

# LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

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**BUSINESS** Super Bowl ads taking positive tone, looking toward future, past **10B** ▶

**SPORTS** Coin toss allows novice bettors shot to cash in before game begins **1C**

**SATURDAY**  
February 12, 2022 •

## MUSTREADS



Las Vegas Review-Journal

### BUSINESS

■ Oscar Goodman, left, recalled the history of the Mob Museum, which nears its 10th anniversary. **10B**

### SPORTS

■ The wife of renowned bettor "Mattress Mack" said she might not watch Sunday's Super Bowl. **1C**

### NEVADA & THE WEST

■ Students made their mask choices on the first day of school after the mandate was lifted. **1B**

■ Clark County recorded a seventh straight day with fewer than 1,000 new COVID cases. **1B**

### OPINION

■ The Paycheck Protection Program largely ended up benefiting the wealthy and well connected. **5B**

### WASHINGTON REPORT

■ President Joe Biden unfroze Afghan assets, splitting them between aid and a Sept. 11 fund. **4A**

■ The FDA delayed a review of COVID vaccines for children under 5. **4A**

### NATION

■ An early study on booster shots hinted at a decline in effectiveness. **6A**

■ A shooting at a Phoenix home left nine officers injured and the suspect dead. **6A**

### WORLD

■ A Canadian judge ordered an end to a border bridge blockade. **8A**

### E-EDITION EXTRAS

■ Sheriff Joe Lombardo delivered his final State of Department address. **1XB**

■ America's egg producers have fully embraced the shift to cage-free. **2XB**



**Sunny**  
**71 46**

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# Invasion clock is ticking

## U.S. intelligence: Russia could push into Ukraine by Wednesday

By Matthew Lee, Aamer Madhani and Vladimir Isachenkov  
The Associated Press

**WASHINGTON** — The Biden administration on Friday escalated dire warnings of a possibly imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine, saying it could happen at any moment, even as emer-

gency diplomatic efforts continued.

Adding to the sense of crisis, the Pentagon ordered an additional 3,000 U.S. troops to Poland to reassure allies.

As diplomatic options for averting war in Ukraine appeared to narrow, the White House said President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin would

discuss the crisis by phone on Saturday.

Biden has said the U.S. military will not enter a war in Ukraine, but he has promised severe economic sanctions against Moscow, in concert with international allies.

Timing of possible Russian military action remains a key question.

The United States picked up intelligence that Russia is looking at Wednesday as a target date, according to a U.S. official familiar with the findings.

The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly and did so only on condition of anonymity, would not

See **UKRAINE 7A**



Erik Verduzco Las Vegas Review-Journal

North Las Vegas police officer Nick Quintana with two of the children he and his wife took in, Owen, 8, and Kristina, 6.

# To serve and protect and love

## NLV officer, spouse open their home to 5 siblings

By Jonah Dylan  
Las Vegas Review-Journal

In a North Las Vegas police department break room, Nick Quintana munched on poke when the call came in.

A girl had dialed 911 and said she heard her parents fighting, followed by four loud bangs.

A man in his 50s had

been fatally shot in the backyard of his home in the 6100 block of Osaka Pearl Street.

Quintana was on his lunch break, and there were enough officers headed to the scene. There was a feeling, though, somewhere inside of him, pulling him to the house.

"I just felt this abrupt urge to go," he said. "I

was originally just kind of resistant to that feeling, because I was just trying to enjoy my lunch. And again, it just came stronger. I know it sounds weird, but it kept getting stronger."

He hopped in his cruiser. Dwayne Hogans was one of the first officers at the

See **CHILDREN 5A**

# AG candidate: Text 'tongue-in-cheek,' not racist

By Bill Dentzer  
Review-Journal Capital Bureau

The date, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, was chosen for maximum impact.

On that Monday, Jan. 17, an unapologetically left-leaning blogger with improbably close ties to certain Repub-

lican interests in Las Vegas posted a screenshot of a private text exchange between herself and a onetime friend and political ally.

Her correspondent in the April 2021 exchange was a Republican attorney general candidate with a penchant for blunt, salty language.

Over the months of their short acquaintance, the two had exchanged thousands of texts. This particular one, posted on the holiday honoring the slain civil rights leader, wasn't unique in tone, only in subject.

In a mutually derisive exchange, the candidate,

attorney Sigal Chattah, excoriated her potential Democratic opponent in the race, incumbent Aaron Ford, tossing out one of her signature insults, invoking a Middle Eastern curse from her Israeli background that

See **CHATTAH 10A**

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**SUMMERLIN** *Howard Hughes*

## ► CHATTAH

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references a particularly gruesome way to die.

"This guy should be hanging from a (expletive) crane," she wrote of Ford. "He's like the leader of (H)amas — making tons of money while the People in Gaza are starving."

Exposed to public scrutiny, the private remark is scandalous enough. To make it all the more damning for Chatah, Ford is Black.

That's where this story of behind-the-scenes political intrigue, shifting alliances, revenge seeking and mischief both begins and ends. The account, based on interviews with the main antagonists, is a side trip through a stormy eddy in the broader stream of bare-knuckles Nevada politics.

### Timed for political damage

Start with this: Chatah's onetime blogger friend, Sarah Ashton-Cirillo, doesn't think Chatah is a racist, or that she made the remark intentionally in a racial context. She acknowledges that she posted the exchange to fatally wound Chatah's candidacy at a time when Chatah was the only announced Republican in the race. Another Las Vegas attorney, Tisha Black, announced her candidacy this week.

"I ran it because I believe that she's unfit from an emotional standpoint, to understand how to interact in a position of that magnitude of being attorney general," Ashton-Cirillo said in a phone interview this week.

She said she waited until after Jan. 15, the deadline for candidates to report their initial round of campaign contributions, wanting "Republicans to realize this is a person so unfit for office, you guys need to do something."

Ashton-Cirillo confirmed what Chatah herself said this week when questioned about making the remark: Chatah uses the expression a lot. In this case, the Israeli-born Chatah said, the context of the exchange came amid talk of Bernie Sanders, whose positions on the conflict between Israel and Palestine Chatah abhors.

"When I say to my friends, 'I'm going to hang you from a crane,' I don't literally mean I'm going to hang you from a crane," Chatah said in an interview this week, characterizing her use of the "smartass comment" as "tongue-in-cheek." She's even aimed it at her former friend, when Ashton-Cirillo, a transgender woman, tweeted a picture of herself in her pre-transition male persona wearing a Palestinian soccer jersey.

Chatah, who emigrated from Israel with her family as a teenager, said her mother's dark skin, as a Yemenite Jew, invited taunting from other Jews with a Yiddish slur that translates to "black animal." The brutal method of execution she referenced is common in places such as Iran and by groups such as the Taliban.

"I would never attribute a racial context to hanging from a crane," Chatah said, stopping short of expressing regret.

"That is my culture," she added. "That's what is done to people in the Middle East, to traitors. And that's just part of my vernacular."

The Ford campaign had no comment on the matter.

### Odd connection

Chatah and Ashton-Cirillo offer broadly matching accounts of how they first connected. Despite her proudly progressive politics, Ashton-Cirillo ran in a circle of politically active Republican women. A real estate property analyst by profession, she worked on opposition research efforts for Republican candidates and was recommended to Chatah for the same in late 2020, as Chatah was weighing her run for office.

Sarah, a trans woman, was embraced by her Republican friends, both recall.

"They did not care that I was trans as long as they saw me as a cog in helping them deliver power to their own people and their own agenda," Ashton-Cirillo said, referring to Republican Party powerbrokers.

"When I first met Sarah, Sarah said she was like a unicorn. She was a Republican transsexual," Chatah said.

Ashton-Cirillo, who also describes her politics as "leftist libertarian," worked with and for these candidates because of personal rather than political connections, bonding over a shared dislike of more entrenched factions within the GOP. In May 2021, when the Review-Journal reported about extremist right-wing elements such

as the Proud Boys seeking to influence the state Republican Party, Ashton-Cirillo was in the thick of it, providing information about the attempted infiltration to the Review-Journal and other media, and saying she was collecting information for a book.



Sigal Chatah

But she was still helping her Republican friends.

"This is somebody that is really, like, out there posing as a Republican, helping on Republican campaigns," Chatah said, acknowledging that Ashton-Cirillo's politics and gender transition were novel. "The whole time I'm thinking that this is literally a Republican transsexual. Of course, I'm going to help her! Of course I'm gonna wanna promote that."

### Friendship ends

By spring 2021, Ashton-Cirillo, a registered Democrat, had decided to run for Las Vegas City Council, initially against Republican Victoria Seaman. Later, in June, she switched races, deciding instead to challenge Republican Michele Fiore. Here's where Ashton-Cirillo and Chatah's retelling of events start to diverge. Each accuses the other of backstabbing, divulging confidential information they had shared only between themselves.

At the peak of their friendship, both said, the two were in touch by text or phone a dozen or more times a day, meeting regularly for coffee or dinner, often at the Three Angry Wives pub in Boca Park. Chatah said she thought Ashton-Cirillo's candidacy against Fiore was "a huge

joke." She had introduced her to Fiore, even suggesting that Fiore use her as a campaign consultant because of the "mind-blowing information" Ashton-Cirillo had provided to Chatah on her potential Republican opponents.

After Ashton-Cirillo launched the campaign against Fiore, Chatah said she began to hear from other people scraps of private conversations she had had with Ashton-Cirillo. She decided to respond in kind and began giving Fiore information. Ashton-Cirillo says it was Chatah, aligned with Fiore, who started with the leaks - including threats of potentially damaging disclosures about Ashton-Cirillo's dating life.

There were additional behind-the-scenes skirmishes. Ashton-Cirillo claims that the threat of disclosure was intended to drive her out of the race. She eventually contacted Chatah and demanded that Chatah intervene to stop the attacks, which Ashton-Cirillo assumed were sanctioned by Fiore's allies in GOP leadership. Chatah said she told Ashton-Cirillo she held no sway to demand anything from the party. The two had a falling-out and ceased contact.

In September, Ashton-Cirillo tweeted support for an independent Palestinian state, a move that Chatah, with her Israeli background, took as a personal affront. Ashton-Cirillo, calling herself "anything but an anti-Semite," said she has long supported the two-state solution in the Palestine-Israel conflict and was reacting at the time to a public position taken by the Nevada State Democratic Party.

In late October, Ashton-Cirillo

withdrew from the race against Fiore, saying she wanted to focus her energy on a politics blog she started and other civic activities. But she still had plans for the "hang from a crane" texts with Chatah. She launched her blog in September and has been attacking Chatah on it since November, among other mostly Republican targets.

Ashton-Cirillo says she sent screenshots of the exchange and other damaging information to the state Democratic Party leadership in April 2021, after the party was taken over by its far-left wing. The party appears never to have weaponized the information, to Ashton-Cirillo's disappointment.

"The people who despise Republicans and Sigal found it abhorrent and disgusting," Ashton-Cirillo said of the blog post disclosing the text. "The people who like to attack me were very, very silent," she said, except for a conservative blogger who defended Chatah. "Because there was no way to refute what was there."

Chatah called the move revenge for her disclosing information to Fiore, "dropped by this blogger on Martin Luther King Jr. Day to try to do the maximum amount of damage and to paint me as a racist."

"It is definitely revenge, because I disclosed information to Michele that in Sarah's mind should never have been discussed," she added. "But Sarah forgets that Sarah disclosed tons of information that should have never been discussed."

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