

Fuel in tap water alarms Pearl Harbor military families

By AUDREY McAVOY

Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Cheri Burness' dog was the first to signal something was wrong with their tap water. He stopped drinking it two weeks ago. Then Burness started feeling stomach cramps. Her 12-year-old daughter was nauseous.

"It was just getting worse every day," said Burness, whose husband is in the Navy.

Their family is among hundreds of military families living near Pearl Harbor with similar complaints after the Navy's water system somehow became contaminated by petroleum.

The problems have afflicted one of the most important Navy bases in the world, home to submarines,

ships and the commander of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region. The issues may even threaten one of Honolulu's most important aquifers and water sources. The Navy said Thursday that tests had identified petroleum in its Red Hill well, which taps into an aquifer near the base. Rear Adm. Blake Converse, Pacific Fleet deputy commander, told a town hall meeting the Navy took this well offline on Sunday because it was the closest well to affected housing areas.

Converse said the Navy will flush clean water through its distribution system to clear residual petroleum products from the water.

Continued on next page



This photo shows a tunnel inside the Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on Jan. 26, 2018.

Associated Press

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PAULA RIDERSTAP SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	Happy Hour 12 - 1 / 4 - 6 / 9 - 10		KARAOKE HAPPY HOUR 9:00 - 11:00pm			

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The process, followed by testing to make sure the water meets Environmental Protection Agency drinking standards, could take four to 10 days, he said.

The Navy will also investigate how contaminants got into the well and fix it, he said.

In the meantime, military officials say they will help affected families move into hotels or new homes.

The crisis came after the Navy on Nov. 22 said a water and fuel mixture had leaked into a fire suppression system drain line in a tunnel at a massive fuel storage facility 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) inland of Pearl Harbor. The Navy said it removed about 14,000 gallons (53,000 liters) of the mixture, and said the liquid hadn't leaked into the environment.

The Navy said so far it's received calls about a fuel odor or physical ailments from 680 homes in Navy housing and 270 in Army housing on the Navy's water system. The Navy water system serves 93,000 people.

In the days after Thanksgiving, Burness' daughter felt so sick she didn't want to eat any leftovers, including potatoes, turnips and carrots that had been boiled in water.

"I don't want you to have to throw out food because I know it's expensive, but I can't eat this, Mom," Burness said her daughter told her.

On Sunday, Burness started seeing comments on social media from military families saying their tap water smelled like fuel. She didn't smell it, but people told her to turn on her hot water and check. She did and smelled it too.

She told her family not to drink the water and not to wash their hair or faces with it. She ordered private



This 2021 photo provided by Cheri Burness shows Burness and her family, including dog Lilikoi, in a car in Honolulu.

Associated Press

water delivery for \$120 a month. The family has mostly been eating off plastic and paper plates or dining out.

On Monday, when she gave her dog some bottled water, he immediately drank a full liter's worth and then drank two more liters over the next 12 hours.

The Navy has since started distributing bottled water and said Marines would set up showers and laundry fa-

cilities connected to clean water. It is also setting up dedicated medical clinics. Environmental and Native Hawaiian groups, meanwhile, are demanding a meeting with Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro. He's scheduled to visit Hawaii next week to attend a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Burness said her stomach

cramps are about 85% better, but not over. Her daughter's nausea has improved. But they are both now complaining of breathing issues.

Burness has been frustrated with the Navy's response, which she believes has been dismissive of families' concerns. She pointed to a Monday email from the commander of Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam that told residents the Navy was

testing water samples but it had no immediate indication the water wasn't safe. His email said he and his staff were drinking the water.

"All they had to do was say, 'We see that there's a problem, we don't know what it is, and we're going to do whatever it takes to find out and fix it.' That's all they had to do. And instead, we got: 'Nope. Looks good. Smells fine. Bye,'" Burness said.

Navy Region Hawaii, which oversees all Navy installations in the state, said the commander's email was sent when "numbers of concerns were still very low."

"Since then, the Navy has aggressively increased sampling, testing, communication to families and others impacted, as well as started response teams of experts to address the issues we all are facing," the command said in a statement.

The Nov. 22 tunnel leak was only the latest involving the Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility, a complex of 20 underground fuel tanks built during World War II. Environmentalists and Honolulu's municipal water utility have expressed concerns about the aging tanks since the Navy disclosed one of them leaked 27,000 gallons (102 kiloliters) in 2014.

The tanks sit 100 feet (30 meters) above an aquifer that supplies about a quarter of the water consumed in Honolulu, prompting concerns that leaks could contaminate one of the city's most crucial water sources. This is the same aquifer tapped by the Red Hill well where the Navy just detected petroleum.

Last month, the Sierra Club of Hawaii and other environmental groups called on the government to shut the tanks down.

Burness said her experience has shaken her confidence in the military. During her decades as a military spouse, she's always believed in doing whatever it takes to support "the mission."

"This has destroyed all of that," she said. "I have zero confidence at this point, and I think this has shown that they cannot be trusted with anything." □



AP Source: NSO Group spyware used to hack State employees

By ALAN SUDERMAN, ERIC TUCKER and FRANK BAJAK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The phones of 11 U.S. State Department employees were hacked with spyware from Israel's NSO Group, the world's most infamous hacker-for-hire company, a person familiar with the matter said Friday.

The employees were all located in Uganda and included some foreign service officers, said the person, who was not authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation. Some local Ugandan employees of the department appear to have been among the 11 hacked, the person said.

The hacking is the first known instance of NSO Group's trademark Pegasus spyware being used against U.S. government personnel.

It was not known what individual or entity used the NSO technology to hack into the accounts, or what information was sought.

"We have been acutely concerned that commercial spyware like NSO Group software poses a serious counterintelligence and security risk to U.S. personnel," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said at briefing Friday.

Senior researcher John Scott-Railton of Citizen Lab, the public-interest sleuths at the University of Toronto who have been tracking Pegasus infections for years, called the discovery a giant wake-up call for the U.S. government about diplomatic security. "For years we have seen that diplomats around the world are among targets," he said, "and it looks like the message had to be brought home to the U.S. government in this very direct and unfortunate way. There is no exceptionalism when it comes to American phones in diplomats' pockets."

News of the hacks, which were first reported by Reuters, comes a month after the U.S. Commerce Department blacklisted NSO Group, barring U.S. technology from being used by the



A logo adorns a wall on a branch of the Israeli NSO Group company, near the southern Israeli town of Sapir, Aug. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

company. And Apple sued NSO Group last week seeking to effectively shut down its hacking of all iPhones and other Apple products, calling the Israeli company "amoral 21st century mercenaries."

The State Department employees were hacked on their iPhones, the person familiar with the matter said. NSO Group said in a statement that after being asked Thursday about the Ugandan phones "we immediately shut down all the customers potentially relevant to this case," but did not say who the customers were. The company said its spying technology is blocked from hacking phones based in the U.S. and is only sold to licensed customers.

If the allegations turn out to be true "they are a blunt violation" of contract terms and NSO Group "will take legal action against these customers," it added.

In announcing the lawsuit, Apple sent out notifications

globally to people whose iPhones were hacked with Pegasus in countries ranging from El Salvador to Poland. The targeted State Department employees were among them.

Apple declined comment Friday on the Uganda hacks.

Marketed to governments for use solely against terrorists and criminals, Pegasus has been abused by NSO customers to spy on human rights activists, journalists and politicians from Saudi Arabia to Mexico, including such high-profile targets as the fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist murdered in his country's consulate in Istanbul.

NSO Group has been

broadly denounced for allowing such targeting, and its placement on the Commerce Department's "entity list" last month was the first time a company outside of China had been added over human rights violations, said Kevin Wolf, an attorney at Akin Gump and former top commerce official in the Obama administration.

Analysts wonder whether NSO Group can survive financially under such circumstances. Last week, Moody's downgraded NSO Group's financial outlook to negative, saying it risked defaulting on more than \$300 million in loans as a result of "high uncertainty" of its ability to sell new li-

censes. It said NSO Group, which is privately held, has about 750 employees with 60 customers in more than 35 countries.

The impact on companies blacklisted by the Commerce Department, about half of which are Chinese, is often far broader than barring them from using U.S. technology.

Wolf said many companies choose to avoid doing business with them completely "in order to eliminate the risk of an inadvertent violation" and the legal costs of analyzing whether they can.

NSO Group was asked by The Associated Press prior to Friday's news whether it could survive as long as it is on the entity list. While not directly responding, it said it was "working on all appropriate channels to reverse the Department of Commerce's decision."

The company again claimed that it does not operate the Pegasus command-and-control system that remotely manages hacks "and has no access to the data collected by its customers." Cybersecurity researchers who have closely tracked NSO's spyware dispute that claim. They say NSO's government clients are incapable of running the online infrastructure and their sleuthing has confirmed centralized control of post-infection operations.

Apple's lawsuit added major heft to a Big Tech legal onslaught against NSO Group. Facebook sued it in 2019 for allegedly hacking its globally popular encrypted WhatsApp messaging app. Last month, a U.S. federal appeals court ruled that the case could go forward, rejecting NSO's claim it should be thrown out because it is a "sovereign entity." □



Search on for 2 parents charged in Michigan school shooting

By COREY WILLIAMS and ED WHITE

Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — A prosecutor filed involuntary manslaughter charges Friday against the parents of a teen accused of killing four students at a Michigan high school, saying they failed to intervene on the day of the tragedy despite being confronted with a drawing and chilling message — "blood everywhere" — that was found at the boy's desk.

James and Jennifer Crumbley committed "egregious" acts, from buying a gun on Black Friday and making it available to Ethan Crumbley to resisting his removal from school when they were summoned a few hours before the shooting, Oakland County prosecutor Karen McDonald said.

"I expect parents and everyone to have humanity and to step in and stop a potential tragedy," she said. "The conclusion I draw is that there was absolute reason to believe this individual was dangerous and disturbed."

By mid-afternoon, authorities said they were searching for the couple. Sheriff Mike Bouchard said their attorney had agreed to arrange their arrest if charges were filed but hasn't been able to reach them.

"The action of fleeing and ignoring their attorney cer-



Gov. Gretchen Whitmer embraces Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter as the two leave flowers and pay their respects Thursday morning, Dec. 2, 2021 at Oxford High School in Oxford, Mich.

Associated Press

tainly adds weight to the charges. They cannot run from their part in this tragedy," Bouchard said in a written statement.

A message seeking comment wasn't immediately returned by lawyer Shannon Smith.

Earlier, the prosecutor offered the most precise account so far of the events that led to the shooting, three days after four students were killed and others were wounded at Oxford High School, roughly 30 miles (50 kilometers)

north of Detroit.

Ethan Crumbley, 15, emerged from a bathroom with a gun, shooting students in the hallway, investigators said. He's charged as an adult with murder, terrorism and other crimes. Under Michigan law, the involuntary manslaughter charge filed against the parents can be pursued if authorities believe someone contributed to a situation where there was a high chance of harm or death. Parents in the U.S. are rarely charged in school shoot-

ings involving their children, even as most minors get guns from a parent or relative's house, according to experts.

The couple's court appearance was pending. It wasn't immediately known if they had attorneys who could comment.

School officials became concerned about the younger Crumbley on Monday, a day before the shooting, when a teacher saw him searching for ammunition on his phone, McDonald said.

Jennifer Crumbley was contacted and subsequently told her son in a text message: "Lol. I'm not mad at you. You have to learn not to get caught," according to the prosecutor.

On Tuesday, a teacher found a note on Ethan's desk and took a photo. It was a drawing of a gun pointing at the words, "The thoughts won't stop. Help me," McDonald said.

There also was a drawing of a bullet, she said, with words above it: "Blood everywhere."

Between the gun and the bullet was a person who appeared to have been shot twice and is bleeding. He also wrote, "My life is useless" and "The world is dead," according to the prosecutor.

The school quickly had a meeting with Ethan and his parents, who were told to get him into counseling within 48 hours, McDonald said.

The Crumbleys failed to ask their son about the gun or check his backpack, McDonald said. The teen returned to class and the shooting subsequently occurred.

"The notion that a parent could read those words and also know that their son had access to a deadly weapon that they gave him is unconscionable — it's criminal," the prosecutor said. □

Famously soggy Seattle sees its wettest fall on record



People walk past a downed power pole blocking E. Madison St. in Seattle after it fell into an office building during a storm on Nov. 9, 2021.

Associated Press

By MANUEL VALDES

Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Seattle, a city known for soggy weather, has seen its wettest fall on record.

The National Weather Service says 19.04 inches (48.4 centimeters) of rain fell between Sept. 1 and Nov. 30, breaking a record set in 2006.

A series of wet storms caused by so-called "atmospheric rivers" pounded the Pacific Northwest, causing widespread flooding and damage. Atmospheric rivers are huge plumes of moisture over the Pacific that carry water from oceans onto land. "It's really been incredible

for Seattle. I think what's really been interesting is that we have just had atmospheric river after atmospheric river, which is something that you usually don't see even in a very wet place like Seattle," said Justin Shaw, who runs the Seattle Weather Blog. Areas north of Seattle were hit especially hard. The city of Bellingham recorded 23.55 inches (59.8 centimeters) of rain from Sept. 1 to Nov. 30, 6.5 inches (16.5 centimeters) more than the previous high. Officials have said damages from November flooding in

Whatcom County, which includes Bellingham, could reach as high as \$50 million.

The record rain comes after the region saw record breaking heat earlier this year. Scientists say these extreme weather events will be more frequent with climate change worsening.

"We know that climate change makes those kinds of extreme events both more likely to happen and more severe," said Meade Krosby a climate adaption scientist at the Climate Impact Group of the University of Washington. □

Iran nuclear talks pause, will reconvene in Vienna next week

By FRANK JORDANS

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Diplomats negotiating in Vienna to revive Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers have paused after five days of talks to consult with their governments and will reconvene next week, officials said Friday.

The European Union official chairing the meeting said there had been some progress, but further "convergence" was necessary. "We have identified the challenges ahead. Now it is time to consult with capitals," EU diplomat Enrique Mora told reporters. "We will be resuming here in Vienna next week."

"We have substantial challenges ahead, time is not unlimited, there is an obvious sense of urgency," he added. "But above all we need a certain convergence of policy to start negotiations."

The so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, has effectively been on life support since the United States pulled out under then-President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran in 2018.



Mohammad Eslami, new head of Iran's nuclear agency (AEOI), left, and Iran's Governor to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Kazem Gharib Abadi, left, leave the International Atomic Energy's (IAEA) General Conference in Vienna, Austria, Monday, Sept. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

The remaining signatories to the nuclear deal — Iran, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain — have been meeting at the Palais Coburg, a luxury hotel where the agreement was signed six years ago. The accord strictly limited Iran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

A U.S. delegation headed

by the Biden administration's special envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, was staying at a nearby hotel and being briefed on the talks by diplomats from the other countries.

The Iranian delegation, appointed by new Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, this week called for the U.S. to unfreeze \$10 billion in assets as an initial goodwill ges-

ture.

Mora said reviving the agreement would require Iran to meet its commitments under the accord, and bringing the United States back into "full compliance," meaning Washington would need to drop the crippling economic sanctions it imposed on Tehran.

Asked what had been

achieved this week, Mora said there had been progress "in the sense that we have had a new Iranian delegation, they have engaged in negotiations with other delegations."

"We are incorporating also new policy sensitivities for the new Iranian delegations," he said. "But again, the point of departure, the common ground, is where we finished" during the last round of talks in June.

In the United Arab Emirates, French President Emmanuel Macron expressed doubt that the new round of the struggling negotiations with Iran would succeed but added: "That does not mean the negotiations will not restart, and quickly."

"I think everyone is aware how important it is to continue discussing not just the nuclear deal but other regional issues," Macron said while in Dubai on the first day of a two-day Gulf trip. France, along with Germany and the U.K., thinks that the 2015 nuclear agreement, with minor tweaks, remains the best way forward with Iran. Israel, and Gulf countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have opposed the agreement. □

China, U.S. tussle over Biden's 'Summit for Democracy'

By KEN MORITSUGU

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China and the United States are tussling over President Joe Biden's upcoming democracy summit, which the ruling Communist Party sees as a challenge to its authoritarian ways.

The party maintains China has its own form of democracy and plans to issue a report titled "China: Democracy that Works" on Saturday, five days before the opening of Biden's two-day virtual meeting with about 110 other governments.

The White House pushed back Thursday against Chinese criticism of Biden's "Summit for Democracy," after a senior Chinese official said that it divides countries and points fingers at others.

White House Press Secre-

tary Jen Psaki said that the participants would discuss how to work together to stand up for democracy around the world.

"That's nothing we're going to apologize for," she said. She was responding to opening remarks by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng at an expert forum on the topic held by the government for foreign journalists in Beijing.

"It claims it's doing this for democracy," Le said, without naming the United States. "But this is in fact the very opposite of democracy. It will do no good to global solidarity, no good to cooperation and no good to development."

Biden has made a competition between democracies and autocracies such as Russia and China a central theme of his presiden-

cy, saying democracies must prove they can deliver. Neither Russia nor China are invited to his summit.

The Communist Party has responded by saying its system serves the country's people, citing its rapid development into a middle-income country and relative success in limiting the number of deaths from COVID-19. Officials regularly highlight failings of American democracy, from gun violence to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol after the last presidential election.

Bonnie Glaser, a China expert who is director of the Asia Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, said the Chinese are correct in viewing the summit as a pushback against autocracy and China's political system.

"The Chinese Communist



Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng speaks at a forum with experts arranged for foreign journalists in Beijing, Thursday, Dec. 2, 2021.

Associated Press

Party likely feels threatened by the Biden democracy narrative and feels compelled to reaffirm that it puts the people first," she said in an email. "Of course, the people come after the party and the preservation of its role, but that is left un-

said."

The U.S. also angered China by including Taiwan in the summit. China claims the self-governing island as part of its territory and objects to it having any contact on its own with foreign governments. □

Lebanese minister resigns in bid to ease crisis with Saudis

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon's information minister resigned Friday, saying he hoped the much anticipated move will open the way for easing an unprecedented diplomatic crisis with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries. That crisis has added to immense economic troubles facing Lebanon, already mired in a financial meltdown.

Minister George Kordahi, a prominent former game show host, said he took the decision to step down ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Saudi Arabia on Saturday. The resignation, Kordahi said at a press conference in the Lebanese capital, may help Macron start a dialogue to help restore Beirut-Riyadh relations.

The crisis erupted following Kordahi's televised comments aired in October that were critical of Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen. The kingdom recalled its ambassador from Beirut and banned all Lebanese imports in response to Kordahi's remarks, affecting hundreds of businesses and cutting off hundreds of millions in foreign currency to



Lebanon's Information Minister George Kordahi speaks during a press conference to announce his resignation at the Ministry of Information in Beirut, Lebanon, Friday, Dec. 3, 2021.

Associated Press

Lebanon.

The minister said he meant no offense with the comments, made before he was appointed to the Cabinet post, and for weeks refused to resign, prolonging the crisis.

"Lebanon is more important than George Kordahi," he said at the press conference Friday. "I hope that this resignation opens the

window" for better relations with Gulf Arab countries, he added.

The diplomatic spat over Kordahi has aggravated Lebanon's economic crisis, the worst in its modern history. The country's financial meltdown, coupled with multiple other crises, has plunged more than three quarters of the nation's population of 6 million, in-

cluding a million Syrian refugees, into poverty.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati welcomed Kordahi's resignation, saying it was necessary and "could open the door for tackling the problem with the brothers in the kingdom and the Gulf nations."

The standoff with Saudi Arabia, a traditional backer of the small Mediterra-

nean country, has further paralyzed Lebanon's government, which has been unable to convene since Oct. 12 amid reports that ministers allied with Hezbollah would resign if Kordahi goes.

The Saudi measures have caused anxiety, particularly among the many Lebanese who work in the Gulf Arab countries, and added to the country's economic woes. It is not clear whether Kordahi's resignation would placate Saudi Arabia enough to reverse its decisions and prevent further escalation, or whether it would open the door for Lebanese Cabinet meetings to resume.

Lebanon's government is embroiled in another crisis triggered when the country's Iran-backed militant Hezbollah group protested the course of the state's investigation into the massive Beirut port explosion last year.

Hezbollah has criticized Tarek Bitar, the judge leading the investigation, saying his probe was politicized, and called on the government to ensure his removal.

□

Serbia and Russia pledge to combat 'color revolutions'



In this photo provided by the Serbian Interior Ministry, Serbian Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin, left, poses with Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of the Kremlin's Security Council, in Moscow, Russia, on Friday, Dec. 3, 2021.

Associated Press

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC

Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbia and Russia pledged Friday to combat popular revolts known as "color revolutions" that the coun-

tries' top security officials described as instruments of the West to destabilize "free states," according to a statement issued by Serbia's interior minister.

In another sign of grow-

ing ties between Serbia and Russia, Serbian Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin met Nikolai Patrushev, the powerful secretary of the Kremlin's Security Council, in Moscow on Friday.

"It was pointed out at the meeting that the 'color revolutions' have become a traditional policy instrument of certain centers of power and countries aimed at undermining statehood and losing sovereignty under the pretext of democratization, and noted that free countries must resist it," Vulin's statement said.

The term "color revolution" has been used to describe a series of mass protests at the beginning of the 21st century that sometimes led to the toppling of regimes in the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and Asia.

The meeting between Pe-

trushev, Moscow's top security official, and Vulin, a staunchly pro-Russia politician, came amid growing public discontent in Serbia with the autocratic rule of President Aleksandar Vucic.

Ecological groups unhappy with the way Vucic's populist government is combating widespread pollution in the Balkan state have been at the forefront of recent protests in Serbia.

Vucic and other Serbian officials have denounced such protests and alleged they were financed by the West to destabilize the country.

Another protest is scheduled for Saturday against two laws passed by parliament that are seen as laying the groundwork for a lithium mining by international company Rio Tinto in western Serbia.

Independent Belgrade media reported Friday that Russia and Serbia have formed a "working group to combat color revolutions." The group has a task to prevent mass demonstrations and survey opposition Serbian activists, nongovernmental organizations and independent journalists, the pro-opposition Direktno portal said. Direktno's report could not be independently verified.

Vulin said in the statement that as long as Vucic is president, the Serbian government "will always be focused on cooperation with the Russian Federation."

Although formally seeking EU membership, Serbia has refused to align its foreign policies with the 27-nation bloc and has instead strengthened its political, economic and military ties with Russia and China.

□

Pakistan police: Mob kills Sri Lankan over alleged blasphemy

By **BABAR DOGAR and MUNIR AHMED**

Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — A Muslim mob descended on a sports equipment factory in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province on Friday, killing a Sri Lankan man and burning his body publicly over allegations of blasphemy, police said.

Armagan Gondal, a police chief in the district of Sialkot, where the killing occurred, said factory workers had accused the victim of desecrating posters bearing the name of Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

Police said initial information shows the Sri Lankan, later identified as Priyanka Kumara, a manager at the facility, was lynched

inside the factory. Videos circulating on social media showed the mob dragging his heavily bruised body outside, where they burned it, surrounded by hundreds of others who cheered on the killers.

Senior police officer Omar Saeed Malik said police were still trying to determine what exactly prompted the mob to attack Kumara, whose body was sent to hospital for an autopsy. A thorough investigation was underway, he said.

In Colombo, Foreign Ministry spokesman Sugeeswara Gunaratne said their embassy in Islamabad was verifying details of the incident with Pakistani authorities.

"Sri Lanka expects that the



Police officers stand guard at the site where a Sri Lankan citizen was lynched by Muslim mob outside a factory in Sialkot, Pakistan, Friday, Dec. 3, 2021.

Associated Press

Pakistan authorities will take required action to investigate and ensure justice," he said.

Hours after the attack,

Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Twitter that the "horrific vigilante attack on factory & the burning alive of Sri Lankan manager is a day of shame for Pakistan." He promised a thorough investigation and said those responsible will be severely punished according to the law.

In a statement, Pakistan's army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa denounced the killing, saying the "cold-blooded murder" by a mob in Sialkot was "extremely condemnable and shame-

ful."

"Such extra-judicial vigilantism cannot be condoned at any cost," Bajwa added. According to police, more than 100 suspects were arrested over involvement in the attack, widely condemned by many Pakistanis.

In the videos, some in the mob are heard chanting a popular slogan of a radical Islamist party, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, which last month held a violent rally over the publications of caricatures of Islam's prophet in France. The party gained prominence in Pakistan's 2018 elections, campaigning on the single issue of defending the blasphemy law.

Mob attacks on people accused of blasphemy are common in this Islamic nation, although such attacks on foreign nationals are rare. Charges of blasphemy carry the death penalty under Pakistani law. International and Pakistani rights groups say accusations of blasphemy have often been used to intimidate religious minorities and settle personal scores. □

Solomon Islands politician wants diplomatic ties with Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — The head of the most populous province in the Solomon Islands said the country would likely switch diplomatic ties back to Taiwan if the prime minister is ousted from his post following next week's no-confidence vote, after looting and violent protests shook the capital city last month.

Daniel Suidani, the premier of Malaita, said Friday he thinks the Solomon Islands should partner with Taiwan because they share democratic values.

Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare angered many in 2019, particularly leaders of Malaita, when he cut the country's diplomatic ties with Taiwan to recognize China instead. Suidani said the switch was done without adequately consulting the public.

The Solomon Islands faced violent protests and unrest last week as long-simmering tensions over economic issues boiled over. The National Parliament building, a police station and businesses were set alight during two tumultuous days in which police failed to control a mob as it wrecked parts of the capital city.



In this image taken from video provided by Taiwan Foreign Correspondents Club, Daniel Suidani, the premier of Malaita speaks during an online press conference with journalists in Taipei, Taiwan on Friday, Dec. 3, 2021.

Associated Press

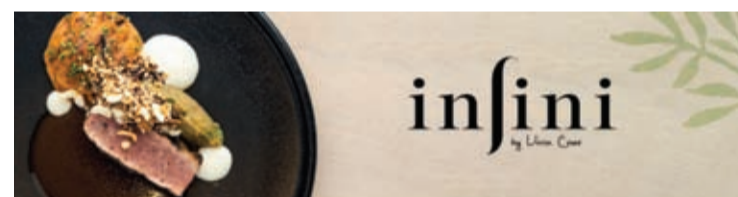
The dispute over the nation's foreign policy is just one of several issues on hand.

Suidani called for national dialogue to resolve the issues causing ongoing unrest in his country, and said the reasons for the violence are longstanding domestic issues over the economy and land rights, not foreign interference.

He said that increasing corruption, unemployment and informal settlements, or slums, were among the major factors leading to the violence in recent days. He also accused

the central government of blocking economic development in Malaita. He said he supports further protests on Monday but will encourage people to do it through "legal avenues."

In 2020, the U.S. government pledged a \$25 million aid package to Malaita, which has been viewed by some as an attempt to gain influence in the country. Suidani, who was wearing a red T-shirt with a prominent USAID shirt logo on the front on Friday, said the package was a request from the Solomon Islands government. □



Taste limitless possibilities at Infini, where Chef Urvin Croes and his team explores without boundaries and steps with both feet outside of the box to create his most sensational dishes yet. This meticulously designed restaurant located inside Blue Residences on scenic Eagle Beach is a chef's table concept with limited seating where diners are able to interact with the staff and other guests alike throughout the evening.

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LOCAL



Hanukkah Candle Lighting Ceremony Observed at the Hilton



PALM BEACH — As is the custom, on the 1st night of Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, locals and visitors, members of the Jewish faith joined together at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino for an informal, family style lighting of the resort's custom-made kwanukiyah.

The honor to conduct the candle lighting ceremony was given to Rabbi Daniel Kipper, of Beth Israel Synagogue in Oranjestad. He congratulated guests on the occasion of the holiday commencement while guest guitarist Ryan Maduro, accompanied the ceremony and the enthusiastic sing-along.

The resort enjoyed a great event turnout, and the prepared traditional Hanukkah treats, were met with animated approval: Latkes, warm potato pancakes with a dollop of apple sauce, or sour cream, and round donuts, dusted with powder sugar and stuffed with jelly.

Pictured here, the 1st night of Hanukkah at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino. □

Aruba to me



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received an amazing story from **Dolores Rutski** from Brick, NJ USA. She wrote:

"Aruba to me has been a longtime love affair from our honeymoon trip in 1973 to our 48th anniversary trip in 2021". □



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our turnaround is fast! For travel to the US, for example, a day before will suffice. A great game plan is to test first, then head out for an evening of dining, shopping and entertainment at the Paseo Herencia Mall, home of the water and lights show in the evenings. By the time you are back at the hotel, your results will be ready in your inbox.

A PCR test costs \$75 and results are ready the next day, while Antigen test costs \$35 with same day results. If you are staying at an off-high-rise area property, you can benefit from the free parking our customers receive at the mall lot.).

For more information follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. □





PALM BEACH — Sundays are to enjoy to the fullest, who does not agree on that. Corals Restaurant at the Holiday Inn Resort Aruba understands this as no other. For a great price you get great value: an extensive, scrumptious, full varied Sunday Brunch Buffet with bottomless mimosas. Take a seat in the cool dining room with full window view at the big blue. This is the definition of a chill Sunday start with big taste!

"It all started with the perception of the ideal Sunday. Sundays are for brunch and mimosas and it appears a trend to take it easy in the morning and indulge into a blissful brunch", says Eva Ruiz, Marketing Director of the resort. "Who does not enjoy to wake up late on a Sunday and take it easy with a coffee, mimosas and everything you crave for?" The Holiday Inn Resort Aruba started this relaxing brunch in February and is positively surprised with the overwhelming enthusiasm. Guests of the resort, outside guests and locals find their way to their favorite brunch spot. Chef Aldwin Donata could not be happy-

Holiday Inn Resort Aruba presents blissful brunch that brightens your day



er. "We change the menu every Sunday keeping in the all-time favorites. It is great to see that so many find their way to us, but honestly there is no place where you get this quality brunch for this price", he says with pride.

Boosting Brunch

Jump-start your day and let's do this brunch. Relax, dive in and look around to make your selection at the extensive salad station, soup station, Asian station, carving station, Aruban station, fruit station and bread station. All your breakfast and lunch favorites are here, believe us, and when you think you have fueled yourself with all the delicacies you can imagine there is one more you simply cannot skip: the heavenly dessert station with all



home-made pastries, cakes and a chocolate fountain. Sunday Brunch at Corals is a must, treat yourself and your loved ones because you deserve to maximize your day and get the best start.

For more information call +297 586 3600 or email the resort directly at hiaruba@ihg.com.

Every Sunday from 11:00am to 2:00pm the Holiday Inn Resort Aruba is welcoming you, chef Donata and his crew will await you at Corals Restaurant for the \$35 Brunch Buffet (children 6-12 \$17.50) and children under 5 are free. □

20+ Menorah-Topped Cars to Parade through Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Hanukkah Celebration comes as culmination of week long holiday celebrations. To celebrate the 2021 Hanukkah season, Chabad Aruba will be having a Car Menorah Parade departing from the California lighthouse traveling to the Hyatt Regency Aruba culminating in a grand menorah lighting and celebration.

"It's been an incredibly joyful Chanukah in Aruba so far with celebrations organized by Chabad Aruba and hosted by resorts

around the island." said Rabbi Ahron Blasberg, director of Chabad Aruba. On Sunday the first candle was lit joyously on the beachfront of the Ritz-Carlton Aruba with many guests and locals in attendance. The atmosphere was palpable as the candle was lit with the sun setting in the background and the Chanukah songs playing. Monday brought the celebration to the Riu Palace and Tuesday to Eagle Beach hosted by the La Cabana Beach Resort. On Wednesday the menorah

was lit at the Playa Linda Beach Resort and Thursday at the Marriott Ocean Club. The public Hanukkah celebrations are about sharing the light and joy with the broader community and the entire island.

Hanukkah emphasizes that each and every individual has the unique power to illuminate the entire world. It was to encourage this profound idea that the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, launched the Ha-



nukkah awareness campaign in 1973, of which Aruba's public Hanukkah activities are a part of. The menorah faces the street, the Rebbe notes, and so bystanders immediately feel "the effect of the light, which illuminates the outside and the environment." In the half-century since, the Rebbe's campaign has brought Hanukkah into the mainstream and altered awareness and practice of the festival, returning what some mistakenly dismissed as a minor holiday to its roots as a public proclamation of the triumph of freedom over oppression and a mainstay of Jewish cultural and religious life. Chabad-Lubavitch's annual Hanukkah campaign has distributed millions of menorahs to Jews around the world, and erected thousands of public menorahs to share its univer-

sal message of light over darkness with humanity at large. This year's Hanukkah campaign will be one of unprecedented light and joy, seeing Chabad reach 8 million Jews in more than 100 countries. Even as crowds begin to gather again, the Hanukkah parades that ensured safe events last year, will go on, and this year more than 6,500 Hanukkah menorah-topped cars will hit the road in Chabad menorah parades to share the Hanukkah message of hope and joy around the globe.

To join the festivities on Sunday evening please visit www.jewisharuba.com/Chanukah or just show up at the Hyatt parking lot at 7pm.

Wishing everyone a happy Chanukah! □



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3 times you need money advice from a human

By **LIZ WESTON** of NerdWallet

You can now manage most aspects of your money without ever consulting another human being. You can budget, borrow, save, invest, buy insurance, prepare your tax return and create a will — among many other tasks — by using apps, websites and software.

But technology still has limitations, especially when you're facing a money situation that's complex or involves judgment calls. Consider consulting a human expert in the following situations:

1. YOU'RE CREATING AN ESTATE PLAN

Insurers typically can't cancel a policy after 60 days unless you fail to pay premiums, commit fraud or make serious misrepresentations on your application, according to the Insurance Information Institute, a trade group. However, insurers can decide not to renew your policy when it expires. With auto insurance, you often have many options after such a "non-renewal." Even if you've had accidents or multiple claims, you typically can find coverage with companies that specialize in higher-risk drivers.

If a homeowners insurance

company dumps you, however, you may have trouble finding coverage, says insurance consumer advocate Amy Bach. That's especially true if you were dropped because you made too many claims, or your area is considered high risk because of wildfires, extreme weather or crime, for example.

How would other companies know? Insurers share such information in databases, and application forms typically ask if you've been "non-renewed" by another insurer, Bach says. Bach's nonprofit organization, United Policyholders, recommends seeking out an independent agent or broker who has relationships with several insurance companies. The agent or broker should know which insurers may be more receptive to your application and can put in a good word for you, Bach says. While most underwriting decisions are made by computers, there are still ways for human beings to override the algorithms.

"It will make a difference if (the agent or broker) can call an underwriter that they know and vouch for you as a good bet," Bach says.

If your area has been labeled high risk, ask your



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

neighbors for referrals to agents or brokers who helped them find coverage. Otherwise, you can ask an accountant, attorney or financial planner if they have recommen-

dations. Friends and family may be able to provide leads as well.

2. YOU'RE CREATING AN ESTATE PLAN

Most IRS audits are conducted through the mail

and are relatively routine. The IRS sends a letter requesting additional documentation to support a deduction or other tax break you've taken. If you mail back sufficient evidence, your case will be closed with no taxes owed. Otherwise, the IRS will mail you a bill.

However, if the IRS wants to meet with you, the stakes get much higher. In fiscal year 2020, the average amount of additional taxes recommended in face-to-face audits was nearly 10 times larger than the average for a correspondence audit: \$72,210 versus \$7,658, according to IRS statistics.

Even tax pros hire someone to represent them in face-to-face audits, says Leonard Wright, a San Diego certified public accountant and financial planner. Wright has plenty of experience: He was chief financial officer of a company that was audited, and his personal tax returns have been audited four times. In each case, he hired another CPA to represent him. It's all too easy to say something you shouldn't when you're under scrutiny, Wright says. You could volunteer information that might not be helpful to your case, or get defensive or confrontational. □

No currency manipulator labels from U.S., China on watch

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER**
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration will not designate any country as a currency manipulator, but it did name China, Vietnam and Taiwan among the nations that have failed to live up to global agreements not to use their currencies to gain unfair trade advantages. In a report to Congress released Friday, the Treasury Department cited China for a number of failures that prevent trading partners from gaining full knowledge of how it manages its currency. The Treasury plans to closely monitor the foreign ex-

change activities of China's state-owned banks to get a clearer picture of China's currency practices, according to the report.

Vietnam and Taiwan have violated a number of criteria that would justify naming them as currency manipulators and both will be watched closely in coming months to see what improvements they make in their currency practices, the report said.

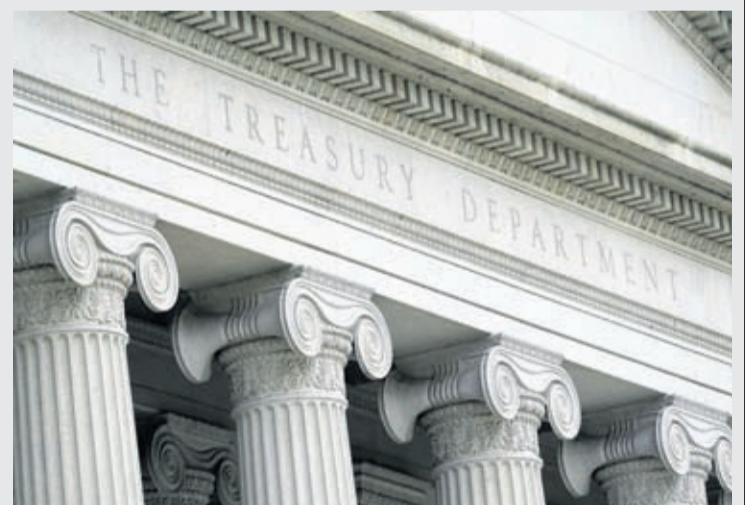
The new report placed 12 nations on a monitoring list for increased scrutiny. The 12 are China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Ireland, Italy, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Mexico

and Switzerland.

All the nations with the exception of Switzerland were on the monitoring list in the last currency report in April.

"Treasury is working relentlessly to promote a stronger and more balanced global recovery that benefits American workers, including through closer engagement with major economies on currency-related issues," said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in a prepared statement.

Being named as a currency manipulator under U.S. law does not carry any immediate penalties but it does require Treasury to engage in negotiations



The Treasury Building is viewed in Washington, May 4, 2021.

Associated Press

with the foreign country in an effort to get it to alter its currency practices. If those negotiations fail, the administration can

impose trade sanctions. Those sanctions can be challenged by countries before the World Trade Organization. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 38 Starting

1 Craving

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7 Uttered

39 Reduced

11 Broad

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40 Interfere

12 Riviera

resort

DOWN

13 Artist

1 Titled

Duchamp

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14 Valuable

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2 Steer

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9 Cube

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25 Throat

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15 Periphery

3 Suit

10 Stop

28 Blood

16 Prefix with

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17 Spotted

5 Regrets

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31 Alpine trill

32 Sleep

19 Shower

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21 Purr

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8 Shuttle

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23 Puzzles

34 Take in

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22 Chewy

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25 Toe count

26 Course

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27 Twist of

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29 Puts down

33 Neighbor

of Libya

34 Matt of

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35 Big truck

36 Groom's

garb

37 Notorious

czar

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Yesterday's answer

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39						40			

12-4

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-4

CRYPTOQUOTE

R X R U B K Q V S P V S T Z J R S N R F

R I N Q E T J F I S H D R N I J F R E T

K Q I K V K U B K E W I Y R F J U R

K Q I K W B R L C R U V R S N R F I U R

C E F V K V X R — W I B I T S P R Z E J

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: NOTHING IS A BIGGER WASTE OF TIME THAN REGRETTING THE PAST AND WORRYING ABOUT THE FUTURE. — JAMES MEREDITH

Fossil footprints puzzle scientists: Bear or ancient human?

By CHRISTINA LARSON

AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pre-historic footprints that have puzzled scientists since the 1970s are getting a second look: Were they left by extinct animals or by human ancestors?

When famed paleontologist Mary Leakey first uncovered the footprints in Tanzania 40 years ago, the evidence was ambiguous. Leakey focused her attention instead on other fossil footprints that could be more clearly linked to early humans. Those footprints, found at a site called Laetoli G, are the first clear evidence of early humans walking upright.

Decades later, a new team re-excavated the confusing footprints, found at a site called Laetoli A, and made photos and 3-D scans available for other researchers to continue the debate.

The research was published Wednesday in the journal Nature.

"These footprints have been in the mystery category for 40 years," said Rick Potts, who directs the Smithsonian Institution's Human Origins Project.

"It's a really exciting idea to re-exhume them and study them again," added Potts, who was not involved in the research. What's long perplexed scientists is that those tracks broad footprints with enlarged fifth toes and estimated to be around 3.7 million years old don't closely match anything scientists have elsewhere identified.

"They didn't have the right weight and foot movement to be easily identified as human, so other explanations were sought," includ-



This undated photo from video shows the left footprint from one of the juvenile male black bears.

Associated Press

ing that they may belong to an extinct species of bears, said co-author and Dartmouth paleoanthropologist Jeremy DeSilva. He and other researchers returned to the site in 2019 and used Leakey's original maps to locate the enigmatic prints, preserved in a layer of volcanic ash that had cooled and hardened. Co-author Ellison McNutt of Ohio University studied the foot mechanics of black bear cubs at a wildlife rescue center in New Hampshire to see whether a small bear walking on hind legs could leave similar footprints. She held a tray of apple sauce to lure the cubs into walking toward her. Each footstep was recorded in a track of mud,

to be analyzed.

Bears walking upright first put weight on the heels of their feet, like humans, she said. "But the foot proportions aren't the same." She concluded that the fossil footprints were not left by bears.

Other factors, such as the spacing of the footprints, led the study authors to conclude that the footprints were left by a previously unknown species of a very early human ancestor.

Not everyone is convinced. Smithsonian's Potts said it's a toss-up between an ancient bear or an ancient human, adding that an ancient bear may have walked differently than a modern black bear.

William Harcourt-Smith, a paleoanthropologist at the American Museum of Natural History who was not involved in the research, said he was convinced that it wasn't a bear, but wasn't certain it was an early human.

"These prints could still belong to some form of non-human ape," he said. □

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Study suggests past COVID infection may not fend off omicron

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands
(AP) — South African scientists are warning that re-infections among people who've already battled COVID-19 appear to be more likely with the new omicron variant than with earlier coronavirus mutants.

A research group has been tracking reinfections in South Africa and reported a jump with the arrival of omicron that they hadn't seen when two previous variants, including the extra-contagious delta variant, moved through the country.

The findings, posted online Thursday, are preliminary and haven't yet undergone scientific review. Nor did the researchers say what portion of the reinfections were confirmed as omicron cases or whether they caused serious illness. But the timing of the reinfection spike suggests that omicron "demonstrates substantial population-level evidence for evasion of immunity from prior infection," they wrote.

"Previous infection used to protect against delta, and now with omicron it doesn't seem to be the case," one of the researchers, Anne von Gottberg of the University of Witwatersrand, said at a World Health Organization briefing on Thursday.

The study also did not examine the protection offered by vaccination. Coronavirus vaccines trigger different layers of immune response, some to fend off infection and others to prevent severe disease if someone does become infected.

"We believe that vaccines



An Orange Farm, South Africa, resident receives her jab against COVID-19 Friday Dec. 3, 2021 at the Orange Farm multipurpose center.

Associated Press

will still, however, protect against severe disease," von Gottberg said.

Dr. Michael Ryan, the head of emergencies at WHO, said reinfection turns up in the nose but it doesn't necessarily translate into severe disease, while vaccines have generally shown to help protect the rest of the body.

"The data we're really looking to see is going to be around severity of infection and whether or not the vaccines continue to protect against severe disease, hospitalization and death," Ryan said. "And

right now, there's no reason to suppose that they won't. We just haven't got the details yet."

The newest variant was discovered just over a week ago by scientists in South Africa and Botswana, and it's now been found in multiple countries. Much remains unknown about the new variant, including whether it is more contagious, as some health authorities suspect, whether it makes people more seriously ill, and whether it can thwart the vaccine.

But learning how much protection is provided by

prior infection is important, especially in parts of the world where much of the population remains to be vaccinated. □



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Review: Steven Spielberg's rousing 'West Side Story' revival

By JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

We're so rife with reboots and remakes today that it can take a moment to gauge just what Steven Spielberg's "West Side Story" is. It isn't a papered-over modernizing or a thinly disguised retread. It's a feat of reconstruction. Spielberg, Tony Kushner and Steven Sondheim have taken the original play and reworked it from the inside, burrowing into the DNA of "West Side Story" and its characters to recast, reconsider, deepen and clarify one of the 20th century's most iconic musicals.

It is, I think, a better movie than the 1961 original, by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, in almost every respect. The Sharks, the Puerto Rican gang who squares off with the white Jets in 1950s New York, have been given a new and fuller life, bringing "West Side Story" into balance and righting some of the wrongs of the original in its stereotyped depictions. Rachel Zegler's Maria, Ariana DeBose's Anita and David Alvarez's Bernardo are, to remarkable degree, what makes this "West Side Story" sing. And the story, as scripted by Kushner, is more emotional and complex than ever, fully realizing the "Romeo and Juliet" tragedy while shading the '50s gang strife with notes of today's divisions and battles of gentrification.

And, yet, as fully realized and impeccably crafted as this "West Side Story" is, I'm not sure it matches the power and force of the original. As problem-filled as that movie was 60 years ago, with Natalie Wood as the Latina Maria, its potency is impossible to shrug off. There was Robbins' electric choreography, the expressionist Panavision color and Rita Moreno — my god, Rita Moreno — a dynamo of almost overwhelming talent. The 1961 "West Side Story" was propelled by a teeming, lurching mid-century America energy — a surge of bodies in motion, syncopated with finger snaps. This "West Side Story"



This image released by 20th Century Studios shows Ariana DeBose as Anita, foreground left, and David Alvarez as Bernardo in "West Side Story."

Associated Press

comes out of a different cultural moment, one of tasteful renovation — three 20th century titans of the arts, like master remodeling craftsmen, shifting and rearranging the play's lattice-work of scaffolding, brick and fire escape.

Delayed a year by the pandemic, "West Side Story" (Dec. 10 in theaters) arrives with a glow of eulogy, coming on the heels of Sondheim's death at 91. "West Side Story," originally staged in 1957, was Sondheim's first musical. (Robbins conceived it, with music by Leonard Bernstein, book by Arthur Laurents and lyrics by Sondheim.) Six decades later, it's Spielberg's first musical, too. Spielberg, naturally, doesn't finally wade into song and dance with some little one-act but with possibly the most beloved musical there is. (He does, after all, know a thing or two about sharks.) When it comes to big-screen grandeur, there's still nobody who does it better.

What's immediately apparent is that Spielberg, with his regular cinematographer Janusz Kaminski, has elected for a paler, desaturated palette and a slightly grittier, more grounded sense of place. The opening shot skims over a giant pile of rubble — "slum clearance" to make way for the Upper

West Side's Lincoln Center. (That bit drew chuckles at the screening I attended, at Lincoln Square's Walter Reade Theatre.) With the wrecking ball coming for San Juan Hill and a new, wealthier New York to build, the days are numbered for both the Sharks and the Jets. Their turf war is misguided from the start; they're both about to have no turf, at all. Corey Stoll's Lieutenant Schrank (superior of Brian d'Arcy James' Officer Krupke) spells it out for them: A remade neighborhood is coming that won't have room for Puerto Ricans like the Sharks or "the last of the can't-make-it Caucasians." It's narrative, context and authenticity that give Spielberg's "West Side Story" its own verve. It most definitely still plays the hits, but the film feels less like a Broadway-to-screen transfer than a cinematic staging of a classic. The set pieces are often extraordinary. "In America" moves from the sound stage to the street in an on-air showstopper. "One Hand, One Heart," in which Tony (Ansel Elgort) and Maria speak their private wedding vows, has been uprooted to the Cloisters, where it shines with a holy tenderness. Some classics — "I Feel Pretty," performed inside Gimbels department

store (where Maria works as a cleaner) — may be too familiar to sound new again. But songs like "Cool" are thrillingly alive, in part because Spielberg's nimble camera is in on the dance, an eager partner to Justin Peck's choreography.

But as much as these are set pieces — and as beautiful as Zegler's voice is — what makes them work so well is that they aren't isolated, but come out of the more fully formed interiors of the characters. Tony is just out of prison and staying in the drugstore basement of a new character, Valentina (Moreno, connecting movie past and present). His best friend, Jets leader Riff (Mike Faist, terrific), is itching for a fight with the Sharks, and Faist plays him with a hint of mean, knowing despondency. Looking down on Puerto Ricans, he seems to realize, is all he has.

The Sharks, meanwhile, are led by Alvarez's Bernardo: boyfriend to Anita and older brother to Maria. There is more talking in this "West Side Story," and that includes Spanish without subtitles that intermingles with English. It's one of many details that endeavor to add authenticity to a drama with new layers of meaning. Not only are Bernardo, Anita and Maria wrestling

with their standing in America, they are seizing a place in this deeply American musical. (Each actor does so, beautifully.) The blade-gleaming ethnic war at the heart of "West Side Story" is here less of a ready substitute for the Montagues and Capulets than a metaphorical battleground for today's discord, with plenty of pain and injustice to go around, and maybe some measure of hope.

That backdrop casts the romance between Maria and Tony in starker relief, and two actors — the sensational breakout Zegler and a never-better Elgort — have a warm chemistry. From the first time they see each other through the swirl of a school dance, their eyes are locked on one another. A lot of Elgort's performance, with a touch of Marlon Brando's melancholy sweetness, is in simply looking at Maria. Their rapport reaches a crescendo in the duet of "Tonight."

But that moment feels obscured by more than the fire-escape ironwork that cages it. It's possible that there are issues to the musical that can't be overcome. Is it better to let a once-one-sided view of race in America recede into the past? It remains, for instance, ridiculous how Maria shrugs off the death of her brother in the final act. It's a disservice to her character that squanders some the magic that's accrued.

Yet this "West Side Story" succeeds most as a revival not just of Robbins' musical but of the best of classical, studio-made, big-screen cinema. It goes without saying that that's an imperiled species today — because of the pandemic, yes, but also because of other deeper currents in the movie industry. (The studio this was set up with was swallowed just before filming began.) "West Side Story" in that way feels as much like a revival as it does a swan song for a grand style of moviemaking that will hopefully persist, as Maria sings, "somehow, someday, somewhere." □

Winter of waiting: Baseball fans hope MLB lockout fleeting

By **DAVID BRANDT**

AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — The only hint of activity outside of Chase Field on Thursday afternoon was the low humming noise from a construction crew, which was busy hanging some signs for an upcoming college football bowl game.

Otherwise, the home of Major League Baseball's Arizona Diamondbacks was quiet, almost serene.

That's fine — and even expected — on Dec. 2. The problem is if it still feels like this on March 31.

That's the day the 2022 MLB season is scheduled to begin and Chase Field's downtown concourse should be bustling with fans, ready to start the 162-game schedule with a day game against the Milwaukee Brewers. But it's unclear if that game or any others will be happening this spring now that the sport has entered its first work stoppage in 26 years.

Bill Pupo — a longtime baseball fan and Diamondbacks season-ticket holder — said he's hopeful of a quick resolution, but also acknowledges the current labor squabble has



Fans arrive at Minute Maid Park where the roof on the stadium was open for Game 2 of baseball's World Series between the Houston Astros and the Atlanta Braves, Oct. 27, 2021, in Houston.

Associated Press

the feel of the 1994-95 strike that lasted 7 1/2 months and wiped out the World Series for the first time in 90 years.

"I think ownership is entitled to make a profit," Pupo said. "The players feel like they need a bigger slice of the pie and I don't blame them. They're the talent, the entertainers."

"The question is, what's the middle ground?"

MLB's labor showdown pits the league's owners vs. the players with a notable third party warily watching: the fans. It's unlikely the ticket-buying public will be very sympathetic to public bickering between the owners and players.

Even in the best of times, fans want their baseball and it was clear in the aftermath of the 1994-95 strike that fans were slow to

forgive. Some never did. Largely thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not the best of times. The 2020 regular season was drastically shortened and played in parks with no fans. Last season was better, but crowd capacity limits were still in place in many locations.

Now labor strife. The topic was on people's minds after a softball game on an

artificial turf field in Manhattan near the Hudson River.

"It's going to turn people off," said 63-year-old Joe Cannizzo of Brooklyn, a self-described "lifelong Yankee fan, a lifelong baseball fan" who was wearing a Curtis Granderson T-shirt.

His friend, 60-year-old Paul Weinstein of Queens, said he grew up playing baseball "seven days a week, 12 hours a day."

But at this point, he said, "I think we're beaten down." "I understand collective bargaining and unions," he said. "And I think we have some of the greatest players ever playing now -- Mike Trout and Clayton Kershaw and more. It's a golden age of baseball, and no one cares."

"We've become disinterested. The marginalized fan, there's too many other things, too many other sports that draw them away," he said.

Pupo didn't get to attend Diamondbacks games in 2020 due to COVID-19 so he rolled his season tickets to 2021. He still didn't feel comfortable attending games because of the pandemic so he rolled them again to 2022. □

Chase Elliott extends run as NASCAR's most popular

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Chase Elliott held on to one of his NASCAR titles Thursday night when fans voted him most popular driver for the fourth consecutive year.

Elliott was both the reigning Cup champion and most popular driver this season, but he was ultimately beaten by new Hendrick Motorsports teammate Kyle Larson for the Cup title. At the season-ending awards ceremony at the Music City Center, the National Press Association declared Elliott winner of the fan-decided most popular award.

"I just can't thank the fans across the country enough," said Elliott. "I was really mind-blown on a few occasions this year of that support, and to see it firsthand, you know, I see the

T-shirts and all that stuff is noticed. Looking forward to '22 to make all those folks proud."

Elliott began his run as NASCAR's most popular driver in 2018, the first year of Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s retirement. Earnhardt had won the most popular award every year since 2003, the season Bill Elliott asked for his name to be removed from the ballot.

Elliott was beloved and voters selected "Awesome Bill From Dawsonville," Georgia, their favorite a record 16 times. Earnhardt won it 15 times and Chase Elliott claimed the throne when Earnhardt retired.

His fourth victory was again backed by a legion of Elliott fans in their Georgia hometown, and it staved off a challenge by team-

mate Larson. Elliott has remained extremely popular — his fans vilify any rival who dares to tangle with Elliott — but Larson has built a strong legion of supporters in his first year driving for Hendrick.

Larson won 11 times in the Cup Series, broke Jeff Gordon's 20-year record for most laps led in a season, and won Rick Hendrick's record-extending 14th championship. Larson dethroned Elliott to claim his first Cup. Larson couldn't knock Elliott from most popular, though, as Elliott's ardent supporters turned out even in a new voting format. The NMPA only opened voting on Nov. 9 — after Larson had already won the championship — and the brief voting period ended Dec. 1. Fans could vote once daily



Chase Elliott does a burnout during the Burnouts on Broadway competition as part of NASCAR Champion's Week, Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn.

Associated Press

online or via mobile app, but votes shared on Facebook and/or Twitter counted twice.

The most popular driver award was first presented in 1949, to Curtis Turner, at the end of NASCAR's inau-

gural season. The award has been administered by the NMPA and presented annually by the organization since 1983, and it is the only major NASCAR award determined solely by a fan vote. □

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Bo Famia Pa Semper!

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Weekly SPECIALS



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SAVE \$1.14

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\$7.99

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SAVE \$0.29

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\$1.08

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SAVE \$0.34

Havarti Danish Cheese

\$1.94

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SAVE \$1.14

Oranges Navel

\$3.99

Per KG



SAVE \$1.14

Blueberries 6oz

\$2.85

Each



SAVE \$0.57

Spinach Cello 10oz

\$2.85

Each



SAVE \$0.57

Chiquita Yuca 16oz

\$1.88

Each



SAVE \$0.57

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