



An investigator on Monday at the scene of the mass shooting in Buffalo. In high school, the suspect had a mental health evaluation.

Trapped and Helpless as a Gunman Drew Closer

By MICHAEL WILSON BUFFALO — On weekends, the employees at the Tops Friendly Market in East Buffalo tend to be younger, the ones unable to work weekdays, often because of school. Cashiers, shopping-cart attendants, shelf stackers — their manager, Lorraine Baker, 57, calls them "my babies." One of them, Nia Brown, 20, was just back to work on Saturday after having had her own baby seven weeks earlier, a daughter named Anyah. Ms. Baker said goodbye after her shift on Saturday afternoon and walked out of Tops. The store lives heavily from the surround-

ing neighborhood, and if the employees weren't her actual babies, they might still be family. In the parking lot as Ms. Baker left, her cousin, Zaire Goodman, 20, was collecting cars. At around 2:30 p.m., he was helping a woman with her groceries when a blue car pulled up. The driver's door opened, and a nightmare stepped out, covered from



Memorials were set up by the Tops supermarket in Buffalo.

DESPITE STATE LAW, BUFFALO SUSPECT PURCHASED RIFLE

Online Posts Reveal Months of Planning and a Lie to Law Enforcement

This article is by Jesse McKinley, Joseph E. Rosenow, Andy Newman and Chelsea Rose Marcias. BUFFALO — A cache of online postings suggests months of preparation and planning preceded Saturday's racist massacre in Buffalo and shows how the suspect evaded a state law that could have prevented him from owning a gun. New York's so-called red-flag law took effect in 2019, allowing judges to bar people believed to be dangerous from possessing firearms. Yet Payton S. Gendron, the 18-year-old man accused of killing 10 people at a Tops supermarket on Saturday, was able to buy an assault-style weapon despite having been held for a mental health evaluation last year after making a threatening remark at his high school. He described the remark — he responded to a school project question by writing that he was "wasting" his life — as a "blatant suicide — as a joke, according to a law enforcement official familiar with the case, and was released. But the postings that came to light on Monday make it evident that Mr. Gendron was biding "I got out of it because I stuck with the story that I was getting out of class and I just stupidly wrote that down," Mr. Gendron wrote. "That is the reason I believe I am still able to purchase guns. It was not a joke, I wrote

that down because that's what I was planning to do." The ruse worked: On Monday, the state police confirmed that they did not seek a red-flag order against Mr. Gendron, who is now charged with one of the deadliest racist massacres in recent American history. The newly discovered writings appear to have been posted on Discord, a chat application, by a user named Jimboboli before being uploaded to internet forums as a pair of comprehensive documents. They feature thousands of lines of racist, antisemitic and often nameless remarks, and include details on how Mr. Gendron apparently planned and practiced for his attack and paid for his weapons and other equipment. Jimboboli was also the name used in a livestreaming that Mr. Gendron posted on Saturday as he carried out his attack on Tops, snippets of which circulated online on several platforms before being expunged. The Discord posts include profiles of Mr. Gendron and extensive details that align with what is publicly known about him, and in many ways mirror a racist screed the author has been confirmed to have published online just before the attack. The compendium also appears to show that Mr. Gendron fully realized the consequences of his violence. "I am well aware that my Continued on Page A12

Evolving Virus Could Reinfect Over and Over

By APOORVA MANDAVILLI A virus that shows no signs of disappearing, variants that are adept at dodging the body's defenses and waves of infections two, maybe three times a year — this may be the future of Covid-19, some scientists now fear. The central problem is that the coronavirus has become more adept at reinfecting people. Already, those infected with the first Omicron variant are reporting second infections with the newer versions of the variant: BA.2 or BA.2.12.1 in the United States, or BA.5 and BA.2 in South Africa. Those people may go on to have third or fourth infections, even within a year, researchers said in interviews. And some small fraction may have symptoms that persist for months or years, a condition known as long Covid. "It seems likely to me that that's going to sort of be a long-term pattern," said John Pulliam, an epidemiologist at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. "The virus is going to keep evolving," she added. "And there are probably going to be a lot of people getting many, many reinfections throughout their lives." It's difficult to quantify how frequently people are reinfecting, in part because many infections are now going unreported. Dr. Pulliam and her colleagues have collected enough data from South Africa to say that the rate is higher with Omicron than seen with previous variants. Continued on Page A11

Soviet-Era Tactics Hobble Russia on Battlefield

By NEIL MACFARQUHAR Army vehicles were so decrepit that repair crews were stationed roughly every 10 miles. Some officers were so out of shape that the military budgeted \$1.5 million to make standard uniforms. "That was the Russian military more than a decade ago when the country invaded Georgia, according to the defense minister at the time. The shortcomings, big and small, were glaring enough that he Kremlin announced an overhaul of the military to build a more, more flexible, professional force. But now, almost three months into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is clear that the Kremlin fell woefully short of creating an effective fighting machine. Russian forces in Ukraine have underperformed to a degree that has surprised most Western analysts, raising the prospect that President Vladimir V. Putin's military operation could end in failure. By any measure, despite capturing territory in the south and east, the Russian military has suf-

Wildfire Risk To U.S. Homes Grows Greater

By CHRISTOPHER FAVELLER DAMMERON VALLEY, Utah — The nation's wildfire risk is widespread, severe and accelerating quickly, according to new data that, for the first time, calculates the risk facing every property in the contiguous United States. On Monday, three weeks after the state's highest court declared the state's wildfire risk to be "unacceptably high," it became clear just how spectacularly the party's gambit has failed. A new state of new congressional districts unveiled by the state that became the leading gateway for Republicans to make gains in this year's critical midterm elections, a disastrous reversal for Democrats in a state where they control every lever of power. The proposed maps, drawn by Jonathan R. Cervas, the court-appointed special master, would undo the changes that Democrats had hoped to use to unseat Representative Nicole Mallotakis, a Staten Island Democrat, from her Republican-held swing districts; and secure their own tenuous seats in the Dammeron Valley region. The new lines even cast the future of several long-tenured, powerful Democratic incumbents in doubt. They brought up the thicketest vilification of the building department's fire department shielded behind clipped reds and surveillance cameras. They were known among real estate agents as always wanting armed guards. Continued on Page A19

New York Map Rescinds Edge For Democrats

By NICHOLAS FANDOS Earlier this year, Democratic leaders in New York made a brazen gamble: With the national party's blessing, they created a congressional map that presented its candidates as many as three additional House seats. On Monday, three weeks after the state's highest court declared the state's wildfire risk to be "unacceptably high," it became clear just how spectacularly the party's gambit has failed. A new state of new congressional districts unveiled by the state that became the leading gateway for Republicans to make gains in this year's critical midterm elections, a disastrous reversal for Democrats in a state where they control every lever of power. The proposed maps, drawn by Jonathan R. Cervas, the court-appointed special master, would undo the changes that Democrats had hoped to use to unseat Representative Nicole Mallotakis, a Staten Island Democrat, from her Republican-held swing districts; and secure their own tenuous seats in the Dammeron Valley region. The new lines even cast the future of several long-tenured, powerful Democratic incumbents in doubt. They brought up the thicketest vilification of the building department's fire department shielded behind clipped reds and surveillance cameras. They were known among real estate agents as always wanting armed guards. Continued on Page A19

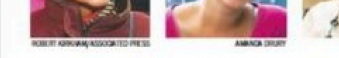
Billions in benefits siphoned by fraud

Jobless programs in the pandemic became 'magnet for rip-off artists' BY TONY ROHM AND YEGANEH TORBATI Saarensa Brown-Thomas had just arrived home from her shift as a custodian when she noticed an envelope in the mail from the D.C. government. Bearing her name, address and the last four digits of her Social Security number, the letter inside said she had been awarded unemployment benefits — a problem, she later recalled, since she had never applied for them. The 32-year-old soon notified her boss, believing last summer that she had put the matter to rest. But the real trouble wouldn't start until September. When Brown-Thomas did actually find herself out of a job, she couldn't get the financial support she needed. Mired in bureaucratic battles, she said she faced a months-long struggle just to prove her identity to the city. "I'm still trying to figure out how to get a lot of stuff paid," Brown-Thomas, who worked at one point with D.C. over her slightly, said in an interview this spring. "It was so easy for them to use my Social Security number to get unemployment." Brown-Thomas is part of a sprawling community of victims caught up in a massive series of attacks targeting the nation's generous coronavirus aid programs. The more than \$5 trillion approved since the start of the pandemic has become a wellspring for criminal activity, allowing fraudsters to siphon money away from hard-hit American workers and businesses who needed the help most. The exact scope of the fraud targeting federal aid initiatives is unknown, even two years later. With unemployment benefits, however, the theft could be significant. Testifying at a little-noticed congressional hearing this spring, a top watchdog for the Labor Department estimated there could have been "at least" \$15 billion in unemployment-related "overpayments," a projection that includes wrongly paid

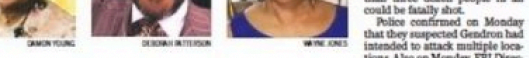
Buffalo suspect planned a shooting for months

OVER 600 PAGES OF ONLINE MESSAGES Highlighted supermarket as 'attack area 1'

BY JON SWAINE AND DALTON BENNETT Payton Gendron, the 18-year-old accused of killing 10 people at a supermarket in Buffalo on Saturday, wrote in increasing detail of his plans to murder dozens of Black people in statements posted online over the past few months, according to a compilation of messages by a writer who identified himself as Gendron. A review of more than 600 pages of messages by The Washington Post found that Gendron received in December to kill those he shared as "replacements," decided in February to target Buffalo's Tops grocery store based on its local African American population. When a store guard confronted him about why he had repeatedly entered that day, Gendron made excuses and fled in what he described as "a close call," the messages state. Having identified the supermarket as "attack area 1," Gendron detailed two additional Buffalo locations as areas at which to "shoot all blacks," according to the messages, which showed that he had charted routes to each location, worked out the times needed for each shoot-out and assessed that more than three dozen people in all could be fatally shot. Police confirmed on Monday that they suspected Gendron had intended to attack multiple locations. Also on Monday, FBI Director Christopher A. Wray said in a call with various law enforcement officials and community leaders: "I want to be clear, for my part, from everything we know, this was a targeted attack, a hate crime and an act of racially motivated violent extremism." Gendron, from Conklin, N.Y., has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder on the related attack on Saturday. Three other people were also injured before Gendron was arrested at the supermarket. The kid, who wore a hoodie, shorts and a black T-shirt with the word "genius" on the front, was probably just using the supermarket's public Wi-Fi, Law figures. SEE SHOOTING ON A8



Members of Ruth Whitfield's family comfort one another at a Monday news conference in Buffalo, where a gunman killed 10 people at a supermarket on Saturday. An 18-year-old accused of the crime detailed his plans to murder Black people in online statements.



FROM LEFT: Katherine "Kat" Massey, 72; Roberta Drury, 31; Pearl Young, 77; Heyward Patterson, 67; and Celestine Chamey, 65. Family members of the 10 victims of Saturday's shooting remembered the loved ones they lost. Story, A7

A barrage of gunshots and a scramble to escape

BY MARC FISHER, JACOB FOSTER AND SILVIA BOGGER-FRAU BUFFALO — Three blockwads of the expressway that half a century ago ripped a gash in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Buffalo, Daniel Lovv was having a smoke outside his barber shop across from the Tops Friendly Markets store. Andre Mackinell was inside the supermarket, on a mission to get a cake to celebrate his son's third birthday. Jerome Bridges was in aisle 14, adding price tags to items, three-packs of baby pacifiers for \$7.49 each. Ruth Whitfield, who was 86, had been visiting her husband in a nursing home and stopped at Tops to grab something to eat, her son said. Casual shoppers passed in and out of the market on a sultry spring Saturday afternoon that felt like the first glimmering of summer. Jefferson Avenue was not too busy, masks against the coronavirus seemed like a thing of the past to most people, and many shoppers nodded at familiar faces. In this mostly Black section of the city, in a neighborhood of century-old houses, some sagging, some kept sturdy and freshly painted, a White kid like Payton Gendron — 18, scraggly,

Oligarchs lose an Italian paradise

Sanctions leave Russian elites frozen out of their lavish stretch of Sardinia BY CHICO HARRAN AND STEFANO PIRELLI ROMAZZINO, ITALY — Even among the billionaires who flock to this vacation enclave, the Russian oligarchs stood out. They bought up the choicest villas along the coast, building department's fire department shielded behind clipped reds and surveillance cameras. They were known among real estate agents as always wanting armed guards. Continued on Page A19

Formula maker reaches deal with FDA

BY LAURA REILLY Abbott Nutrition, the maker of Similac and other popular baby formulas, said Monday it has come to an agreement with the Food and Drug Administration to fix safety issues at a Sturgis, Mich., factory that has been shuttered for more than three months, contributing to a nationwide formula shortage. The agreement represents a first step toward resolving a problem that has sent parents scrambling from store to store off on the fumes, it will take two weeks to reduce production and another six to eight weeks to get the product back on shelves. FDA Commissioner Robert M. Calais said the "Today" show on Monday that he felt "very comfortable" that the Sturgis plant would reopen in two weeks and that the shortage would be resolved by the end of the year. "Today's action means that Abbott and the Sturgis facility operations before reopening is approved. The company has previously said that once the FDA has signed