

## Biden marks COVID 'tragic milestone' in U.S. at global summit

By ZEKE MILLER and MARIA CHENG

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Joe Biden appealed to world leaders at a COVID-19 summit Thursday to reenergize a lagging international commitment to attacking the virus as he led the U.S. in marking the "tragic milestone" of 1 million deaths in America. He ordered flags lowered to half-staff and warned against complacency around the globe. "This pandemic isn't over," Biden declared at the second global pandemic summit. He spoke solemnly of the once-unthinkable U.S. toll: "1 million empty chairs around the family dinner table."

The coronavirus has killed

more than 999,000 people in the U.S. and at least 6.2 million people globally since it emerged in late 2019, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Other counts, including by the American Hospital Association, American Medical Association and American Nurses Association, have the toll at 1 million.

"Today, we mark a tragic milestone here in the United States, 1 million COVID deaths," he said.

The president called on Congress to urgently provide billions of dollars more for testing, vaccines and treatments, something lawmakers have been unwilling to deliver so far.

Continued on next page



The American flag flies at half-staff at the White House in Washington, Thursday, May 12, 2022, as the Biden administration commemorates 1 million American lives lost due to COVID-19.

Associated Press




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**Continued from Front**

That lack of funding — Biden has requested an additional \$22.5 billion in what he calls critically needed money — is a U.S. reflection of faltering resolve that jeopardizes the global response to the pandemic, he says.

Eight months after he used the first COVID summit to announce an ambitious pledge to donate 1.2 billion vaccine doses to the world, the urgency of the U.S. and other nations to respond has waned.

Momentum on vaccinations and treatments has faded even as more infectious variants rise and billions of people across the globe remain unprotected. Biden addressed the opening of the virtual summit Thursday morning with recorded remarks and made the case that tackling COVID-19 "must remain an international priority." The U.S. is co-hosting the summit along with Germany, Indonesia, Senegal and Belize. "This summit is an opportunity to renew our efforts to keep our foot on the gas when it comes to getting this pandemic under control and preventing future health crises," Biden said. The U.S. has shipped nearly 540 million vaccine doses to more than 110 countries and territories, according to the State Department — far more than any other donor nation.

The leaders announced about \$3 billion in new commitments to fight the virus, along with a host of new programs meant to boost access to vaccines and treatments around the world. But that was a far more modest outcome than at last year's meeting. "At the global level, all countries, big or small, rich or poor, must have equal access to health solutions," Indonesian President Joko Widodo said in his remarks. After the delivery of more



**White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha speaks during the daily briefing at the White House in Washington, April 26, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

than 1 billion vaccines to the developing world, the problem is no longer a lack of shots but of logistical support to get doses into arms. According to government data, more than 680 million donated vaccine doses have been left unused in developing countries because they were expiring and couldn't be administered quickly enough. As of March, 32 poorer countries had used less than half of the COVID-19 vaccines they were sent.

U.S. assistance to promote and facilitate vaccinations overseas dried up earlier this year, and Biden has requested about \$5 billion for the effort through the rest of the year.

"We have tens of millions of unclaimed doses because countries lack the resources to build out their cold chains, which basically is the refrigeration systems, to fight disinformation and to hire vaccinators," White House press secretary Jen

Psaki said this week.

"We're going to continue to fight for more funding here," Psaki said. "But we will continue to press other countries to do more to help the world make progress as well."

Congress has balked at the price tag for COVID-19 relief and has thus far refused to take up the package because of political opposition to the impending end of pandemic-era migration restrictions at the U.S.-Mexico border. Even after a consensus for virus funding briefly emerged in March, lawmakers decided to strip out the global aid funding and solely focus the assistance on shoring up U.S. supplies of vaccine booster shots and therapeutics.

Biden has warned that without Congress acting, the U.S. could lose out on access to the next generation of vaccines and treatments, and that the nation won't have enough supply of booster doses or the an-

tiviral drug Paxlovid for later this year. He's also sounding the alarm that more variants will spring up if the U.S. and the world don't do more to contain the virus globally.

In an interview Thursday with The Associated Press, White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha pressed the need for the U.S. to fund global vaccination efforts as a way to protect Americans at home, warning that strains like delta and omicron first sprang up overseas.

"All of these variants were first identified outside of the United States," he said. "If the goal is to protect the American people, we have got to make sure the world is vaccinated. There's just no domestic-only approach here."

Demand for COVID-19 vaccines has dropped in some countries as infections and deaths have declined globally in recent months, particularly as the omicron variant has proved to be less severe than earlier versions of the disease. For the first time since it was created, the U.N.-backed COVAX effort has "enough supply to enable countries to meet their national vaccination targets," according Dr. Seth Berkley, CEO of

the vaccines alliance Gavi, which fronts COVAX.

Still, despite more than 65% of the world's population receiving at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, less than 16% of people in poor countries have been immunized. It is highly unlikely countries will hit the World Health Organization target of vaccinating 70% of all people by June.

In countries including Cameroon, Uganda and the Ivory Coast, officials have struggled to get enough refrigerators to transport vaccines, send enough syringes for mass campaigns and get enough health workers to inject the shots. Experts also point out that more than half of the health workers needed to administer the vaccines in poorer countries are either underpaid or not paid at all.

Donating more vaccines, critics say, would miss the point entirely.

"It's like donating a bunch of fire trucks to countries that are on fire, but they have no water," said Ritu Sharma, a vice president at the charity CARE, which has helped immunize people in more than 30 countries, including India, South Sudan and Bangladesh.

"We can't be giving countries all these vaccines but no way to use them," she said, adding that the same infrastructure that got the shots administered in the U.S. is now needed elsewhere. Sharma said greater investment also is needed to counter vaccine hesitancy in developing countries where there are entrenched beliefs about the potential dangers of Western-made medicines. Gavi's Berkley also said that countries are increasingly asking for the pricier messenger RNA vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna, which are not as easily available as the AstraZeneca vaccine, which made up the bulk of COVAX's supply last year.

Variants like delta and omicron have led many countries to switch to mRNA vaccines, which seem to provide more protection and are in greater demand globally than traditionally made vaccines like those from China and Russia. □



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# U.S. civil rights enforcers warn employers against biased AI

By MATT O'BRIEN

The federal government said Thursday that artificial intelligence technology to screen new job candidates or monitor worker productivity can unfairly discriminate against people with disabilities, sending a warning to employers that the commonly used hiring tools could violate civil rights laws.

The U.S. Justice Department and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission jointly issued guidance to employers to take care before using popular algorithmic tools meant to streamline the work of evaluating employees and job prospects — but which could also potentially run afoul of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"We are sounding an alarm regarding the dangers tied to blind reliance on AI and other technologies that we are seeing increasingly used by employers," Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the department's Civil Rights Division told reporters Thursday. "The use of AI is compounding the longstanding discrimination that jobseekers with disabilities face."

Among the examples given of popular work-related



Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke speaks at a news conference at the Department of Justice in Washington, Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

AI tools were resume scanners, employee monitoring software that ranks workers based on keystrokes, game-like online tests to assess job skills and video interviewing software that measures a person's speech patterns or facial expressions.

Such technology could potentially screen out people with speech impediments, severe arthritis that slows typing or a range of other

physical or mental impairments, the officials said.

Tools built to automatically analyze workplace behavior can also overlook on-the-job accommodations — such as a quiet workstation for someone with post-traumatic stress disorder or more frequent breaks for a pregnancy-related disability — that enable employees to modify their work conditions to perform their jobs successfully.

Experts have long warned that AI-based recruitment tools — while often pitched as a way of eliminating human bias — can actually entrench bias if they're taking cues from industries where racial and gender disparities are already prevalent.

The move to crack down on the harms they can bring to people with disabilities reflects a broader push by President Joe Biden's ad-

ministration to foster positive advancements in AI technology while reining in opaque and largely unregulated AI tools that are being used to make important decisions about people's lives.

"We totally recognize that there's enormous potential to streamline things," said Charlotte Burrows, chair of the EEOC, which is responsible for enforcing laws against workplace discrimination. "But we cannot let these tools become a high-tech path to discrimination." A scholar who has researched bias in AI hiring tools said holding employers accountable for the tools they use is a "great first step," but added that more work is needed to rein in the vendors that make these tools. Doing so would likely be a job for another agency, such as the Federal Trade Commission, said Ifeoma Ajunwa, a University of North Carolina law professor and founding director of its AI Decision-Making Research Program. "There is now a recognition of how these tools, which are usually deployed as an anti-bias intervention, might actually result in more bias — while also obfuscating it," Ajunwa said. □

# Wind, drought combine to make western U.S. fires unstoppable

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN

Associated Press

The flames of a northern New Mexico wildfire have become unstoppable as the largest blaze in the U.S. burns trees sucked dry of moisture over decades of drought amid a forecast Thursday of more winds expected to fan the blaze, according to wildfire fighting managers.

Meanwhile, winds in Southern California sent embers flying in the coastal community of Laguna Niguel on Wednesday. More than 20 homes were destroyed, many of them multimillion-dollar mansions. No injuries were reported.

The California fire was much smaller than the New Mexico blaze that has burned at

least 170 homes, but Brian Fennessy, chief of the Orange County Fire Authority, said drought and climate change have combined to make fires that were once easy to contain extremely dangerous for people and property.

From New Mexico to Colorado and parts of the Midwest, forecasters on Thursday issued red flag warnings of extreme wildfire danger because of low humidity levels, erratic winds and warm temperatures. The same combination of weather conditions have contributed over the last month to much worse than normal spring wildfires in the U.S.

In New Mexico, the fastest-moving flames in the southern foothills of the Rocky

Mountains were headed northeast and away from the area's biggest population center of Taos, a popular tourist destination 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of the state line with Colorado.

The winds have made it difficult for aircraft to fly to help firefighters on the ground, but some planes managed to drop retardant on the blaze Wednesday despite winds gusting in some areas above 45 mph (72 kph).

Some evacuation orders were relaxed along the southern flank of the fire near the town of Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Additional crews were on order to join the more than 1,800 personnel fighting the New Mexico fire, and fore-



A firefighter works to put out a structure burning during a wildfire Wednesday, May 11, 2022, in Laguna Niguel, Calif.

Associated Press

casters said weather conditions should improve on Friday.

The fire already has burned through a forested landscape held sacred by its rural residents, many losing

homes that have been in their families for generations. Some evacuated residents who were allowed to return home Tuesday and Wednesday found only charred rubble. □



# Cartel-financed Oregon pot farms expand to growing indoors

By **ANDREW SELSKY**  
Associated Press

**SALEM, Ore. (AP)** — Foreign drug cartels that established illegal outdoor marijuana farms in Oregon last year are expanding to large indoor grows, a state police official said Thursday.

The new challenge emerged as a task force created by the Legislature met for the first time to figure out how to combat cannabis-related problems, some of which threaten Oregon's legal, regulated recreational marijuana industry.

The Task Force on Cannabis-Derived Intoxicants and Illegal Cannabis Production is also responsible for recommending funding and command structure to enable law enforcement to combat illegal cannabis production, changes to state laws to address labor trafficking and water theft by the cartel-financed pot farms and regulations on genetic engineering of cannabis, among other issues.

"It started with a simple ask of help and it's turned into, 'Oh, my goodness, there's so much to deal with.' And so I think we just have to kind of take one at a time," said state Rep. Lily Morgan,



**Josephine County Sheriff Dave Daniel stands amid the debris of plastic hoop houses destroyed by law enforcement, used to grow cannabis illegally, near Selma, Ore., on June 16, 2021.**

Associated Press

a Republican from the southern town of Grants Pass, as the task force met via video link.

One of the biggest problems is the recent proliferation of illegal, industrial-sized marijuana farms.

In early 2021, hundreds of greenhouses began cropping up in southern Oregon's Josephine and Jackson counties — some within city limits, others brazenly established along highways or tucked into remote

valleys.

They were not licensed by the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission and are financed by foreign criminal cartels, from Latin America, Europe and Asia, authorities have said. There were more pot farms than overwhelmed law enforcement officials could take down. Indoor illegal growing operations have long existed indoors, but now criminal gangs are pushing more in that direction, en-

abling them to grow year-round, a task force member said.

"We're starting to hear about Josephine County, a lot of operations moving indoors," said Oregon State Police Sgt. Tyler Bechtel. "It makes it all that much harder to see it from the street, see it from the air, just smell it. And it's not a seasonal problem when you move indoors. It's a year-round problem."

The state police have

identified dozens of ethnic-based drug trafficking organizations, each operating between five and 30 marijuana grow sites, Bechtel said.

Giving an idea of the scope of the problem, the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission says 551,000 marijuana plants were seized in Jackson County, Josephine County and central Oregon's Deschutes County from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. And that was a tiny fraction of the illegal crop. Authorities also seized almost \$3.4 million in cash in the raids.

"Despite legal avenues for purchases and sales of marijuana within Oregon, an illegal marijuana market continues to cause public safety concerns, including diversion of marijuana to other states, sales of marijuana to underage buyers, illegal cultivation of marijuana on private, state, and federal property, and enrichment of organized criminal operations," the commission said in a report. The report examined results after an outlay of millions of dollars in grants to the three counties to address increasing unlawful marijuana cultivation and distribution operations in Oregon. □

# Wind, drought combine to make western U.S. fires unstoppable



**A firefighter works to put out a structure burning during a wildfire Wednesday, May 11, 2022, in Laguna Niguel, Calif.**

Associated Press

By **SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN**  
Associated Press

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# Finland moves toward joining NATO amid Russian threats

**Associated Press**

**KYIV, Ukraine (AP)** — Finland's leaders Thursday came out in favor of applying to join NATO, and Sweden could do the same within days, in a historic realignment on the continent 2 1/2 months after Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine sent a shiver of fear through Moscow's neighbors.

The Kremlin reacted by warning it will be forced to take retaliatory "military-technical" steps.

On the ground, meanwhile, Russian forces pounded areas in central and eastern Ukraine, including the last pocket of resistance in Mariupol, as part its offensive to take the vital industrial Donbas region, while Ukraine recaptured some towns and villages in the country's northeast.

Finland's president and prime minister announced that the Nordic country should apply right away for membership in NATO, the military defense pact founded in part to counter the Soviet Union.

"You (Russia) caused this. Look in the mirror," Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said this week.

While the country's Parliament still has to weigh in, the announcement means Finland is all but certain to apply and gain admission though the process could take months to complete. Sweden, likewise, is considering applying.

That would represent a



**Men stand next to an apartment building damaged by Russian shelling in Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, Thursday, May 12, 2022.**

major change in Europe's security landscape: Sweden has avoided military alliances for more than 200 years, while Finland adopted neutrality after its defeat by the Soviets in World War II.

Public opinion in both nations shifted dramatically in favor of NATO membership after the invasion, which stirred fears in countries along Russia's flank that they could be next.

Such an expansion of the alliance would leave Russia surrounded by NATO countries in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic and would amount to a stinging setback for Putin, who had hoped to divide and roll back NATO in Europe but

is instead seeing the exact opposite happen.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has said the alliance would welcome Finland and Sweden with open arms.

Russia's Foreign Ministry warned that Moscow "will be forced to take retaliatory steps of military-technical and other characteristics in order to counter the emerging threats to its national security."

NATO's funneling of weapons and other military support to Ukraine already has been critical to Kyiv's surprising success in stymieing the invasion, and the Kremlin warned anew in ominous terms Thursday that the aid could lead to direct

conflict between NATO and Russia.

"There is always a risk of such conflict turning into a full-scale nuclear war, a scenario that will be catastrophic for all," said Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council. While Russia's advance in the Donbas has been slow, Ukraine's military noted that Moscow has achieved "partial success." Western officials said Russia has gained ground and taken some villages.

Explosions were heard Thursday near the town of Bakhmut, an area of the Donbas that has seen heavy fighting. The Ukrainian military said Russian forces were storming two

villages there.

Britain's Defense Ministry said Russia's focus on the Donbas has left its remaining troops around the northeastern city of Kharkiv vulnerable to counterattack from Ukrainian forces, which recaptured several towns and villages around the city.

Still, Russian rocket strikes Thursday killed one person and wounded three in a suburb of Kharkiv, the regional governor said. Kharkiv is Ukraine's second-largest city.

Fighting across the east has driven thousands of Ukrainians from their homes. Evacuees wiped away tears as they carried their children and belongings onto buses and vans to flee.

"It is terrible there now. We were leaving under missiles," said Tatiana Kravstova, who left the town of Siversk with her 8-year-old son Artiom on a bus headed for the central city of Dnipro. "I don't know where they were aiming at, but they were pointing at civilians."

Ukraine also said Russian forces had fired artillery and grenade launchers at Ukrainian troops in the direction of Zaporizhzhia, which has been a refuge for civilians fleeing Mariupol, and attacked in the Chernihiv and Sumy regions to the north.

Overnight airstrikes in Chernihiv killed three people, according to local media. □

## North Macedonia: U.S. leads exercise in NATO's newest member

**By FLORENT BAJRAMI and KONSTANTIN TESTORIDES**

**Associated Press**

**KRIVOLAK, North Macedonia (AP)** — U.S. troops joined forces from Britain, France, Italy and allied countries in the region Thursday in a military exercise held in NATO's newest member, North Macedonia, aimed at displaying deployment readiness along the alliance's eastern borders.

Nearly 10,000 soldiers from 19 nations are taking part in NATO's planned "Swift Response" exercises as

Russia's war in Ukraine continues for a 12th week. The exercises are being held in five separate locations, spanning from Norway to North Macedonia, military officials said.

"I think it's a fantastic demonstration of what we can do as an alliance and our ability to project combat power if asked to do so and how quickly we can do it," Maj. Gen. Peter B. Andrysiak, U.S. Army Deputy Commanding General for Europe and Africa, told reporters after an hourlong

display in North Macedonia.

Over the past 10 days, about 4,600 soldiers from Albania, France, Greece, Italy, North Macedonia, Montenegro, the U.K., and the U.S. have taken part in the exercises, which have included parachute jumps at several locations around the country.

North Macedonia formally joined NATO in March 2020. The small Balkan country of 1.8 million people has an active military of about 8,000 personnel. □



**A U.S. A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft flies over during the Swift Response 22 military exercise at the Krivolak army training polygon in the central part of North Macedonia, on Thursday, May 12, 2022.**

**Associated Press**



# Rights group: Israel approves over 4,000 new settler homes

By JOSEPH KRAUSS

Associated Press

**JERUSALEM (AP)** — Israel advanced plans for the construction of more than 4,000 settler homes in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, a rights group said, a day after the military demolished homes in an area where hundreds of Palestinians face the threat of expulsion.

It was a jolting illustration of Israel's policies in the territory it has occupied for nearly 55 years. Critics, including three major human rights groups, say those policies amount to apartheid, a charge Israel rejects as an attack on its very legitimacy.

Hagit Ofran, an expert at the anti-settlement watchdog group Peace Now, told The Associated Press that a military planning body approved 4,427 housing units at a meeting on Thursday that she attended. "The state of Israel took another stumble toward the abyss and further deepened the occupation," she tweeted. Spokespeople for the Israeli government and the military body in charge of civilian affairs in the West Bank did not respond to requests for comment.

It's the biggest advancement of settlement projects



The east Jerusalem Israeli settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev, seen next to a section of the controversial separation barrier, Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Associated Press

since the Biden administration took office. The White House opposes settlement construction and views it as an obstacle to any eventual peace agreement with the Palestinians. There was no immediate comment from the administration on Thursday's decision. But last week, when the first reports emerged of the impending settlement approval, State Department spokeswoman Jalina Porter reiterated that the U.S. "strongly" opposes settlement expansion.

U.N. Mideast envoy Tor Wennesland condemned the announcement, calling the settlements a "major obstacle to peace" that undermines hopes for a two-state solution.

"Continued settlement expansion further entrenches the occupation, encroaches upon Palestinian land and natural resources, and hampers the free movement of the Palestinian population," he said.

Most of the international community considers the

settlements illegal and supports a two-state solution to the conflict. But neither the United States nor other world powers have given Israel the stronger party any incentive to accede to such an arrangement. Israel says Palestinian leaders have rejected proposals by previous governments that would have given them a state.

Israel views the West Bank as the biblical and historical heartland of the Jewish people. Prime Minister Naf-

tali Bennett, who once led the main settler organization, is opposed to Palestinian statehood, but his government has taken steps to improve economic conditions for Palestinians.

Israel approved some 3,000 settler homes in October, brushing aside a rebuke from the U.S., its closest ally. Peace talks with the Palestinians broke down more than a decade ago, in part because of Israel's continuing construction on lands the Palestinians want for a future state. On Wednesday, Israeli troops demolished at least 18 buildings and structures in the West Bank following a Supreme Court decision that would force at least 1,000 Palestinians out of an area Israel designated as a firing zone in the early 1980s.

B'Tselem, another Israeli rights group, said 12 residential buildings were among the structures that were demolished, in villages in the arid hills south of the West Bank city of Hebron.

Residents of the Masafer Yatta say they have been living in the region, herding animals and practicing traditional desert agriculture for decades, long before Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 war. □

# Plane veers off runway in China and catches fire; 36 injured

**BEIJING (AP)** — A Chinese passenger jet veered off the runway during takeoff and caught fire on Thursday, sending black smoke

billowing into the air and injuring more than 30 people. The Tibet Airlines flight with 122 people on board was departing from the south-

western city of Chongqing for a flight to Nyingchi in China's Tibet region.

Videos shared by state media showed the left side of the aircraft on fire as people who appeared to be passengers headed away from the scene. Other footage showed fire trucks spraying water on the plane. The accident happened at 8:09 a.m. (0009 GMT), Tibet Airlines said.

The Airbus A319-115 jet had 113 passengers and nine flight crew on board, all of whom were evacuated. During the evacuation, 36 people were injured with sprains or scrapes, according to the southwest regional branch of the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

"In the process of taking off, the flight crew discovered an abnormality with the aircraft and stopped the takeoff according to the procedures. The aircraft left the runway and caught fire after the engine hit the ground. Currently the fire has been put out," the aviation authorities said in a statement.

One passenger, Long Anquan, told China News Service that during takeoff he heard an unusual noise, after which the plane started to lean to one side and hit the ground with its wing. Long quickly bent forward and put his hands over his head, but the impact was so strong that he was still injured. Long said he felt lucky to survive. "I've used

up all my luck in my entire life," he said in an interview with China News Service.

The Chinese flight tracking platform VariFlight said the plane is 9 1/2 years old.

The airport said about two hours after the accident that flights had resumed and that an investigation was underway. One of the three runways remained closed, the CAAC said.

The incident follows the crash of a China Eastern Boeing 737-800 in southeastern China on March 21 in which all 132 people on board were killed. That accident, in which the plane went into a sudden nose-dive and slammed into the ground in a mountainous area, remains under investigation. □



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, a passenger jet that veered off a runway during take-off and caught fire is seen in the aftermath in Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport in southwestern China's Chongqing Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Associated Press



# Cuba hotel explosion badly damaged major Baptist church

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ

Associated Press

**HAVANA (AP)** — Alejandro Clemente González was talking with an electrician while preparing for weekend services at Cuba's most important Baptist church when an enormous explosion shook the building and shattered the 19th century dome towering far above the pews.

Concrete plunged from walls, wood and glass showered down from the windows as an apparent gas explosion next door killed at least 44 people in and around the devastated Hotel Saratoga in Old Havana on May 6.

"I didn't know what was happening," the church administrator said with a trembling voice as he revisited the sanctuary with Associated Press journalists on Wednesday. "I called on the Lord, 'What is this, Lord? Help us!'"

He said the two men heard the cries of a receptionist as debris tumbled down around them, obstructing their path.

"I remembered that there was an exit at the back, and then the brothers who were on the third floor



**Rev. Barbaro Abel Marrero Castellanos, president of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba, poses for a photo inside the Calvary Baptist Church damaged by an explosion that devastated the Hotel Saratoga which is located next door, in Old Havana, Cuba, Wednesday, May 11, 2022.**

Associated Press

came down, we all met, we counted one another," and managed to escape. All 18 people who had been inside were physically unharmed, if shaken.

"Since then I have slept badly. I jump at every sound," González said.

Parts of the upper floors have collapsed at the building that houses not only Calvary Baptist Church

but a seminary and the denomination's headquarters for western Cuba.

Sunlight glows through cracks in the outer walls, windows are shattered, their frames torn from the walls. Halls and rooms of the broken hotel are visible through a gap. A thick layer of gray dust covers the dark wood pews where hundreds meet for worship

services.

The famous, elegant building now known as the Teatro Marti was just a few years old when, in 1887, Baptists began holding services across the street on a corner in Old Havana that had once held a circus. Cuba was still a Spanish colony and its Capitol building — modeled on the U.S. Capitol — wouldn't be

built nearby for a few decades yet.

The Baptists bought the property in 1889 and gradually established the church, a printing house, a school, a seminary and the headquarters that now serves about 70,000 Baptists in western Cuba.

Overall, the church estimates there about about 200,000 Baptists across the whole island.

"For each believer, each Christian, each Baptist who comes, this is their home," said the Rev. David González, 31, who has lived for the past two years in an apartment beside the church that is now partially collapsed.

Government authorities so far have focused emergency efforts on trying to find the living and the dead in and around the devastated hotel — on Thursday they reported another death — but they did meet with church officials about the status of the church.

"They transmitted to us a desire to help as much as possible," said the Rev. Bárbaro Abel Marrero Castellanos, president of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba. □

# Guatemala judge threatened after decision on civil war crime

By SONIA PÉREZ D.

Associated Press

**GUATEMALA CITY (AP)** — A Guatemala judge who last week ordered nine former police and military officers to stand trial for alleged crimes during that country's civil war, said Wednesday that death threats against him had increased since announcing his decision.

"They send me messages, they call me on the phone, there's vehicles following; all of that is happening," Magistrate Miguel Ángel Gálvez said.

Gálvez is no stranger to high-profile cases. He once ordered former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt to be tried. "Before they had threatened me, but now they even come to hearings to photograph me," he said. Last week's case stemmed from a document from

Guatemala's civil war recovered in 1999 known as the "Military Diary." Inside, military officials logged forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and the torture of 183 people.

The men on trial were high-ranking military and police officers arrested last year and implicated in the cases described in the document by nature of the command positions they held when the crimes occurred between 1983 and 1986.

In addition to the nine ex-police and military officers Gálvez ordered to stand trial, he called for prosecutors to find Toribio Acevedo Ramírez, a former head of military intelligence. Panamanian authorities arrested Acevedo Ramírez Tuesday in Panama City's airport.

Gálvez said that during a hearing he received at

least 20 calls from a number in the United States. When he finally answered, a voice on the other end said "if you hang up, you're going to remember me."

Gálvez said he suspected the leader of the far-right Foundation Against Terrorism, FCT, Ricardo Rafael Méndez Ruíz, could be behind some of the threats. Méndez Ruíz was sanctioned by the U.S. State Department last year as an undemocratic actor for allegedly obstructing prosecutions against former military officers by harassing and intimidating investigators.

Méndez Ruíz had written on social media that "It is Miguel Ángel Gálvez's turn, the FCT will take care of it." He said Gálvez would pay for serious crimes he committed. "We are going to



**Judge Miguel Angel Galvez poses for a photo during a recess from a court hearing, in Guatemala City, Wednesday, May 11, 2022.**

Associated Press

see him locked up or exiled," he wrote.

On Wednesday, Méndez said he had filed a complaint against the judge. Gálvez said the Supreme Court should investigate the threats, but it had so far not commented.

Meanwhile, Gálvez fears the government is trying to build a case against him, as has been the case with other judges and prosecutors who have worked on sensitive corruption cases, which are also sometimes part of his docket. □



## Aqua Grill restaurant: The taste of New England with Caribbean flair



**ORANJESTAD** — One thing is for certain: Chef Scott Scheuerman and his team are famous for getting people hooked, just like the fish on your plate. You will get the taste of home fused with Caribbean while dining in elegance. Scheuerman will tell how Aqua Grill established its name since opening in 2002, and why it reaped accolades from such prestigious travel publications as Fodor's, who says, "This hip restaurant is heaven on earth for seafood lovers, who will find fresh fish galore..." Now is your chance to taste Aqua Grill's NEW seasonal menu and create a lifetime culinary memory.

### 'A Scheuer thing'

Secretly, we all know that the success of a restaurant begins in the kitchen. That is where the chef creates his magic and for Aqua Grill the culinary team has won an assortment of awards for their continuous delivery of 'haute-cuisine del mar.' Classic seafood is mingled with contemporary ideas resulting in surprising dishes that soon made the restaurant a must-dine, confirmed by established travel media specialists



like Fodor's and Frommer's.

American-born Scheuerman, executive chef of Aqua Grill, is thrilled about 'his restaurant'. "We started out as a New England style seafood restaurant, patterned after Boston style. But we quickly blended into some Caribbean, local flair... if you will. We do still offer the traditional New England dishes like whole Maine lobster, northern seafood plates like the salmon, tuna and swordfish. We buy also from the local fisherman to offer Caribbean dishes like snapper and grouper which are number one sellers in our restaurant being the most prevalent local fishes. Catches like wahoo, mahi mahi and brasil are welcome too, anything that comes out of the water we embrace."

### Fresh import from Boston

Aqua Grill flies in their own shipments on a weekly basis mostly from Boston because the price quality balance is the best, says the chef. "We are unique in this. Number one priority is buying fresh, we mean not frozen. Our original concept is New England seafood and we stick to that concept. They have a wonderful assortment of oysters and lobsters as well." Aqua Grill also offers international fusion type of menu items; actually all you wish for is there. A very balanced menu awaits you. "And we have options for meat lovers and vegetarians/vegans too. We, however, do not mix it up too much because we believe we do not want to lose our identity as a seafood restaurant," Scheuerman adds.

### Sublime menu

Now is the time to indulge in Aqua Grill's dinner experience. The established restaurant offers a sensational menu. We present to you a Raw Bar with among others fresh Oysters on the half Shell, Littleneck Clams, Peruvian Ceviche and Lobster Salad. Steamed Dumplings and Prawns or Steamed Mussels seduce you from the open view kitchen.

After that continue your gastronomic trip to heaven with the house specialties like Main Lobster, steamed or broiled or maybe you crave for the best Alaska King Crab Legs you have ever tasted?

You haven't reached your destination yet because there are more main course options to blow you away: Seared Chilean Sea Bass, Cioppino or Blackened Tuba are just some to mention.

Take a pick out of Aqua Grill's delicious desserts to finally conclude yes, this beats it all. We will be back for more. □

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## AHATA:

# In March Aruba experienced a 97% recovery in hotel occupancy



**Oranjestad, Aruba – May 10th, 2022: The Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association has published the latest hotel performance data reporting that in April 2022 Aruba hotels experienced an 80% average occupancy rate.**

### April 2022:

Occupancy: The occupancy rate was 80%, which is a 97% recovery compared to 2019.

ADR: In comparison to 2019, the average daily rate (for occupied rooms) increased by 12% to \$323.04.  
RevPAR: The revenue per available room was \$259.52, which is a 9% increase over 2019.

### Year-to-date 2022:

Occupancy: The average occupation for the first four months of 2022 was 67%, which is a 76% recovery compared to 2019.

ADR: The average daily rate (for occupied rooms) increased by 3% to \$345.54.  
RevPAR: The revenue per available room was \$230.60, a 22% decrease from 2019.

### Timeshare:

AHATA's Timeshare properties experienced a 88% occupancy rate in April, and project an average occupancy of 86% in May 2022.

AHATA member hotels: Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, Barceló Aruba, Boardwalk Boutique Hotel,

Brickell Bay Beach Club, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Courtyard by Marriott, Divi & Tamarijn All-Inclusive, Eagle Aruba Resort, Holiday Inn Resort Aruba, Hyatt Regency Aruba, Hyatt Place Aruba Airport, Manchebo Beach Resort, Marriott Aruba & Stellaris Casino, Paradera Park, Rehoboth Peaceland Boutique Hotel, Renaissance Wind Creek Aruba Resort, The Ritz-Carlton Aruba, RIU Palace Aruba, RIU Palace Antillas, Talk of the Town Hotel.

AHATA member timeshares: Divi Aruba Phoenix, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Village Golf, La Cabana, Marriott Ocean Club, Marriott Surf Club, The Mill Resort.

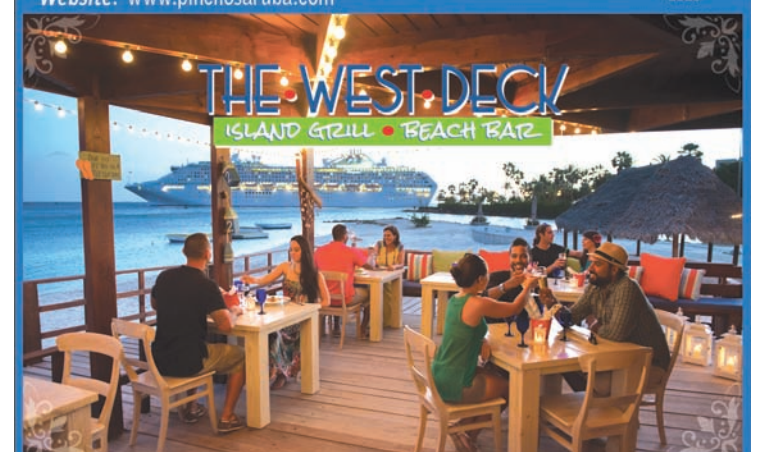
AHATA member vacation home rentals: Aramis Real Estate, Aruba's Life Vacation Residences, Aruba Happy Rental, Casiola Aruba, Cobalt Blue Fusion (Blue, Azure), Ford Property Management, Turibana Plaza. □

### OCCUPANCY FORECAST:

	Occupancy Forecast	Recovery compared to 2019
May	79%	98%
June	78%	94%
July	83%	93%
2022	74%	87%



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**Tel.:** 583-2666  
**Website:** www.pinchosaruba.com



**Open:** Daily for Lunch and Dinner  
**From:** 10:30 am to 10:00 pm  
**Tel.:** 587-2667  
**Website:** www.thewestdeck.com





## Amidst a new strategy and adjusted organization: Aruba Airport Authority N.V. sees growth in 2021

ORANJESTAD - On April 29th the Board of Supervisory Directors and Shareholder (Aruba), in presence of management and the external financial

auditor, have approved and adopted Aruba Airport Authority's Annual Report 2021, including the financial statements.

The recovery of air traffic and consequently passengers handled at Aeropuerto Internacional Reina Beatrix (AUA Airport) was stronger than initially forecasted for the year 2021. The 1st quarter marked a very slow recovery coming out of the year 2020 but suddenly emerged as being a strong recovery year for the remainder of 2021.

Compared to 2020 the number of passengers grew with 103% to a total of 1,842,864 passengers which was a recovery of 69% versus pre-pandemic year 2019. The recovery resulted in 28 destinations scheduled across 25 airlines in 2021.

Joost Meijis, CEO of AAA: "Our redefined vision and strategy will give us guidance in the times to come and maximizes our added value to a sustainable economy and community in Aruba. I like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our own AAA employees and the entire airport community who contributed to the results achieved during the challenging last years: the airlines, the passengers, our business partners, representatives of authorities, the board of supervisory directors, our shareholder, and most importantly our employees."

For a summary of the AAA Annual Report 2021 please visit <https://www.airportaruba.com/press-releases>



## Can I have a ..., please?

ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change?? How about a different breakfast from what you are used to at your hotel. Hop in your car, drive around and anywhere around the island you will come across a local snack shop.

Here you will find all types of snacks loved by the lo-

cals. Try a pastechi, a Caribbean pastry filled with cheese or meat and fried up deliciously. Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, a crusty little meat ball. A dedito is also a good option, it's a stick made out of cheese or hotdog. If you want to try something more familiar go for a home-made hamburger or a ham and cheese toast, but



with a local touch. All these snacks are ridiculously addictive.

Freshen up with a delicious fruit shake (batido) made out of watermelon, strawberry, banana, papaya or just mix any fruit together. What makes these little snack shops more attractive is the warmth of its people and with the smile you are being served.☐





# Millennial Money: Save on family travel without stressing

By **KELSEY SHEEHY** of **Nerd-Wallet**

My family didn't travel much when I was a kid, but when we did, my parents jumped through hoops to cut costs.

On a trip to Disney World, for example, our family of six switched hotels. Every. Night. My mom worked for a hotel chain and could get one free night per property.

Did my parents save money? Yes. Did it add to the mental burden of traveling with four kids? Absolutely.

As an adult now, planning a trip with my own child, I fully understand how expensive — and hard — it is to travel with kids. Planning and packing requires accounting for naps, snacks, tantrums and blowouts. And you're budgeting for extra airfare, a bigger rental car and additional lodging. You can save money on family travel and still have peace of mind. To find out how, I consulted two experts. Here's what they had to say.

## PAY WITH POINTS

The secret of savvy travelers? They don't actually pay for airfare and lodging. Instead, they use rewards credit cards to turn everyday purchases into free flights and hotel rooms.

"Make your money work



Travelers roll their luggage at a baggage claim area at Los Angeles International Airport Monday, April 25, 2022, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

for you," says Preethi Harbuck, a San Francisco Bay Area-based travel writer behind the blog Local Passport Family. Harbuck's family of seven (soon to be eight) travels almost exclusively on credit card points. "There are more expenditures when you have kids but you can leverage those into greater benefits." Card hopping can net you major points thanks to signup bonuses but can be hard to manage, says Jamie Harper, mother of four and author of the travel

blog Fly by the Seat of Our Pants. To keep things manageable, stick to one or two primary cards.

Harper and her husband rotate between Hyatt, Marriott and Hilton cards, which offer perks like free breakfast, Wi-Fi and anniversary nights.

## PACK LIGHT — AND SMART

Overpacking can be a disaster on multiple fronts. First, you have to lug all that stuff with you and keep track of it along the way. The odds of a lost blankie are high.

Second, checked bags are expensive — around \$30 to \$35 per bag, each way.

Harbuck and her family stick to either one checked bag or a few smaller carry-ons. Rather than a fresh outfit for each person, each day, they rewear outfits and typically do laundry on each trip.

"Pack clothing that's lightweight, packs up well and dries quickly," she says, noting that wool items are great for colder weather. Having layers is crucial, too. Skimp on this and you may

wind up spending \$50 per kid on souvenir sweatshirts to keep them warm, Harper says.

## CHOOSE ACTIVITIES MINDFULLY

Pack your itinerary with free things to do, like local parks, hikes, beaches or free museums.

You can also tap into perks included with memberships you already have — to your local zoo or children's museum — or invest in passes that you can use again and again.

When you do pay for experiences and excursions, consider your family's life stage. Rather than taking your toddler to an art museum, for example, opt for an outdoor sculpture garden where they can run around or a museum tailored toward children with plenty of interactive features at their level. Your family's travel priorities should also guide you, Harbuck says. Learning about a place's culture and history is important for her family, so they spend money on activities that achieve that goal and skip more popular tourist attractions. "We've been to London several times but have never ridden the London Eye," she says. "It doesn't help me feel connected to the culture, and it's super expensive." □

# Managers fired from Twitter amid Musk buyout turmoil

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY**  
**AP Technology Writer**

Twitter fired two of its top managers Friday, the latest sign of internal turmoil amid Tesla billionaire Elon Musk's planned buyout of the company.

One Twitter general manager, Kayvon Beykpour, is leaving after 7 years. In a series of tweets Thursday, Beykpour said CEO Parag Agrawal "asked me to leave after letting me know that he wants to take the team in a different direction."

Bruce Falck, Twitter's revenue and product lead, was also fired, according to a tweet that has since been deleted. His Twitter bio now says "unemployed."

"I dedicate this Tweet to those engineers and thank you ALL for the opportunity to serve alongside you. It's been awesome. There is a lot more to do so get back to work, I can't wait to see what you build," Falck tweeted.

Twitter confirmed both departures and said the company is pausing most hiring and except for business critical roles. In addition, it said in a statement, "we are pulling back on non-labor costs to ensure we are being responsible and efficient."

Beykpour was the general manager of consumer Twitter, leading design, research, product, engineering and customer service

and operations teams, according to his Twitter bio. A co-founder of the live streaming app Periscope, Beykpour joined Twitter when the social media company bought his start-up in 2015.

"I hope and expect that Twitter's best days are still ahead of it. Twitter is one of the most important, unique and impactful products in the world. With the right nurturing and stewardship, that impact will only grow," he said on Twitter.

Beykpour did not immediately respond to a message for comment.

In a memo sent to employees and confirmed by Twitter, Agrawal said Twitter has not hit growth and rev-



The Twitter application is seen on a digital device, Monday, April 25, 2022, in San Diego.

Associated Press

enue milestones after the company began to invest "aggressively" to expand its user base and revenue. Shares of San Francisco-

based Twitter slipped 86 cents to \$45.23 midday Thursday, more than 20% below Musk's offer price of \$54.20 per share. □



# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS** 40 Vortex

1 Wedding words 41 Lofty poems

5 Strike

9 Clarifying words

11 Tennis setting

13 Quartet member

14 Famed fur tycoon

15 The works

16 Sweetly charming

18 Takes back

20 Playfully shy

21 Bullfight bulls

22 Fling

23 Fresh

24 That

woman

25 Swindles

27 Fruit basket items

29 Mine yield

30 Ermines and minks

32 Stylish set

34 Corp. VIP

35 "See ya!"

36 ATM

button

38 Teakettle

output

39 "Super-

man" star

## DOWN

1 Parish

head

2 Egg

dish

3 Having powerful friends

4 Actor

Mineo

5 Digitizes, as a page

6 Defeat

7 Changed by a spell

checker

8 TV spots

10 Gentle

reproach

S	A	P	S		A	N	I	M	E
T	R	I	E	D		B	O	R	O
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U	N	O		S	P	A	N	N	E
M	A	N	N	E		A	Y	E	
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P	E	A	L	S		B	E	S	S

Yesterday's answer

12 Deuce

beaters

17 "— been

real!"

19 God of

war

22 Pekoe

and

oolong

24 Forward

fall

25 Spring

feature

26 Decorative

27 Chapel

sight

28 Shirt

part

30 Like bad

apples

31 Tender

spots

33 Peruse

37 "The

Matrix"

hero

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	
9				10		11			12
13						14			
15				16	17				
18			19					20	
	21					22			
		23				24			
25	26				27			28	
29				30					31
32			33					34	
35						36	37		
38						39			
	40							41	

5-13

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.

5-13

## CRYPTOQUOTE

F N F E D C J C Q F M E J U C Q J S H Q C L

Y L N F O F M H A N J L L J T L A J P M D

A X C Q D Q S T Y M C P D D .

— W Y T D L V J S H N Y L

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: NO PERSON IS YOUR FRIEND WHO DEMANDS YOUR SILENCE OR DENIES YOUR RIGHT TO GROW. — ALICE WALKER

# Study finds cleaner air leads to more Atlantic hurricanes



This satellite image provided by the NOAA shows five tropical storms churning in the Atlantic basin on Monday, Sept. 14, 2020. Associated Press

By SETH BORENSTEIN

AP Science Writer

Cleaner air in United States and Europe is brewing more Atlantic hurricanes, a new U.S. government study found.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration study links changes in regionalized air pollution across the globe to storm activity going both up and down. A 50% decrease in pollution particles and droplets in Europe and the U.S. is linked to a 33% increase in Atlantic storm formation in the past couple decades, while the opposite is happening in the Pacific with more pollution and fewer typhoons, according to the study published in Wednesday's Science Advances.

NOAA hurricane scientist Hiroyuki Murakami ran numerous climate computer simulations to explain change in storm activity in different parts of the globe that can't be explained by natural climate cycles and found a link to aerosol pollution from industry and cars — sulfur particles and droplets in the air that make it hard to breathe and see.

Scientists had long known that aerosol pollution cools the air, at times reducing the larger effects of greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuel and earlier studies mentioned it as a possibility in increase in Atlantic storms, but Murakami found it a factor around the world and a more direct link.

Hurricanes need warm water — which is warmed by

the air — for fuel and are harmed by wind shear, which changes in upper level winds that can decapitate storm tops. Cleaner air in the Atlantic and dirtier air in the Pacific, from pollution in China and India, mess with both of those, Murakami said. In the Atlantic, aerosol pollution peaked around 1980 and has been dropping steadily since. That means the cooling that masked some of the greenhouse gas warming is going away, so sea surface temperatures are increasing even more, Murakami said. On top of that the lack of cooling aerosols has helped push the jet stream — the river of air that moves weather from west to east on a roller-coaster like path — further north, reducing the shear that had been dampening hurricane formation.

"That's why the Atlantic has gone pretty much crazy since the mid-90s and why it was so quiet in the 70s and 80s," said climate and hurricane scientist Jim Kossin of the risk firm The Climate Service. He wasn't part of the study but said it makes sense. The aerosol pollution "gave a lot of people in the 70s and 80s a break, but we're all paying for it now."

There are other factors in tropical cyclone activity with La Nina and El Nino — natural fluctuations in equatorial Pacific temperatures that alter climate worldwide — being huge. Human-caused climate change from greenhouse gases, that will grow as

aerosol pollution reductions level out, is another, and there other natural long-term climatic oscillations, Murakami said.

Climate change from greenhouse gases is expected to reduce the overall number of storms slightly, but increase the number and strength of the most intense hurricanes, make them wetter and increase storm surge flooding, Murakami, Kossin and other scientists said.

While aerosol cooling is maybe half to one-third smaller than the warming from greenhouse gases, it is about twice as effective in reducing tropical cyclone intensity compared to warming increasing it, said Columbia University climate scientist Adam Sobel, who wasn't part of the study. As aerosol pollution stays at low levels in the Atlantic and greenhouse gas emissions grow, climate change's impact on storms will increase in the future and become more prominent, Murakami said.

In the Pacific, aerosol pollution from Asian nations has gone up 50% from 1980 to 2010 and is starting to drop now. Tropical cyclone formation from 2001 to 2020 is 14% lower than 1980 to 2000, Murakami said.

Murakami also found a correlation that was a bit different heading south. A drop in European and American aerosol pollution changed global air patterns in a way that it meant a decrease in southern hemisphere storms around Australia.

But as much as more hurricanes in the Atlantic can be a problem, the death from extra storms don't compare to the seven million people a year globally who die from air pollution, said University of Washington public health professor Kristie Ebi, who studies health, climate and extreme weather.

"Air pollution is a major killer, so reducing emissions is critical no matter what happens with the number of cyclones," said Ebi, who wasn't part of the study. □



# Scientists grow plants in lunar dirt, next stop moon

**CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)** — For the first time, scientists have grown plants in soil from the moon collected by NASA's Apollo astronauts.

Researchers had no idea if anything would sprout in the harsh moon dirt and wanted to see if it could be used to grow food by the next generation of lunar explorers. The results stunned them.

"Holy cow. Plants actually grow in lunar stuff. Are you kidding me?" said Robert Ferl of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Ferl and his colleagues planted thale cress in moon soil returned by Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, and other moonwalkers. The good news: All of the seeds sprouted.

The downside was that after the first week, the coarseness and other properties of the lunar soil stressed the small, flowering weeds so much that they grew more slowly than seedlings planted in fake moon dirt from Earth. Most of the moon plants ended up stunted. Results were published Thursday in Communications Biology.

The longer the soil was exposed to punishing cosmic radiation and solar wind on the moon, the worse the plants seemed to do. The Apollo 11 samples — exposed a couple billion years longer to the elements because of the Sea of Tranquility's older surface — were the least conducive for growth, according to scientists.

"This is a big step forward to know that you can grow plants," said Simon Gilroy, a space plant biologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who had no role in the study. "The real next step is to go and do it on the surface of the moon." Moon dirt is full of tiny, glass fragments from micrometeorite impacts that got everywhere in the Apollo lunar landers and wore down the moonwalkers' spacesuits.

One solution might be to use younger geologic spots on the moon, like lava



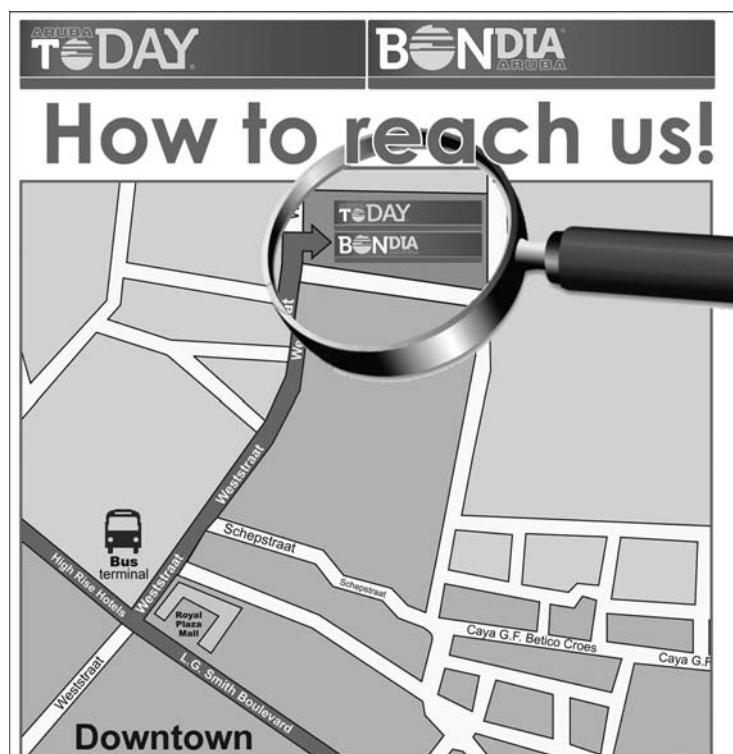
This 2021 photo provided by the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences shows the differences between thale cress plants grown in volcanic ash from Earth, which had a similar particle size and mineral composition to lunar soil, left, compared with those grown in the lunar soil, right, after 16 days, at a laboratory in Gainesville, Fla.

Associated Press

flows, for digging up planting soil. The environment also could be tweaked, altering the nutrient mixture or adjusting the artificial lighting. Only 842 pounds (382 kilograms) of moon rocks and soil were brought back by six Apollo crews. Some of the earliest moon dust was sprinkled on plants under quarantine with the Apollo astronauts in Houston after returning from the moon. Most of the lunar stash remained locked away, forcing researchers to experiment with simulated soil made of volcanic ash on Earth. NASA finally doled

out 12 grams to the University of Florida researchers early last year, and the long-awaited planting took place last May in a lab. NASA said the timing for such an experiment was finally right, with the space agency looking to put astronauts back on the moon in a few years. The ideal situation would be for future astronauts to tap into the endless supply of available local dirt for indoor planting versus setting up a hydroponic, or all-water, system, scientists said. "The fact that anything grew means that we have a really good starting point,

and now the question is how do we optimize and improve," said Sharmila Bhattacharya, NASA's program scientist for space biology.



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#### San Nicolas

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#### San Nicolas:

San Nicolas Tel. 584 5712

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002

Urgent Care 586 0448

Walk-In Doctor's Clinic

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Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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Alcoholics Anonymous  
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous  
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia  
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes  
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention  
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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# 'Top Gun' sequel a welcome trip to the danger zone

By **MARK KENNEDY**

**AP Entertainment Writer**

Early on in "Top Gun: Maverick," Tom Cruise hops on his sleek motorcycle, wearing Aviator sunglasses and a leather jacket with patches, and speeds into a time machine. No, that's not right. It's actually us who take a trip back.

More than 30 years after Cruise smirked his way to the cocky heights of the '80s as the maverick Navy pilot codenamed Maverick, he effortlessly picks up the character in a new chapter of "Top Gun" that is an absolutely, thoroughly enjoyable ride — a textbook example of how to make a sequel.

"Top Gun: Maverick" satisfies with one foot in the past by hitting all the touchstones of the first film — fast motorcycles, the song "Danger Zone," military fetichisms, humorless Navy bosses, shirtless bonding sports, "the hard deck," bar singalongs and buzzing the tower — and yet stands on its own.

It's not weighed down by its past like the last "Ghostbusters" sequel, but rather soars by using the second to answer and echo issues with the first.

Cruise is, of course, back, reprising his rebel test pilot now based in a forgotten corner of the Mojave Desert, a mere captain when



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Tom Cruise as Capt. Pete "Maverick" Mitchell in "Top Gun: Maverick."

Associated Press

he should be an admiral because he keeps bucking authority. The years have not calmed Maverick from his impulsive, hot-headed style. Pilots do, he argues; they don't ruminate. "You think up there, you're dead," he states. This is Cruise at his most Cruise-iest, coiled, sure and arrogant, teeth gleaming in the sunshine.

His once-rival Iceman — Val Kilmer — is back, too, a huge Navy muckety-muck now. And even Goose is back, by way of his son, the similarly mustachioed Miles Teller, who is strikingly similar looking to Anthony Edwards, the actor who played Maverick's doomed flight partner and wingman in life in the first film. That death looms large for Maverick even 30 years on: "Talk to me, Goose," he'll whisper

to himself.

Some things have changed, of course. The F-14A Tomcats have been replaced by the F/A-18 and the all-male cocky pilots of the first film have been infiltrated by a few cocky women. Unfortunately, it seems these are the last days of envelope-pushing men and women in naval aviation; pilotless aircraft are more reliable and they're next. "The future is coming and you're not in it," Maverick is told by Ed Harris, playing a humorless admiral.

But Maverick, on the edge of extinction, has one last job for the Navy: Train a group of young hotshots for a dangerous bombing mission in Iran. One potential snag: The young hotshots he must train include Goose's son, call sign Roost-

er. Will Maverick be responsible for cooking another Goose? Can he outwit John Hamm, playing an imperious by-the-book officer with delicious calm fury? Director Joseph Kosinski brings a visceral feel to the film, somehow making us feel claustrophobic in the wide open sky as pilots swoop and swerve. He wonderfully alternates between loud scenes outside with airplane engines roaring and quiet ones indoors of people almost whispering. He also switches from brilliant sun to dark interiors. One welcome touch in the screenplay by Ehren Kruger, Eric Warren Singer and Christopher McQuarrie is a new love interest for Maverick. Jennifer Connelly plays a divorced bar owner who has a townhouse, a beach house, a sailboat

and a Porsche, so business is good. But she's also not a push-over for on-again-off-again Maverick and, in a key scene, she's the comfortable pilot of a boat and he's the clueless one.

This is a more thoughtful Maverick, more gloomy. "Top Gun: Maverick" is in some ways a meditation on what happens to gifted rebels later in life. He is riven by guilt and in one scene he is picked up and unceremoniously tossed out of a bar by the very same hotshots that he was 30 years ago. Worst, he's called "pops." What is remarkable is that Cruise looks to have indeed found a way to thwart time. His chiseled body and still-boyish face are indistinguishable from the pilots three decades his junior during a football game on the beach.

The film handles Maverick's personal stuff — wooing the barmaid, repairing his relationship with Goose's kid — while also fulfilling its promise as an action movie. There are jets pulling 10Gs, the metal sound of cockpit sticks being pulled, epic dogfights and the whine of machinery balking at the demands put on it. The action even takes a few unexpected and thrilling turns. So jump on Maverick's bike, hug him tight and join him on the highway to the danger zone. □

## Geena Davis memoir 'Dying of Politeness' comes out in fall



Geena Davis, star of "Thelma & Louise," poses in a 1966 Ford Thunderbird similar to the one featured in the film, at the 30th anniversary screening of the film in Los Angeles on June 18, 2021.

Associated Press

BY HILLEL ITALIE

NEW YORK (AP) — Oscar

winner Geena Davis has a memoir coming out this fall, titled "Dying of Politeness," and described by the actor as her "journey to badassery."

HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, announced Tuesday that the book will be published Oct. 11. According to the publisher, Davis will share "laugh-out tales" about her modeling career and provide candid accounts of films "Tootsie," "The Accidental Tourist" and "Beetlejuice" and co-stars such as Susan Sarandon of "Thelma & Louise," Madonna from "A League of Their Own" and ex-husband Jeff Gold-

blum from "The Fly."

Davis, 66 said in a statement that the book would reveal how acting helped transform her into a person in charge of her own life. She won an Oscar for her supporting performance in "The Accidental Tourist" and was nominated for best actor for "Thelma & Louise." In 2019, the academy presented her the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for her advocacy for gender equality in media.

"As my career progressed, I went all the way from playing a soap star in her underwear in Tootsie, to a housewife turned road warrior in 'Thelma & Louise,'

to a baseball phenomenon in 'A League of Their Own,' to the first female president of the United States in Commander in Chief, and more," she said.

"For everything I put into each of those roles, I've taken far more away. I've been blessed to practice living a different life — a bolder, freer, and more authentic one — onscreen. In this book, I'll reveal the ways in which my public life — the movies, the advocacy, and my relationships — have impacted and empowered the private me, and, I hope, inspire my readers to expand their own sense of power." □



# Nuggets big man Jokic rises from 41st pick to 2-time NBA MVP

By PAT GRAHAM

AP Sports Writer

**DENVER (AP)** — To think, Nikola Jokic's entry into the NBA was once overshadowed by the introduction of the "quesarito."

"Hopefully, I'm going to have some percentage from Taco Bell," joked the Denver Nuggets' newly minted two-time MVP, whose name scrolled across the TV screen during the 2014 draft while the fast-food chain aired a commercial for its new product.

Much like the "quesarito" — a burrito wrapped in a quesadilla — the 7-footer is different. He has the vision of a point guard and a wide array of low-post moves. He has plenty of range, too. The player nicknamed "Joker" is one of a kind. That's true right down to where he accepted his second straight MVP title — at his horse stable in Sombor, Serbia. He even rode to the barn on a two-wheeled cart pulled by his horse. He was once the 41st pick, and taken while the Taco Bell commercial played. Not that he even knew that day.



Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic gestures after hitting a 3-point basket against the Golden State Warriors in the first half of Game 4 of an NBA basketball first-round Western Conference playoff series on April 24, 2022, in Denver.

Associated Press

"I was sleeping," Jokic said Thursday in a Zoom call from Serbia.

Now, he's inspiring a new generation of international players to dream big.

"I think I put an example that you can do whatever you want to do, if you work hard or if you try hard," Jokic said. "I think it's really, really a nice journey. Hopefully, it's not going to stop." The 27-year-old Jokic aver-

aged 27.1 points, 13.8 rebounds and 7.9 assists on a team that was missing two max players in Jamal Murray (ACL) and Michael Porter Jr. (back). The versatile center elevated his game to become the first NBA player to eclipse 2,000 points, 1,000 rebounds and 500 assists in a season.

As the 13th player to win back-to-back NBA MVP titles, his name will be for-

ever linked with the greats such as Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Moses Malone and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Jokic now has a chance at a three-peat, which would put him the same company with Larry Bird, Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell.

"I can't compare myself to those guys," Jokic said. "They did a lot and if you say those names anywhere

in the world, they will know them. They did everything for the sport today. They were amazing. They won a lot of championships.

"But just to have my name be there, I think it's really cool. Just one day someone's going to say my name with those group of guys."

In typical Jokic fashion, his celebration was far from elaborate: "Some music and some beer," he said. "Pretty simple."

Plenty of friends, family and members of the Nuggets joined him in Serbia, including coach Michael Malone and president of basketball operations Tim Connelly. Some — including him — wore shirts with a quote across the front: "Some people want to see you fail. Disappoint them." Jokic takes great pride in that sort of mantra, rising from a player whose game was once maligned — flopper, slow feet, poor defender — to what he is today.

Through all his fame, he remains a player of simple delights. Chief among them, his family. His horses, too. □

# Démare wins Giro 6th stage in photo finish, López keeps lead

**SCALEA, Italy (AP)** — French cyclist Arnaud Démare beat Caleb Ewan in a photo finish Thursday to win a second successive Giro d'Italia stage, while Juan Pedro López kept hold of the leader's pink jersey after the race's sixth leg.

In a contest between three of cycling's very best sprinters, Démare was behind both Ewan and Mark Cavendish as they approached the finish. But Démare used the slip stream behind Ewan to perfection to pull alongside his rival just before the line and then threw himself forward to edge his rival by the smallest of margins. Cavendish was about half a bike length behind in third.

None of them celebrated immediately after crossing the line, unsure who had got the victory. Cavendish was talking to Dé-

mare when the results were confirmed and hugged the Groupama-FDJ rider.

"It was very tight. I had the feeling that I had won but it was hot so I waited for the photo finish," Démare said. "A win is sometimes decided by very little. ... I only had 100 meters to overhaul Cavendish. I threw my bike on the line and it made the difference."

It was a seventh Giro stage win for Démare, more than any other Frenchman.

"Many people underestimate me but it's my 86th (career) victory today, my seventh at the Giro d'Italia. It counts. It's wonderful," he added.

Most of the overall contenders crossed the line safely in the peloton at the end of the flat 192-kilometer (119-mile) route from Palmi to Scalea as the race moved to the Italian main-

land following three stages in Hungary and two in Sicily. López maintained his 39-second advantage over Lennard Kämna. Rein Taaramäe was third, 58 seconds behind López.

"I don't know why it was so slow today but for sure I enjoyed the day," López said. "For sure tomorrow is a more hard stage but we're ready with the team to defend the maglia rosa (pink jersey)."

There was little action for most of the stage, with the peloton cruising at a slower pace than even the lowest estimates of the race organizers.

Diego Rosa was the lone breakaway rider for almost four hours although he knew he had almost no chance to get the win. Rosa rides for Eolo-Kometa, which is the second-division Italian team run by Alberto



Geoupama FDJ's Arnaud Demare, left, crosses the finish line in front of Lotto Soudal's Caleb Ewan, center, to win the 192 kilometers 6th stage of the Giro d'Italia cycling race from Palmi to Scalea in southern Italy, Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Associated Press

Contador and Ivan Basso. The slow pace in the peloton and the lack of eagerness for a breakaway could be partly explained by what awaits the riders on Friday's seventh stage, a day of almost continuous

climbing and descending. There are hardly any flat sections on the 196-kilometer (122-mile) route from Diamante to Potenza and four categorised climbs. The Giro finishes on May 29 in Verona. □



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# Kentucky Derby winner Rich Strike not running in Preakness

By STEPHEN WHYNO  
AP Sports Writer

Rich Strike will not run in the Preakness after his major upset to win the Kentucky Derby, keeping horse racing from having a Triple Crown winner for a fourth consecutive year.

Owner Rich Dawson made the stunning announcement Thursday, 10 days before the race in Maryland. Dawson said he and trainer Eric Reed agreed to stick with the initial plan for Rich Strike and rest him for five weeks. Rich Strike, at 80-1, was the biggest long shot to win the Derby in more than a century. Only Donerail in 1913 paid more to win.

The plan now is to have Rich Strike ready to run in the Belmont Stakes in New York on June 11. Dawson said it was wise for the colt to get extra rest and not face a short, two-week turnaround at Pimlico.

"It's very, very tempting to alter our course and run in the Preakness at Pimlico, which would be a great honor for all our group," Dawson said in a news release. "However, after much discussion and consideration ... we are going to stay with our plan of what's best for Ritchie."



**Rich Strike (21), with Sonny Leon aboard, wins the 148th running of the Kentucky Derby horse race at Churchill Downs Saturday, May 7, 2022, in Louisville, Ky.**

"We thank the wonderful Preakness and Pimlico folks that have reached out and very much appreciate the invite."

Reed did not immediately respond to a message from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Rich Strike was not expected to be the morning-line favorite for the Preakness, with Derby runner-up Epi-

center and Kentucky Oaks winner Secret Oath set to be part of the field. He could have been the first Derby winner not to go off as the Preakness favorite at post time since 2012 when I'll Have Another won the first two legs of the Triple Crown.

With Rich Strike's surprise withdrawal, the Preakness will go on without the of-

ficial Derby champion for the second time in four years. Country House and disqualified winner Maximum Security skipped the race in 2019.

Bob Baffert-trained Medina Spirit finished third in the 2021 Preakness after testing positive following the Derby for a substance not allowed on race day. Mandaloun, who was elevated to the 2021 Derby win long after Medina Spirit tested positive, did not run in the Preakness last year.

Rich Strike's incredible charge past the leaders down the stretch at Churchill Downs after being initially left out of the Derby field became one of the biggest upsets in sports. The

owners, trainer Reed and jockey Sonny Leon had all never won the race.

Adding to the impressive tale, Rich Strike had won only once before and had been claimed for \$30,000 — pennies in racing and unlikely for Derby-caliber horses.

Neither Reed nor the Maryland Jockey Club immediately responded to messages from the AP seeking comment.

With Rich Strike pointing to the Belmont, the Preakness appears to be a wide-open race among horses back from the Derby, potentially including Zandon and fourth-place finisher Simplification.

Trainer Chad Brown, who saddles Zandon, is also expected to enter Early Voting.

Horse racing has had two recent Triple Crown winners: American Pharoah in 2015 and Justify in 2018. Each was trained by Baffert, who is currently serving a suspension in Kentucky for medication violations that is being observed in Maryland and elsewhere. Baffert transferred Derby horses Taiba and Messier to former assistant Tim Yakteen.

Neither is expected to run in the Preakness.

Longtime Baffert friend D. Wayne Lukas confirmed Wednesday that filly Secret Oath would run in the Preakness and decided to pick a different race next Saturday for Ethereal Road — the horse that was scratched to make room in the Derby for Rich Strike. □

