press release from the White House is not how to execute a foreign policy plan in a crisis while the world sits on the brink of another major military conflagration in Europe.

Does the administration have a comprehensive policy objective and plan for engagement with Russia on Ukraine and the wider Russian national security issues? The short answer is that we see no evidence of any comprehensive strategy being executed. This White House, nor any White House team, cannot survive with poor leadership and no comprehensive strategy.

There is only so much bandwidth available in every White House team to manage day-to-day operations. It is well-understood in national security policy events, intelligence developments and primary military operations that your decision-making matrix, regardless of how good it

may be, begins to fray and collapse when you have to run at full speed managing from crisis to crisis, with no time to reflect on the impact of your decisions, especially if you're not operating against a strategic policy objective with a solid plan that everyone supports. Then, as you try to seize the initiative and build momentum for a policy strategy that will diffuse the

crisis, it can become like life on a hamster wheel, where no matter how fast you run, you don't seem to get anywhere.

Biden's statement earlier in the week threatening to cut off all of Russian President Vladimir Putin's oil export revenue, or some aspect of that huge policy lever, like so many WH statements, takes time and revisions to get an accurate read on what was actually said, what it meant and when it might happen. This impulsive statement is a significant escalation step that should not be taken lightly or impulsively because the noise from Capitol Hill is getting louder. The solution to de-escalation and reaching a cooling-off period with a ceasefire is something that takes a comprehensive series of decisions and international moves in concert with an overt policy

objective. Impulsive, feel-good political pronouncements don't solve international crisis situations.

Biden needs help. His team is failing. The stakes are high and getting more dangerous by the day. Throwing ideas at the wall to see if one of them sticks is not a policy plan. Instead, it's a terrifying example of presidential weakness and a team of incompetent political people actually having to act responsibly and effectively in a pressure cooker environment -- and they all clearly lack the tools to perform. Some presidents are tested and quickly rise to the occasion after a bumpy start, like John F. Kennedy. But the Biden administration looks more and more like the Jimmy Carter presidency. Carter took three years before his administration hit the point of no return. Biden has gotten to that point in 12 months.

Biden has fallen into the policy and management trap of measured response, incremental escalation, crisis decision-making, strategic patience, etc. All these word salad phrases were created to describe a weak and ineffective decision-making matrix and personal style. A unique style that is driven by the question, "How is this decision going to play politically?" doesn't incorporate the question of, "Will this work and advance our position in the crisis?" Biden's strategy is ineffective, and Putin is now

and will remain able to anticipate and manage the U.S. government policy of throwing ideas at the wall to see which one sticks.

Before Biden makes a decision that causes more problems and complexity, the president should dispatch a presidential envoy who can engage with substance, experience and, most significantly, credibility with the Russian Army and Putin. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice come to mind. They are some of our most experienced statesmen. If the White House were to send a message to Moscow asking Putin to meet with either, I'm confident they would get a meeting. There are many reasons for this view. Some are public knowledge; some are not.

Those of us old enough to remember the Carter presidency watched this current leadership style play out in four short years that destroyed a presidency and changed the world for the worse. We have a fantastic body of research and knowledge on how to examine presidential candidates, and the historical precision of records to clearly judge how well they performed and accurately measure success or failure.

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ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS

Will Vladimir Putin threaten Ukraine with nuclear strike or surrender?

By Harlan Ullman,
Arnaud de Borchgrave
Distinguished
Columnist

When questioned about prosecuting the 2003 war in Iraq, then-Maj. Gen. David Petraeus famously asked, "Tell me how this ends?"

That question is even more relevant today regarding Ukraine. Recall Iraq disintegrated into a widespread insurgency in 2004 that Petraeus would have to suppress two years later.

During that war, then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld coined the notions of "known, knowns; known unknowns; and unknown unknowns." The last two categories apply to Ukraine. In terms of postulating what might come next in Ukraine over the coming days, weeks and even months, the unknowns are daunting.

Start with the known unknowns. What might be Russian President Vladimir Putin's more extreme options in waging this brutal and obscene war against civilians? First, Putin might expand Adolf Hitler's terror tactics of the Blitz and the bombing of London by increasing the atrocities Russia is committing in Ukraine.

Second, would a desperate Putin employ a nuclear weapon, possibly threatening to destroy Kyiv if Ukraine does not surrender, or in anger, or as a demonstration?

Or would he use chem-

ical weapons as Bashar al-Assad did in Syria. How would the civilized world react? Would the United States consider retaliation, as it did against Syria's use of chemical weapons -- or are the risks of escalation too high? In any event, these scenarios must be considered, along with a range of responses.

Third, suppose Ukraine's courageous President Volodymyr Zelensky is assassinated? Is there a succession plan in place? Or would decapitation of the leadership end the war? What would we and NATO do?

Fourth, suppose Putin controls Ukraine east of the Dnieper River. Would the country be partitioned, much as Korea and Germany were after World War II? And would that end hostilities, or would that spark an ongoing conflict or simmering gray zone war?

The unknown unknowns are the most dangerous and threatening because of their unpredictability and hugely destabilizing potential. Putin could declare that any state providing weaponry to Ukraine is a belligerent and thus can be targeted. Poland, Romania and Hungary, Ukraine's border states, could suffer punitive cyberattacks and even missile strikes to seal off roads and land transport routes that could kill or wound citizens of those countries. Would that constitute grounds for invoking NATO's Article 5? Putin could fortify Ka-

liningrad, its tiny enclave in the Baltic separated from Russia by Poland and Lithuania. Putin could send more troops to Belarus, deploying them on the western borders as a direct threat to NATO. Russia could also deploy the Baltic Fleet as a further warning.

Concurrently, what covert actions might the United States, NATO and others be undertaking to disrupt the Russians? Resupplying Ukraine with anti-air, armor and personnel weapons; logistics from body armor to food, batteries, communications, surveillance and other vital items; to, possibly, fighter aircraft and surface-to-surface missiles is top of the agenda. However, what cyberattacks, influence and information operations to affect Russian forces and the Russian public may be underway is an unknown unknown.

Further, contingency planning must be underway for a number of worse or worst-case scenarios: NATO, in the event of Russian escalation against it and its members, and Ukraine, if the government falls, whether or not one in exile or in Lviv is established. The time frame is both immediate and long term, should Ukraine descend into an insurgency. And what can be done to influence Russian elites and citizens to protest the outrageous and unconscionable invasion of Ukraine and the reign of terror waged against its citizens?

Unlike the aftermath of the sneak attacks that brought America into World War II and the Korean War, the strategic aims then were straightforward. Wage a war of unconditional surrender against Japan, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and repel the North Koreans from the South. Ukraine is far more complicated. For example, banning Russian oil and gas sales to Europe would cripple those states and hence is unacceptable, so far. And while the United States is attempting to renegotiate the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, Russia is a signatory and its assistance may be needed.

The conclusion of this cursory examination of how this conflict ends in Ukraine is incomplete. What is needed is a thorough examination of this range of knowns and unknowns to develop a broad set of options that cover these and other contingencies. The purpose is to ensure that future surprise is minimized and that steps can be put in place now to avoid or mitigate what could be a disastrous worst case.

Harlan Ullman is senior adviser at Washington's Atlantic Council, the prime author of "shock and awe" and author of "The Fifth Horseman and the New MAD: How Massive Attacks of Disruption Became the Looming Existential Danger to a Divided Nation and the World at Large." Follow him @harlankullman.



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Idaho passed new legislation Monday, would ban abortions following the detection of a fetal heartbeat, with the bill now on the desk of Gov. Brad Little (R) to sign before it becomes law. File Photo by AI Drago/UPI

Abortion

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Planned Parenthood responded to the news in a statement.

"The ban won't just deny Idahoans their constitutional right to abortion care, but also effectively eliminate care entirely for

many residents who are financially unable to travel out-of-state to obtain the care they need," reads the statement.

"This will disproportionately affect the state's Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities, people with low incomes, and those in rural areas."

Little, who was elected governor in 2018, signed a

similar Fetal Heartbeat Bill in April, banning abortions after a baby's heartbeat is detected, around five or six weeks after conception.

"We should never relent in our efforts to protect the lives of the preborn. Hundreds and hundreds of babies lose their lives every year in Idaho due to abortion, an absolute tragedy," Little said at the time.

Pfizer-BioNTech ask FDA for emergency use authorization for fourth COVID-19 shot

By Daniel Uria UPI

Pfizer and BioNTech on Tuesday requested emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for a fourth dose of their COVID-19 vaccine for older Americans.

The companies sought authorization for an additional booster dose for adults aged 65 and older who had already received a booster of any "authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccines" in the United States, citing sets of data from Israel.

"Both data sets showed evidence that an additional mRNA booster increases

immunogenicity and lowers rates of confirmed infections and severe illness," Pfizer and BioNTech wrote in a news release.

Israel began rolling out a fourth booster shot for people over the age of 60 and medical workers in January.

Pfizer and BioNTech said that analysis of 1.1 million adults aged 60 and older who had no known history of COVID-19 infection who received the booster showed infection rates two times lower and rates of severe illness four times lower than those who had received only one booster.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla told CBS News Face the Nation Sunday said he expects a fourth COVID-19

shot will be needed.

"It is necessary -- a fourth boost for right now. The protection we are getting from the third, it is good enough -- actually quite good for hospitalizations and deaths -- is not that good against infections, but doesn't last very long," he said. "But we are just submitting those data to the FDA, and then we'll see what the experts also would say outside Pfizer."

The request came the same day the White House warned that it lacks funding to provide booster shots for all Americans after Congress failed to provide additional COVID-19 resources in a \$1.5 trillion spending bill.



Second gentleman Doug Emhoff tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, the White House said. File Photo by AI Drago/UPI

Second gentleman Doug Emhoff tests positive for COVID-19

By Daniel Uria UPI

Second gentleman Doug Emhoff tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, Vice President Kamala Harris' office said.

Harris wrote on Twitter that Emhoff tested positive early Tuesday, but she had tested negative and would

continue to test herself for the virus.

"Doug is doing fine and we are grateful to be vaccinated and boosted," Harris said. "Please get vaccinated and boosted if you haven't already."

Sabrina Singh, Harris' deputy press secretary, said in a statement that Harris would not attend

an evening White House event "out of an abundance of caution" following her husband's positive test.

Harris previously joined President Joe Biden and other members of Congress at a bill signing and delivered remarks at an Equal Pay Day summit on Tuesday.

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Sniffles, Sneezes, and Allergies... Oh my!

Resfriados, estornudos y alergias... ¡Dios mío!

Yes, spring is definitely in the air. But how can you tell if those sniffles and sneezes are just allergies or if they are the symptoms of COVID-19? It's better to be safe than sorry. Old North State Medical Society is still providing free COVID-19 testing, boosters, and vaccinations for those 5 and older. For reliable information about your health and safety, rely on the physicians from Old North State Medical Society – trusted since 1887.

The Old North State Medical Society is providing FREE testing and vaccinations across the state of North Carolina. To find free testing and vaccination sites near you, visit: onsms.org/get-vaxxed

Sí, definitivamente la primavera está en el aire. Pero, ¿cómo puede saber si esos resfriados y estornudos son solo alergias o si son síntomas de COVID-19? Es mejor estar seguro que lamentar. La Sociedad Médica Old North State Medical Society todavía proporciona pruebas, refuerzos y vacunas gratuitas de COVID-19 para personas mayores de 5 años. Para obtener información confiable sobre su salud y seguridad, confíe en los médicos de Old North State Medical Society, los cuales han sido confiables desde 1887.

Old North State Medical Society está proporcionando pruebas y vacunas GRATUITAS en todo el estado de Carolina del Norte. Para localizar sitios de vacunación y pruebas gratuitas cerca de usted, visite: onsms.org/get-vaxxed.



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COVID

continued from page 1

be felt on March 22 as a fund that reimburses doctors and other medical providers for providing COVID-19 care to uninsured individuals would stop accepting new claims before ending completely on April 5.

It also warned that the federal government does not have “adequate resources” to purchase booster doses for all Americans if a potential fourth dose is needed.

“The shortages will be even more acute if we need a variant-specific booster vaccine, since we will not have any existing supply,” the letter stated.

Further, Zients and Young said the federal government would cancel plans to purchase more oral antiviral



In the letter, White House COVID-19 response coordinator Jeff Zients urged “Congress to provide critical funds needed to prevent severe disruptions to our COVID response.” **Photo by Leigh Vogel/UPI**

treatments such as Pfizer’s Paxlovid beyond the 20 million it had already secured due to the lack of funding.

Beginning next week the government would also cut state allocations of the existing supply by more than 30%.

Other impacts include efforts to prevent future out-

breaks such as scaling back surveillance of future variants, stalling research and production of vaccines to provide protection against such variants and inability to provide funding to other nations for their own COVID-19 prevention programs.

“In addition to these immediate impacts, failing to provide additional funding for the COVID response now will leave us unequipped to deal with a future surge,” Zients and Young wrote. “With cases rising abroad, scientific and medical experts have been clear that in the next couple of months we could see rising cases of COVID-19 here in the United States as well.”

The \$15.6 billion in funding to continue these programs was originally set to be included in a \$1.5 trillion government spending bill that President Joe Biden signed on Tuesday.

However, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced last week that the funding had been cut amid opposition to a provision that would use money from states that did not make use of funding provided to them under the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan to offset the cost.



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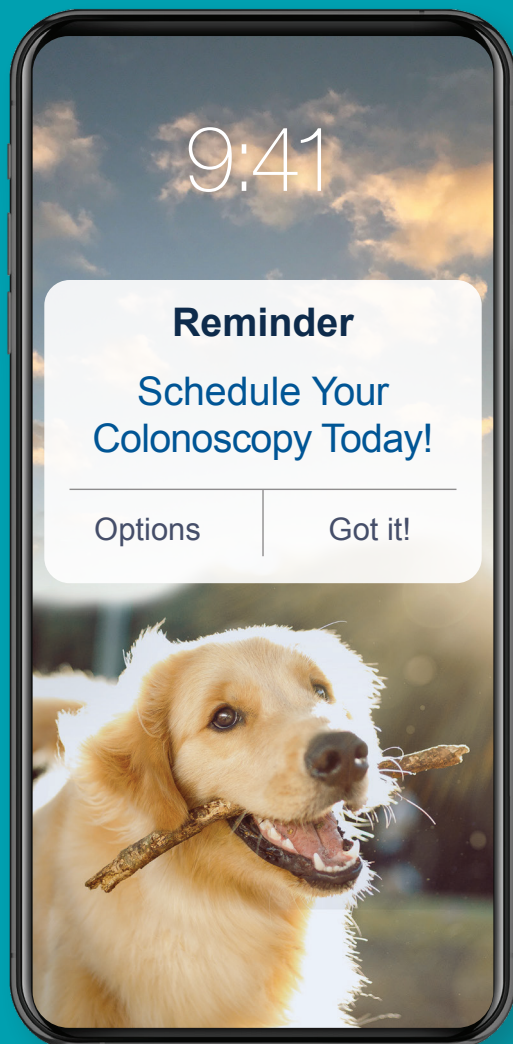
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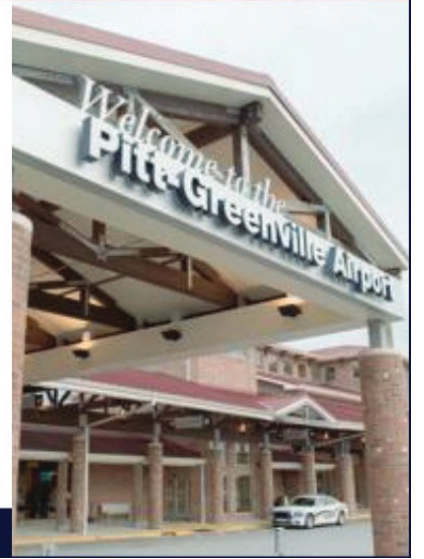
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Russia withdraws from Council of Europe

By Darryl Coote
UPI

Before the members states were to vote Tuesday night on whether to expel Russia from the Council of Europe over its invasion of Ukraine, Moscow formally announced its withdrawal from the continent's human rights watchdog.

Moscow's foreign ministry said in a statement that its withdrawal was effective Tuesday.

Russia said it has notified the council's secretary general, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, of its intention to leave the now 46-member organization.

"All responsibility for the destruction of the common humanitarian and legal space on the continent, for the consequences for the Council of Europe itself, which without Russia will lose its pan-European coordinates, will be borne by those who force us to take this step," the ministry said.

"We part with such a Council of Europe without regret."

Russia announced its withdrawal prior to the council Tuesday night voting to expel the embattled nation from its membership.

The organization had suspend-



The Council of Europe on Tuesday night voted to expel Russia over its invasion of Russia. Photo courtesy of Council of Europe

ed Russia's membership on Feb. 25, a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin attacked Ukraine, and then initiated its expulsion.

On Tuesday night, its Parliamentary Assembly unanimously agreed that Russia should no longer be a member state.

A meeting of its Committee of Ministers is also to be held Wednesday morning concerning Russia's decision to withdraw from

the council, it said.

"Through their actions in Ukraine the Russian authorities deprive the Russian people of the benefit of the most advanced human rights protection system in the world, including the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights and our vast convention system," the council's leadership said in a statement.

A day earlier, Ukrainian Prime

Minister Denys Shmyhal demanded before the council that Russia be ousted from its ranks.

Russia's attack has killed 691 Ukrainian civilians and injured 1,143 more, according to United Nations data. The war has also caused more than 3 million to flee the country.

Shmyhal told the council that it must have a "tough response" for this attack.

"Those who carried out this unprovoked and unjustified aggression cannot remain in this European family -- where human life is regarded as the highest value," he said.

The council, founded in 1949, was tasked with the mission to uphold human rights and the rule of law in Europe following the Second World War.

Russia joined the organization in 1996.

Marie Struthers, Amnesty International's director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, said Russia's decision to leave the council "is a tragedy for the victims of the Kremlin's human rights abuses."

"Outside the Council of Europe and given the further degradation of Russia's rule of law, some of the last safeguards against human rights abuses will be off limits to those who need them most in today's Russia," Struthers said in a statement.

"All stakeholders in Russia, including its legislators, should take steps to oppose this reckless move and prevent the country sliding ever deeper into an abyss defined by a total disregard for human rights."

Biden approves \$800M in aid after Ukraine's Zelensky appeals to Congress

By Daniel Uria & Clyde Hughes & Danielle Haynes
UPI

U.S. President Joe Biden announced another \$800 million in military aid for Ukraine after President Volodymyr Zelensky made a rare appeal for assistance before a joint session of Congress on Wednesday.

Biden said the military support will include 800 anti-aircraft systems, 9,000 anti-armor systems, 7,000 small arms, drones and other equipment.

"This could be a long and difficult battle," Biden said in an address from the South Court Auditorium of the White House. "But the American people will be steadfast in our support of the people of Ukraine in the face of [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's immoral, unethical attacks on civilian populations."

"We are united in our abhorrence of Putin's depraved onslaught. And we're going to continue to have their backs as they fight for their freedom, their democracy, their very survival."

Biden's announcement came hours after Zelensky made an address before a joint session of Congress and stressed urgency in taking steps to counter Russia's invasion -- especially barring them from the skies over Ukraine.

Zelensky urged lawmakers to do more to help Ukraine fend off Russian advances, which are close to entering their fourth week.

He said that the present time is Ukraine's "darkest time" and more restrictions are needed to defeat Russia and President Vladimir Putin.

"Russia has turned the Ukrainian sky into a source of death for thousands of people," he said, presenting a video that showed graphic footage on the ground in Ukraine.

"To create a no-fly zone over Ukraine, to save people, is this too much to ask? Humanitarian, no-fly zone, something that Russia would not be able to terrorize our free cities."

"If this is too much to ask, we offer an alternative. You know what kind of defense systems we need, such as 300 and similar other systems. You know how much depends on the battlefield, on the ability to use aircraft. Powerful, strong aviation to protect our people."

Biden didn't comment on Zelensky's request to create a no-fly zone over Ukraine during his announcement of new military aid.

Zelensky also urged more economic punishment for Russia.

"All American companies must leave Russia from their market, leave their market immediately because it is flooded with our blood," he said.

"Ladies and gentlemen, members of Congress, please take the lead, if you have companies in your districts who finance the Russian military machine leaving the business in Russia, you should put pressure. I'm asking to make

sure that the Russians do not receive a single penny that they use to destroy people in Ukraine."

Zelensky pointedly asked Biden for more involvement.

"I wish you to be the leader of the world," he said. "Being the leader of the world means to be the leader of peace."

Zelensky received a standing ovation before and after his address. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi introduced him with a chant meaning "glory to Ukraine" in Ukrainian.

Zelensky's appeals came as negotiators resumed peace talks on Wednesday. Zelensky said earlier in a televised address that discussions are coming along slowly and that they're beginning to "sound more realistic."

Biden has pledged significant levels of aid for Ukraine since the fighting began on Feb. 24. On Tuesday, he signed a \$1.5 trillion spending bill that includes almost \$14 billion for Ukraine that includes funding for defensive military equipment, training and help for millions of Ukrainian refugees. Combined with Wednesday's new tranche of funding, Biden has approved about \$2 billion in aid to Ukraine since his inauguration.

"With this new security funding and the drawdown authorities in this bill, we're moving further to augment support to the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their country," Biden said at

the signing.

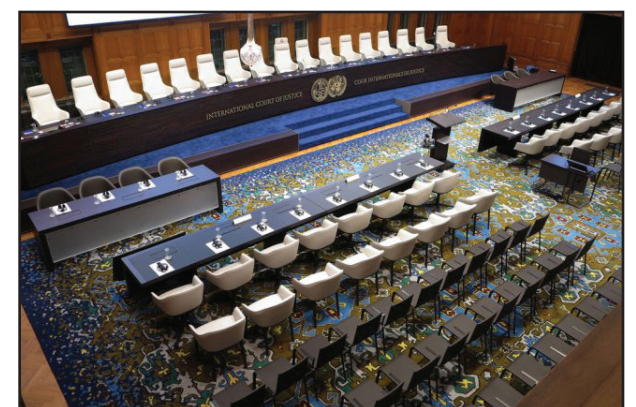
Zelensky made a similar address on Tuesday before Canadian Parliament, during which he also urged leaders in that country to support closing the airspace over Ukraine.

Earlier this month, he called NATO "weak" for failing to create a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Russian airstrikes have been deadly across Ukraine and have targeted civilian areas, such as apartment buildings in the capital Kyiv.

Zelensky has also been strong in his appeals for entirely isolating Moscow economically -- and called on British lawmakers to recognize Russia as a terrorist state.

Zelensky has traveled an unusual path to become the revered leader that he is today. At age 17, he started a career in entertainment as part of a Russian comedy program and found success during the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 2008, he starred in the Russian film Love in the Big City and its sequels in 2010 and 2014, as well as a handful of other films.

In a strange incident of art imitating life, Zelensky became the star of the Ukrainian television series Servant of the People in 2015 -- in which he played the president of Ukraine who wins election through an effective social media campaign against corruption. Netflix announced Wednesday that it's bringing the series back to the streaming platform due to popular interest.



An undated image of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Netherlands. The court ruled on Wednesday that Russia should immediately end its hostilities against Ukraine. File Photo by Ankor Light/Shutterstock

International court orders Russia to suspend war against Ukraine

By Clyde Hughes
UPI

The International Court of Justice in The Hague on Wednesday ordered Russia to immediately suspend its war against Ukraine in a move largely seen as symbolic with no one from the Kremlin attending or participating in the proceedings.

The Ukrainian government asked the United Nations' top court to take action early this month after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24 with no signs so far of a diplomatic breakthrough to end the fighting.

"The Russian Federation shall immediately suspend the military operations that it commenced on 24 February 2022 in the territory of Ukraine," the court said in its statement.

"The Russian Federation shall insure that any military or irregular armed units which

may be directed or supported by it, as well as any organizations and persons which may be subject to its control or direction, take no steps in furtherance of the military operations referred to in the point above."

The court said that Russia and Ukraine should refrain from any action that would aggravate the war.

The court, though, does not have any means of enforcing the action since United Nations sanctions can only be levied by the Security Council. Russia, as a member of that body, would have the power to single-handedly veto such action.

The court held the proceedings with Ukraine contesting Russia's formal explanation claiming its actions are an effort to stop genocide and eliminate Nazi influence. Ukraine said the explanations were nothing more than a pretext to justify an unprovoked war.

Opposition to First Black Female Supreme Court Nominee

By Mildred Robertson

It seems that defending the public is viewed as a strike against Supreme Court Judge Nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson. At least if you are a republican. As the first Black, female nominee to the nation's highest court, Judge Jackson has come under fierce scrutiny by Republican legislators, who among other things, said her background as a public defender may mean she is soft on crime. This outcry comes after many Republican legislators, even some who had supported her in the past, faced blowback when they unsuccessfully attempted to label Biden's nomination as an "affirmative action" choice.

Republicans, searching for ways to oppose this stellar nominee, have flailed about attempting to reconcile past bipartisan support for Jackson with current efforts to derail her nomination. Justice Jackson, who attended Harvard University for college and law school, began her legal career with three clerkships, including one with U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Stephen Breyer. She currently serves as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. It was April 19, 2021, when President Joe Biden nominated

Judge Jackson to the U.S. Court of Appeals. She was confirmed by the United States Senate on June 14, 2021, by a vote of 53-44. Yet less than a year later, many of these same legislators want to question her credentials.

A deeper review of her qualifications indicates that her credentials surpass several sitting justices. Judge Jackson graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University where she was editor of the Harvard Law Review. She logged six years of service as a District, Appellate, and Supreme Court judge; serving two years in each role. She has 8 years of private service experience and 5 years working for the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Top that off with 3 years of public service and 8 years as a District Judge. Her 32 years of service far exceed that of the last two Supreme Court Justices approved by the Senate; Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett.

As Republicans try to paint Jackson as a far-right liberal, her record has shown her to be a moderate Justice. Further, Jackson's life experiences have prepared her to face decisions impartially from both sides of the spectrum. Jackson has familial connections in law enforcement, as well as family members who have had

run-ins with the law. "You may have read that I have one uncle who got caught up in the drug trade and received a life sentence," said Jackson. "That is true, but law enforcement also runs in my family. In addition to my brother, I had two uncles who served decades as police officers, one of whom became the police chief in my hometown of Miami, Florida."

To that end, a major police chief's organization is throwing its support behind Judge Jackson. In a letter sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Monday, the International Association of Chiefs of Police urged senators to confirm Judge Jackson to the high court.

President Biden has clearly made an excellent choice in nominating Judge Jackson for the open seat on the Supreme Court. She is a highly qualified jurist whose record indicates that she can view issues from all sides. The record will not allow her detractors to paint her as unqualified. Her moderate record will debunk the false narrative that she will bring undue bias to the Court. They are left with no argument other than the fact that she is a black female to oppose her appointment. It is an argument that they likely will make, nonetheless.

ON THIS DATE IN HISTORY

In 1802, the U.S. Congress authorized the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

In 1827, Freedom's Journal, the first Black-owned and -operated newspaper in the United States, was published in New York.

In 1926, Robert Goddard launched the world's first liquid-fuel rocket.

In 1935, Adolf Hitler denounced the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty and immediately ordered general military conscription in Germany.

In 1945, the Island of Iwo Jima was declared secure by U.S. forces in one of the major World War II conflicts in the Pacific.

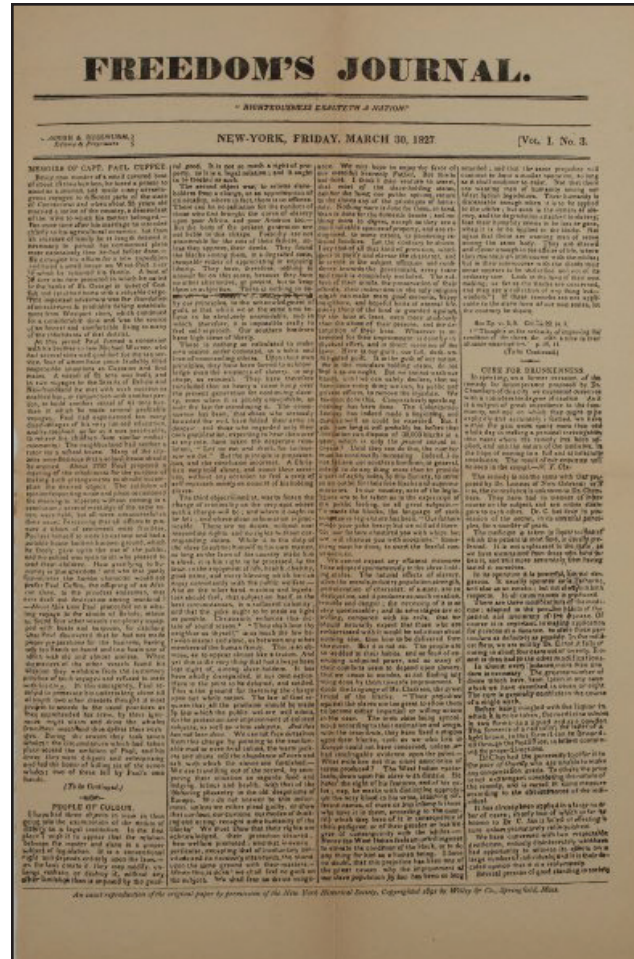
In 1956, the Rev. A. Edward Banks became the 25th minister to be arrested for allegedly violating the seldom-used Alabama state anti-boycott law. The boycott of Montgomery, Ala., buses began after Rosa Parks was fined \$10 for refusing to surrender her seat to a white person.

In 1966, NASA astronauts Neil Armstrong and David Scott docked their Gemini 8 space vehicle with an Agena craft, a first in orbital history.

In 1968, about 300 Vietnamese villagers died at the hands of U.S. troops in what came to be known as the My Lai massacre.

In 1984, CIA station chief in Beirut, William Buckley, was kidnapped by members of Hezbollah. His captors claimed that they had executed Buckley on Oct. 4, 1985, though it's believed he died of a heart attack sometime in June 1985, following nearly 15 months of torture.

In 1985, Terry Anderson, Beirut bureau chief for the Associated Press, was



kidnapped by members of Hezbollah. He would remain in captivity for more than six years, before securing his release on Dec. 4, 1991.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan ordered 3,200 U.S. troops sent to Honduras in what the White House described as "a measured response" to a Nicaraguan invasion directed against U.S.-backed Contra rebels.

In 1994, the International Atomic Energy Agency said North Korea barred its inspectors from checking one of the nation's seven nuclear sites.

In 2009, Japan reported its gross domestic product fell at a 12.7 percent annual rate in the last quarter of 2008, plunging the country into what experts said was its worst financial crisis since

World War II.

In 2014, results of a referendum showed that people in Crimea voted overwhelmingly for the autonomous Black Sea peninsula to break from Ukraine and join Russia.

In 2021, a series of shootings at three massage parlors in the Atlanta area left eight people dead. Six of the slain victims were Asian women, prompting questions of whether the shootings were a hate crime amid rising anti-Asian sentiment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in China. The accused gunman told police he was motivated by a conflict between sexual addiction and his Christianity, and he was sentenced to life in prison without the chance of parole.

Kamala Harris to deliver remarks on aid for HBCUs suffering bomb threats

By Sommer Brokaw UPI

Vice President Kamala Harris will deliver remarks Wednesday on grant funds to aid over a third of historically Black colleges and universities that have had bomb scares since early January, including repeated threats.

Harris, who is a Howard University alumna and first graduate of an HBCU to become the vice president of the United States, will deliver the remarks during a White House event on public safety at 3 p.m. Wednesday.

The grant funds will come from the U.S. Department of Education's Project School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV) program, a White House statement on the event said.

Projects SERV provides limited short-term funding to schools that have experienced traumatic incidents to assist in restoring a safe environment conducive to learning, according to the education department's statement on the grant funds for the impacted HBCUs.

Typical awards under the program range from \$50,000 to \$150,000 per school.

No explosive devices have been found, but the recent and repeated bomb threats have disrupted learning, diverted critical resources to emergency responses and increased burden on campus mental health systems, according to

the White House statement.

HBCUs were founded to educate Black people in the Jim Crow era, when Black people were terrorized by White supremacist mob lynching incidents, especially in the South, and refused entry into other colleges due to racial discrimination.

"The recent bomb threats experienced by HBCUs have shaken students and fractured their sense of safety and belonging, which are critical to their academic success and wellbeing," U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said in a statement ahead of the event. "We, at the Department of Education, recognize how these threats evoke a painful history of violence against Black Americans in this country that is especially traumatizing to HBCU students, faculty, and staff."

"Today's announcement will improve access to Project SERV grants for HBCUs as these institutions work to address students' mental health needs, shore up campus security, and restore learning environments so that they can get back to doing what they do best -- educating the next generation of great leaders."

Last month, Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin called for emergency aid from state lawmakers as bomb threats to HBCU's across the country recently hit his state.

Bomb threats have targeted 57 institutions, in-

cluding HBCUs, houses of worship, and other faith-based and academic institutions across the nation from Jan. 4 to Feb. 16, according to an FBI update on the matter last month.

The FBI began its ongoing investigation of the bomb scares as "racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism and hate crimes," earlier this year.

Several HBCUs have received bomb threats multiple times this year, with Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga., and Howard University in Washington, D.C., being among them.

11 Alive released a recording of the first of at least three bomb threats Spelman received.

"I picked this school, university because of this reason, there are too many Black students in it," the caller said in the recording.

Howard University has been targeted on at least four occasions in recent months.

The Department of Homeland Security warned last month of a heightened threat of domestic and foreign terrorism following recent bomb threats to HBCUs and a hostage incident at a synagogue in Texas the prior month.

The FBI identified six juveniles as persons of interest in the series of HBCU bomb threats last month, but a law enforcement official later told CNN no arrests had been made.

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KELVIN JAY EBRON

DIS WEAPON OCC DWELL/MOVING VEH — FELONY
 DISCHARGE WEAPON WITHIN CITY LIMITS — MISDEMEANOR
 POSSESS DRUG PARAPHERNALIA — MISDEMEANOR
 FALSE REPORT TO POLICE STATION — MISDEMEANOR



WILLIAM BULLOCK BATTLE

BREAKING AND OR ENTERING — FELONY
 FELONY LARCENY — FELONY
 POSSESSION OF BURGLARY TOOLS — FELONY
 FTA-OBTAIN PROPERTY FALSE PRETENSE — FELONY



RUSSELL AARON BURNS

SEXT ACT SUB PARENT/CUSTODIAN — FELONY



JOANNE MARIE HODGES

LARCENY-PV — FELONY
 FTA-MISDEMEANOR LARCENY — MISDEMEANOR



ALLEN RAY HARDISON

COMMUNICATING A THREAT OF MASS VIOLENCE
 ON EDUCATIONAL PROPE — FELONY
 CYBERSTALKING — MISDEMEANOR
 FALSE BOMB REPORT PUBLIC BLDG — FELONY



GENENA TYWON SMITH

PROBATION VIOLATION-POSS SCHEDULE II — FELONY



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SECOND DEGREE FORCIBLE RAPE — FELONY
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Court delays Maryland's primary elections to review district maps

By Darryl Coote
UPI

The Court of Appeals of Maryland has delayed the state's gubernatorial primary elections by three weeks to allow for litigation concerning new legislation maps to be concluded.

The court on Tuesday issued the order, which was signed by Chief Judge Joseph Getty, to move the elections scheduled for June 28 to July 19. It also moved the filing deadline for candidates to April 15.

The decision to delay the primaries was made as the court is considering a challenge to the 2022 legislative districting plan that was enacted by the state's General Assembly in December but was then vetoed by the state's Republican governor, Larry Hogan.

However, the Democrats, who hold supermajorities in both the House and Senate, overruled the veto.

Hogan argued Dec. 9 when he announced his veto that the

Democrat-supported maps are antidemocratic, gerrymandered and "a shameful violation of state and federal law."

After the decision was announced Tuesday, Hogan thanked the Court of Appeals on social media.

"This victory ensures that citizens of Maryland will have their day in court to fight for free and fair elections," he said. "The legislature's maps make the worst gerrymandering in America even worse, and cannot stand."

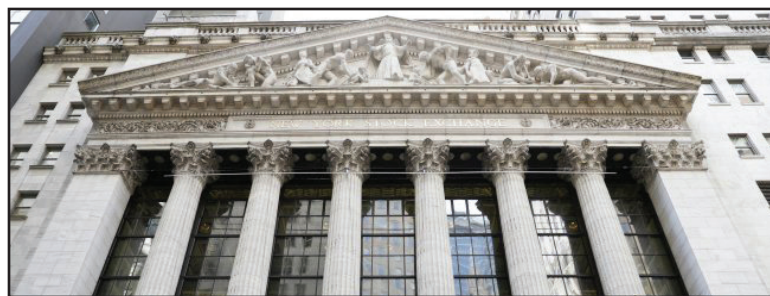
The court said it was reviewing the maps after having received "timely-filed petitions challenging" their legality.

Tuesday's action was the second court acted concerning the elections after it moved the filing deadlines a month from Feb. 22 to March 22.

Having served two consecutive terms as governor, Hogan is barred from running in the upcoming election, leaving three Republicans and 10 Democrats to fight over his vacant seat.



Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan celebrated the state's court of appeals' decision on Tuesday to move Maryland's gubernatorial primary elections to allow for the review of new congressional maps. Pool File Photo by Chris Kleponis/UPI



Rising inflation pushes Federal Reserve to hike interest rates for 1st time since 2018

By Clyde Hughes
UPI

For the first time since 2018, the U.S. central bank voted to increase short-term interest rates during a policy meeting on Wednesday, a measure to fight rising inflation that's being affected by high gas prices and Russia's war in Ukraine.

The Federal Reserve concluded its policy meeting on Wednesday afternoon, at which time it announced a quarter-point rate increase. The rate has been near zero since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"With appropriate firming in the stance of monetary policy, the committee expects inflation to return to its 2% objective and the labor market to remain strong," the Federal Open Market Committee said in a statement. "In support of these goals, the committee decided to raise the target range for the federal funds rate to 1/4 to 1/2% and anticipates that ongoing increases in the target range will be appropriate."

The primary factors pressing the need for a rate hike include the rising costs of fuel and food. Government figures for February showed that U.S. inflation rose on a 12-month basis to the highest level in 40 years.

Nine members of the committee voted for the quarter-point increase. One member, James Bullard, voted against the move in favor of a steeper half-point increase.

The Federal Reserve is also facing fresh uncertainties, including the fighting in Ukraine that's led to a U.S. oil embargo and rising prices at the pump. A new spike in coronavirus cases in China may also cause new supply chain issues.

Fed Chairman Jerome Pow-

ell told lawmakers earlier this month that he favored a rate hike at Wednesday's meeting.

"Making appropriate monetary policy in this environment requires a recognition that the economy evolves in unexpected ways," he said. "We will need to be nimble in responding to incoming data and the evolving outlook."

The Fed on Wednesday also indicated that there will be several more rate hikes before the end of 2022 -- and it expects inflation to remain high and end the year at about 4.3%.

"The economy is coming into full employment rapidly and inflation is way too high. You add that all up and that means they've got to raise rates," Jim Caron, chief fixed-income strategist at Morgan Stanley Investment Management, told CNBC.

"The degree of uncertainty is extraordinary. They told us what they were going to do. They did that to get rid of the uncertainty."

Experts say that Americans can expect to see the impact of the rate hike in their credit card and mortgage payments, but they should see a benefit to other areas like savings accounts, for example.

The Fed's announcement on Wednesday comes a day after Sarah Bloom Raskin withdrew her name from consideration as President Joe Biden's nominee to a seat on the Fed's board of governors.

The former deputy treasury secretary made the decision to withdraw her name after Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, a frequent swing voter, said he'd vote to oppose her nomination, leaving Democrats one vote short of confirmation.

Congress, families mark 1-year anniversary of Atlanta spa shootings

By Danielle Haynes
UPI

Members of Congress marked the one-year anniversary of a series of deadly shootings in Atlanta that Rep. Judy Chu said shocked Americans "awake to the reality of Asian hate."

Chu, chairwoman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, opened the somber event on the steps to the U.S. Capitol with a remembrance of the shootings, which left eight people dead.

"I will never forget the moment that one year ago today a gunman entered three Asian-owned spas and killed eight people, including six Asian women," she said. "He was so deliberate in his desire to kill Asian women that he drove 27 miles between the spas to ensure he would hit his targets."

"America was finally shocked awake to the reality of anti-Asian hate."

The shootings came amid rising anti-Asian rhetoric and violence in the United States in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in China. According to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, anti-Asian hate crimes increased by 339% in 2021 compared to a year prior.

The gunman, though, told police he was motivated by a conflict between sexual addiction and his Christianity, and he was sentenced to life in prison without the chance of parole.

Among the victims were Daoyou Feng, 44; Hyun Jung Grant, 51; Suncha Kim, 69; Paul Andre Michels, 54; Soon Chung Park, 74; Xiaojie Tan, 49; Delaina Ashley Yaun, 33; and Yong Ae Yue, 63. A ninth victim, Elcias Hernandez-Ortiz, survived the gunshot wound he received.

The families of the victims were expected to attend local memorial events to remember their loved ones and bring awareness to anti-Asian crimes, The Atlanta

Journal-Constitution reported. The Asian Justice Rally-Break the Silence rally is expected to be held Wednesday afternoon at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot, and a memorial is scheduled for Wednesday evening at the Korean American Center in Norcross, Ga.

Hernandez-Ortiz told the Journal-Constitution he was "initially very angry" after he was injured in the shooting.

"But as days passed on and I had time to reflect, I realized I was so thankful to God for saving my life," he added.

Randy Park, Hyun's son, recently wrote on a fundraising website that his mother always ended her night by telling both her sons, "I love you."

"Not a day goes by where we don't think about our mother and what transpired," he wrote. "The cruel reality is that time cannot be reversed and the act undone. All we can do now is hold on to her memory and live a fulfilling life."

Maryland teacher stops for fried chicken, wins \$50,000 from scratch-off ticket

By Wade Sheridan
UPI

A teacher from Gaithersburg, Md., won \$50,000 from a scratch-off lottery ticket after she stopped to grab fried chicken with her kids.

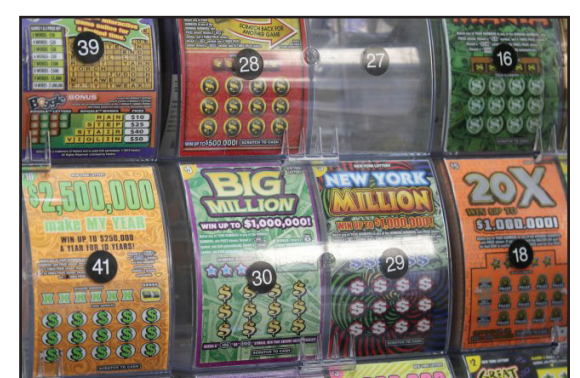
The woman, who was a lottery novice, made the stop at Royal Farms in Churchtown where she bought three \$5 scratch-off tickets from a Maryland Lottery vending machine at the suggestion of her 14 and 16-year-old kids.

The teacher discovered that her Diamond Mine X9 scratch-off ticket was a winner, and was shocked at the amount she earned when handing the ticket over to the store clerk.

She then called her husband, who accompanied her to Lottery headquarters to cash in the ticket.

"Of course, I didn't believe them," the husband said.

"I called work to let them know I wouldn't be coming in because I had an appointment at the Lottery to claim a



File Photo by John Angelillo/UPI

ticket, and they said that was the best Monday excuse they had ever heard," the woman said. The woman said the

money will go towards college savings for her kids. The family also ate crabs as part of a celebratory meal.



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Buccaneers' Tom Brady ends brief NFL hiatus, cites 'unfinished business'

By Alex Butler
UPI

Tom Brady, who announced his retirement less than two months ago, will return to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for a 23rd season in 2022, he said Sunday on social media.

"These past two months I have realized my place is still on the field and not in the stands," Brady wrote on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. "That time will come. But it's not now."

"I love my teammates, and I love my supportive family. Without them, none of this is possible. I'm coming back for my 23rd season in Tampa. We have unfinished business."

Brady, 44, announced Feb. 1 that he was "not going to make" the "competitive commitment" to play football anymore. The Buccaneers, the NFL and Brady's former team, the New England Patriots, issued statements to wish the future Hall of Famer well in retirement.

The Buccaneers later left



Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady will return for a 23rd season in 2022. **File Photo by Steve Nesius/UPI**

the door open for Brady's return when asked about it at the NFL Scouting Combine earlier this month in Indianapolis.

"That door is never closed," coach Bruce Arians said. "Whenever Tom wants to come back, he's back. ... If Tom wants to come back, we'll have plenty of money for him."

Brady led the NFL with 5,316 yards and 43 passing scores in 17 starts last season. He also completed 67.5% of his throws for the 13-4 Buccaneers.

The seven-time Super Bowl champion, three-time MVP and 15-time Pro Bowl selection ranks No. 1 in NFL history with 624 passing touchdowns,

84,520 passing yards and 243 regular-season wins.

Brady remains signed through the 2022 season. His decision to return is expected to impact the desire of several players, who were set to hit the open market, to return to the franchise next season.

The NFL's free agency period starts Wednesday.



Former Dallas Cowboys defender Randy Gregory (94) will play for the Denver Broncos in 2022. **File Photo by Terry Schmitt/UPI**

Defensive end Randy Gregory snubs Cowboys offer, will join Broncos

By Alex Butler
UPI

Defensive end Randy Gregory will sign with the Denver Broncos, and not the Dallas Cowboys, despite his former team's multiple announcements Tuesday that he decided to re-sign with the franchise in free agency.

Sources told USA Today, NFL Network and ESPN that Gregory and the Broncos agreed to a five-year, \$70 million pact that includes \$28 million guaranteed. Those reports came just hours after the Cowboys posted news of Gregory's alleged re-signing on their official website and Twitter account.

Gregory's new pact can't become official until 4 p.m. EDT Wednesday, the start of the new league year.

Sources also told NFL Network, ESPN and USA Today on Tuesday that the Cowboys and safety Malik Hooker agreed to a two-year, \$8 million deal.

The Cowboys and defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence also agreed to a new contract on Monday. That deal will be worth \$40 million over three years

and includes \$30 million guaranteed.

Gregory, 29, was a second-round pick by the Cowboys in the 2015 NFL Draft. The five-year veteran totaled six sacks, three forced fumbles, a fumble recovery, an interception and a pass defensed in 12 games last season. Gregory totaled 3.5 sacks in 10 games in 2020.

The 6-foot-5, 255-pound pass rusher missed nearly three full seasons due to suspensions from various violations of the NFL's substance abuse policy.

Hooker, 25, entered the league as the No. 15 overall pick by the Indianapolis Colts in the 2017 NFL Draft. He joined the Cowboys last off-season as a free agent. Hooker totaled 44 tackles, two passes defensed and an interception in 15 games last season. He totaled three starts for the Cowboys.

Gregory and Hooker were on track to become free agents Wednesday afternoon. Lawrence already was under contract through 2022, but his new pact will reduce his impact on the Cowboys' salary cap by \$13 for next season.

Cleveland Browns release Jarvis Landry

By Alex Butler
UPI

The Cleveland Browns terminated the contract of wide receiver Jarvis Landry, the team announced Monday. He will become a free agent.

Landry, 29, was under contract for a non-guaranteed base salary of \$14.3 million in 2022, the final year of his pact with the AFC North franchise. Landry's release will save the Browns nearly \$15 million in salary cap space.

The five-time Pro Bowl selection led the team with 52 catches in 12 starts last season. He totaled 570

yards and two scores. Landry, 29, joined the Browns in a 2018 trade from the Miami Dolphins.

"The trade for Jarvis Landry in 2018 was a key moment for our organization," Browns general manager Andrew Berry said in a news release. "Jarvis' on-field production and fiery competitiveness speaks for itself, but his leadership and team-oriented attitude impacted our culture in a way that will last in time even beyond his release."

"These decisions are always difficult, but we wish Jarvis well and we look forward to the day when he returns as a storied Browns alumnus."

Landry totaled 288 catches for 3,560 receiving yards and 120 rushing yards and four rushing scores over his four-year tenure with the Browns. The 2017 NFL receptions leader averaged 100 catches over his first four seasons with the Dolphins, but slipped to an average of 72 receptions per season over his last four campaigns.

Sources told NFL Network, ESPN and The Athletic on Saturday that the Dallas Cowboys agreed to send wide receiver Amari Cooper and a sixth-round draft pick to the Browns in exchange for a fifth-round pick and a sixth-round pick.

Wrestling legend, two-time WWE Hall of Famer Scott Hall dies at 63

By Connor Groot
UPI

Scott Hall, a two-time WWE Hall of Famer who also competed as "Razor Ramon," died Monday after his family took him off life support. He was 63.

"WWE is saddened to learn that two-time WWE Hall of Famer Scott Hall has passed away," the company said in a statement on Twitter. "WWE extends its condolences to Hall's family, friends and fans."

Hall's impending death was revealed Sunday evening by his longtime tag team partner and close friend Kevin Nash on Instagram after multiple reports surfaced that Hall had been put on life support following multiple heart attacks due to complications from an emergency hip replacement procedure.

"I'm going to lose the one person on this planet I've spent more of my life with than anyone else," Nash wrote on social media. "I love Scott with all my heart but now I have to prepare my life without him in the present. I've been blessed to have a friend that took me at face value and I him."

WWE is saddened to learn that two-time WWE Hall of Famer Scott Hall has passed away.

WWE extends its condolences to Hall's family, friends and fans. pic.twitter.com/jgqL3WizOS—WWE (@WWE) March 15, 2022

Hall began his professional wrestling career in 1984, performing with various organizations before joining World Championship Wrestling in 1991 as "The Diamond Studd."

In 1992, Hall signed a deal with WWE and introduced fans

to the "Bad Guy" character of "Razor Ramon." He became a four-time Intercontinental Champion and one of WWE's top personas, participating in memorable rivalries against Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels, Nash and many others.

Hall returned to WCW in 1996 and joined Hulk Hogan and Nash as the founding members of the nWo (New World Order) faction, ushering in the "Monday Night Wars" era and revolutionizing the sports-entertainment industry.

After his retirement, Hall was inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame as "Razor Ramon" in 2014 and again as a member of the nWo in 2020.

Hall is survived by his son, Cody, whom he trained to be a pro wrestler, and his daughter, Cassidy.



Two-time WWE Hall of Famer Scott "Razor Ramon" Hall, shown April 5, 2014, was a four-time Intercontinental Champion and one of WWE's top personas in the 1990s. **Photo courtesy of Miguel Discart/Wikimedia Commons**

La Voz Latina

FIFA suspends Russia from World Cup; NHL condemns invasion of Ukraine

By Connor Groot
UPI

FIFA has booted Russia out of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar in response to last week's Russian invasion of Ukraine.

FIFA, the world governing body of soccer, and the European association, UEFA, released a joint statement Monday confirming that all Russian national teams and clubs have been suspended indefinitely due to the conflict in Ukraine.

"Following the initial decisions adopted by the FIFA Council and the UEFA Executive Committee, which envisaged the adoption of additional measures, FIFA and UEFA have today decided together that all Russian teams, whether national representative teams or club teams, shall be suspended from participation in both FIFA and UEFA competitions until further notice," the statement said.

"These decisions were adopted today by the Bureau of the FIFA Council and the Executive Committee of UEFA, respectively the highest decision-making bodies of both institutions on such urgent matters.



The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Winner's Trophy sits on display Feb. 22 in Warsaw, Poland. Photo by Leszek Szymanski/EPA-EFE

"Football is fully united here and in full solidarity with all the people affected in Ukraine. Both Presidents hope that the situation in Ukraine will improve significantly and rapidly so that football can again be a vector for unity and peace amongst people."

Russia was scheduled to play Poland in a semifinal match ahead of a potential final against Sweden or the Czech Republic in March. The Russian women's team was to compete in the European Cham-

pionships that currently are set for July in England.

Spartak Moscow also was removed from the Europa League, meaning their round of 16 opponent, RB Leipzig, will be given a bye to the quarterfinals of the tournament.

In addition to those moves, UEFA confirmed it was canceling its deal with sponsor Gazprom -- a Russian energy company -- which is worth about \$44.9 million each year to the organization.

"UEFA has today decided to end its partnership with Gazprom across all competitions," UEFA said in a separate news release. "The decision is effective immediately and covers all existing agreements including the UEFA Champions League, UEFA national team competitions and UEFA EURO 2024."

UEFA's decision comes after Saint Petersburg was removed as the host city for this season's Champions League final. Paris is now set to host the premier fixture instead of the Russian city.

Also Monday, the NHL condemned Russia and outlined measures it has put in place as a reprimand for the country's actions.

"The National Hockey League condemns Russia's invasion of Ukraine and urges a peaceful resolution as quickly as possible," the NHL said in a statement. "Effective immediately, we are suspending our relationships with our business partners in Russia and we are pausing our Russian language social and digital media sites.

"In addition, we are discontinuing any consideration of Russia as a location for any future com-

petitions involving the NHL. We also remain concerned about the well-being of the players from Russia, who play in the NHL on behalf of their NHL clubs, and not on behalf of Russia. We understand they and their families are being placed in an extremely difficult position."

Moving forward, the NHL plans to remove its games from Russian-based Yandex, one of Europe's largest internet companies. That partnership dates back to 2019, and the sides agreed on a multiyear extension earlier this year.

The NHL also intends to temporarily halt its relationship with Russia betting partner Liga Stavok.

Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine last week, sparking significant international backlash. The NHL's denouncement of the attack came shortly after the International Ice Hockey Federation issued a similar decree against Russia.

In its statement, the IIHF said it has banned teams from Russia and Belarus from taking part in international hockey events "until further notice." The organization also noted that it will relocate the 2023 World Junior Championship tournament out of Russia.

Lin-Manuel Miranda stars in comedic ad for 'Encanto' pill on 'Kimmel'

By Wade Sheridan
UPI

Lin-Manuel Miranda wants to help fans curb their cravings for Encanto music in a new comedic ad that aired on Jimmy Kimmel Live.

Miranda, who wrote the songs for the Encanto soundtrack, helps advertise a pill named Encantix in the clip, which was released on Monday.

The pill, which is meant to be placed into the ears of fans, will cut down on the amount of times families have to listen to Encanto tracks such as "We Don't Talk About Bruno."

"Encantix is not intended for use to curb Hamilton, Moana or any other Disney musicals. Call your doctor if you can't stop talking about Bruno for more than four hours. Encantix may cause explosive jazz hands," a voice over for the ad says before Miranda's hands are blown off.

The soundtrack to Encanto was recently the No. 1 album in the U.S. for an eighth week.



Lin-Manuel Miranda stars in a comedic advertisement for an "Encanto" pill on "Jimmy Kimmel Live." File Photo by Jim Ruymen/UPI

Miranda also discussed the success of the soundtrack and how his son is proud of "We Don't Talk About Bruno" with Kimmel.

"I'm peaking now. I know I will not be cool very soon to my children so I'm enjoying this moment," Miranda said.

Alia Bhatt joins Gal Gadot in spy thriller 'Heart of Stone'

By Annie Martin
UPI

Alia Bhatt has joined the cast of the Netflix film Heart of Stone.

The streaming service confirmed Monday that Bhatt, 28, will star with Gal Gadot and Jamie Dornan in the new spy thriller.

Heart of Stone will mark Bhatt's English-language debut in a major studio film. The Indian-born British actress is well-known in Bollywood and has starred in such films as Highway, Uda Punjab and Ganubai Kathiawadi.

Bhatt confirmed her casting in a post on Instagram. Her mom, actress Soni Razdan, and

actor Arjun Kapoor were among those to congratulate Bhatt in the comments.

"Congratulations," Razdan wrote alongside celebratory emojis.

"Mini Meryl's at it again..." Kapoor said, comparing Bhatt to Meryl Streep.

Heart of Stone is written by Greg Rucka and Allison Schroeder and directed by Tom Harper. Rucka, Harper and Patty Whitcher will executive produce the film, according to Deadline.

Gadot plays Diana Prince, aka Wonder Woman, in the DC Extended Universe, while Dornan is known for the 50 Shades of Grey films.

DC's 'Blue Beetle' film casts Harvey Guillén, Bruna Marquezine

By Wade Sheridan
UPI

Harvey Guillén, Bruna Marquezine and Belissa Escobedo have joined the cast of DC Comics' Blue Beetle.

Guillén's role is being kept under wraps while Marquezine will portray Penny, the female lead of the film and love interest for Blue Beetle, a Latino superhero.

Xolo Maridueña (Cobra Kai) is taking on the lead role of Jamie Reyes, who becomes the Blue Beetle after an alien scarab is implanted into his spine. Escobedo will star as Jamie's younger sister Milagros.

The scarab, which can communicate with Jaime, gives him armor and a host of powers including the ability to fly and use alien weapons.

Guillén is best known for star-



Harvey Guillen has joined the cast of upcoming comic book film "Blue Beetle." File Photo by Jim Ruymen/UPI

ring in FX's What We Do in the Shadows. Marquezine has starred in Brazilian telenovelas Women in Love and God Save the King. Escobedo is set to star in Disney's Hocus Pocus 2.

Angel Manuel Soto (Charm City Kings) is serving as director, based off a script by Gareth Dunnet-Alcocer (Miss Bala). Blue Beetle is set to hit theaters on Aug. 18, 2023.

MLB owners ratify new labor deal to end lockout, preserve 162-game season

By Connor Grott
& Alex Butler
UPI

Major League Baseball's team owners voted unanimously to ratify a new collective bargaining agreement Thursday, officially ending MLB's 99-day lockout and clearing the way for a 162-game regular season that will begin April 7.

"I am genuinely thrilled to say Major League Baseball is back and we're going to play 162 games," MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred said during a news conference. "I want to start by apologizing to our fans. I know the last few months have been difficult."

Earlier Thursday, MLB owners and the players' union reached an agreement on a new labor deal, but the owners needed to sign off on the agreement. Now official after a unanimous 30-0 vote, MLB's three-month labor dispute comes to an end and spring training quickly approaches.

With the conclusion of the second-longest work stoppage in baseball's history, spring training camps

will open Sunday, and free-agent signings can begin Thursday night.

The agreement materialized after discussions heated up this week, when the league made a proposal that significantly bridged the gap in the competitive-balance tax -- a key issue in the final stages of talks.

A disagreement about an international draft threatened negotiations and caused MLB to cancel two additional regular-season series Wednesday, but those issues were resolved Thursday morning. The league then delivered a full proposal to the MLBPA, which it voted to accept by a 26-12 margin.

The new collective bargaining agreement covers almost all aspects of the sport, but baseball's core economics were spotlighted in the negotiations.

Along with the new CBT -- which jumps from \$230 million to \$244 million over the five-year deal -- the minimum salary for players with less than three years of Major League service time increases from \$570,500 to \$700,000, eventually growing to \$780,000.

In addition, a bonus pool worth \$50 million will be distributed among those younger players who have yet to reach arbitration.

Other elements of the deal include: post-season expansion to 12 teams; advertisements on player jerseys and helmets; a designated hitter in the National League; implementation of a draft lottery; and a 45-day window for MLB to make rule changes -- among them a pitch clock, larger bases and a ban on shifts in the 2023 season.

Negotiations centered on a new bargaining agreement started last year and moved slowly leading up to the Dec. 1 expiration of the previous agreement. The league and players' union made little progress in the months prior, and owners locked out the players just after midnight Dec. 2.

Talks didn't resume until 43 days later, and by the time the scheduled opening of spring training in mid-February arrived, the gaps between the sides remained significant enough that the chance of losing regular-season games seemed certain.