

# Groton Daily Independent

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**A lost elk was seen in the Groton Area.** (Courtesy photo Layne Howard)

## Thursday, Oct. 24

Senior Menu: New England ham dinner, 7 layer salad, peaches, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Lasagna bake, garlic toast.

Football Playoffs: Groton Area hosts St. Thomas More, 6 p.m.

## Friday, Oct. 25

Senior Menu: Potato soup, ham salad croissant, tomato spoon salad, fruit.

School Breakfast: Breakfast cookie.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, tri taters.

Volleyball hosts Redfield (7th/C at 5 p.m., 8th/JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow)

## Saturday, Oct. 26

State Cross Country at Rapid City  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 209 N Main

## Sunday, Oct. 27

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: St. John's at 9 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m., Sunday School at 9:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with Milestones (Jr. K and Kindergarten), 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

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# 1440

**Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.**

## **Boeing Stalemate Continues**

Boeing's 33,000 production workers voted to continue their weeklong strike yesterday, rejecting a 35% pay raise over four years and \$7K bonuses, among other benefits.

The vote came as Boeing reported a \$6B third quarter loss, raising its full-year losses to \$8B amid quality concerns over its 737 Max aircraft. CEO Kelly Ortberg told investors in his first public call yesterday he plans to prioritize a culture shift to reboot the company's image. The statement came after Boeing announced layoffs and other efforts to downsize this month as its credit rating approaches junk status. Boeing's stock fell 3% in midday trading.

Boeing is the single largest exporter in the US by dollar value, generating close to \$80B in revenue each year. Still, the company has failed to turn a profit since 2018.

## **Turkey Terror Attack**

Attackers killed five people and wounded at least 22 others at an aerospace company's headquarters in Turkey yesterday. The government has labeled the incident a terrorist attack. Two attackers—one man and one woman—have been killed; the government says it is working to identify them.

According to local reports, the attack began when someone detonated a bomb outside the entrance of Turkish Aerospace Industries, a state-run defense company manufacturing military and civilian aircraft and drones. At least one other armed militant fired at security guards and entered the facility, with local officials describing a hostage situation at the company's cafeteria.

The attack comes as Turkey's government has been negotiating an end to its decadeslong conflict with Kurdish separatists. While the country's defense minister blamed Kurdish militants for the attack, investigators have not publicly identified an affiliation or motive as of this writing.

## **Mass Rape Trial**

Gisèle Pelicot, the 71-year-old French victim of mass rape, testified yesterday against her former husband, Dominique, who admitted to sexually assaulting and facilitating dozens of men to assault her for over a decade. Gisèle opted for a public trial—which has garnered international attention—in a case where victims typically choose anonymity to shed light on the issue of sexual consent in France.

Fifty men between the ages of 26 and 74 are accused of raping Gisèle between 2011 and 2020 in incidents her husband coordinated online. Dominique, who was married to Gisèle for 50 years, admitted to placing drugs in her food to facilitate the assaults. Over 20,000 labeled images and videos discovered on his devices showed the incidents. The defendants each face up to 20 years in prison.

Over a dozen marches in support of Gisèle have taken place in France during the weeklong trial, part of a global reaction to the case observers have likened to the US.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani's 50th home run ball sells for \$4.4M at auction, a record price for a sports ball of any kind.

Fernando Valenzuela, Dodgers pitching legend, dies at age 63.

Actresses Julianne Moore and Rosario Dawson, Radiohead's Thom Yorke, and author James Patterson among at least 15,000 creatives signing on to statement warning against unauthorized use of their work to train generative AI.

Director Roman Polanski won't face trial for alleged rape of a minor in 1973 after settling out of court. Harvey Weinstein's retrial on an overturned 2020 rape conviction to be pushed back to 2025.

## Science & Technology

Google's DeepMind deploys invisible watermark for AI-generated text; approach alters words used in a formulaic but indistinguishable way that can be decoded with a key.

Researchers discover how ovarian cancer shuts down immune cells, promoting tumor growth; cancer cells effectively block the energy source T cells rely on to function.

Archaeologists uncover the most extensive medieval urban sites discovered to date in Central Asia; cities of Tashbulak and Tugunbulak, located along the Silk Road, date back to 550 CE to 1050 CE.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.9%, Dow -1.0%, Nasdaq -1.6%).

US existing home sales drop 1% month-over-month in September to the slowest annual pace since October 2010; median home price topping \$404K is up 3% year-over-year.

Tesla shares rise 12% in after-hours trading on better-than-expected profits.

Peloton shares close up 11% after hedge fund founder says stock is undervalued.

McDonald's shares close down 5% after CDC announces E. coli outbreak linked to Quarter Pounder burgers across 10 states; total of 49 cases reported, with one person dead and 10 hospitalized.

Apple and Goldman Sachs ordered to pay over \$89M in penalties and refunds after US regulator finds they misled Apple Card holders.

American Airlines to pay record \$50M fine over treatment of passengers with disabilities.

## Politics & World Affairs

The Pentagon confirms reports of North Korean soldiers in Russia but says purpose is unclear; South Korea says 3,000 troops are there, part of a planned 10,000-person deployment, with Ukraine saying they are joining Russia's war in Kursk.

G-7 finalizes \$50B loan to Ukraine, backed by Russian assets.

Florida mother files wrongful death lawsuit against Character.AI—a company allowing users to interface with AI chatbots—after her 14-year-old son, active on the site, dies by suicide.

Mexican soldiers kill 19 suspected members of Sinaloa cartel in shootout in the northwestern state; attack comes months after arrest in the US of cartel cofounder Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada.

## Names Released in Turner County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 46 and Highway 19A, 12 miles west of Beresford, SD

When: 11:17 a.m., Saturday, October 19, 2024

Driver 1: Tracy A. Mortenson, 45-year-old female from Laurel, NE, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2018 Ford Explorer

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: Bailey Ann Feistner, 19-year-old female from Woonsocket, SD, serious non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 2: 2018 Ford F-150

Seat Belt Used: Yes

Turner County, S.D.- A Laurel, NE woman died Saturday morning in a two-vehicle collision 12 miles west of Beresford, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Tracy A. Mortenson, the driver of a 2018 Ford Explorer, was traveling eastbound on SD Highway 46. At the same time, Bailey A. Feistner, the driver of a 2018 Ford F-150, was northbound on SD 19 and failed to stop at the stop sign at the intersection of SD 46. The vehicles collided, sending them both into the northeast ditch.

Mortenson passed away at the scene. Feistner sustained serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

## South Dakota's Growing EV Charging Infrastructure – Insights from Zutobi's 2024 Report

South Dakota is making notable progress in expanding its electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, with a 31.82% increase in charging stations between 2023 and 2024. While the state's EV adoption remains low, the growth in infrastructure shows that South Dakota is laying the groundwork for future EV expansion.

Here are some key findings from the report:

Infrastructure growth: South Dakota has expanded its EV charging network by 31.82%, reflecting the state's commitment to building the necessary infrastructure to support electric vehicles. With 232 charging stations, South Dakota is preparing for increased EV adoption.

Room for growth in EV adoption: Despite strong infrastructure growth, South Dakota currently has only 1,675 registered EVs, accounting for 0.56% of all vehicles in the state. However, with the infrastructure already in place, the state is well-positioned to support more EV drivers in the coming years.

National trend: Across the U.S., the number of registered EVs in 2024 surpassed 3.1 million, a 114% increase from the previous year. However, charging infrastructure has only grown by 25% nationwide, making South Dakota's focus on infrastructure even more noteworthy.

full study: <https://zutobi.com/us/driver-guides/the-us-electric-vehicle-charging-point-report>

## Housing Opportunities for Veterans

A home is a place to call your own, where you can raise a family, build memories, and become part of a neighborhood and community. It also means meeting personal and financial goals and investing in your future.

A great benefit for veterans is the VA home loan. Backed by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, VA loans are designed to help active-duty military personnel, veterans, and eligible surviving spouses become homeowners. The VA home loan guaranty benefit and other housing-related programs help veterans buy, build, repair, retain, or adapt a home for their own personal occupancy.

VA loans are advantageous because they have a government guarantee and come in many varieties. The VA does not require a downpayment, they offer low interest rates, there are limited closing costs, there is no need for private mortgage insurance, and the VA home loan is a lifetime benefit and can be used multiple times.

The VA also offers the following for qualified veterans: interest rate reduction refinance loans (IRRRL), specialty adapted housing grants (SAH), special home adaptation grants (SHA), and temporary resident adaptation grants (TRA).

VA home loans are provided by private lenders, such as banks and mortgage companies. The VA guarantees a portion of the loan, enabling the lender to provide more favorable terms. Visit: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/> to learn more about the VA loan programs.

Some veterans may qualify for a VA Home Loan to buy a Governor's House from the South Dakota Housing Development Authority. To see if you are eligible or want to see the floor plans or a virtual tour, visit: <https://www.sdhda.org/homeownership/governors-house-program>.

Four walls and a roof over your head isn't the only way we define the word "home." Home is more than just a shelter; it's where we love, it's where we feel, it's where we can be ourselves, and it's where life happens.

As always, if you want to learn more about veteran's benefits, please call our team at 605.333.6869.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



**Greg Whitlock,**  
**Secretary**  
**South Dakota**  
**Department of**  
**Veterans Affairs**

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## West Nile Virus Update -SD

SD WNV (as of October 22): FINAL REPORT

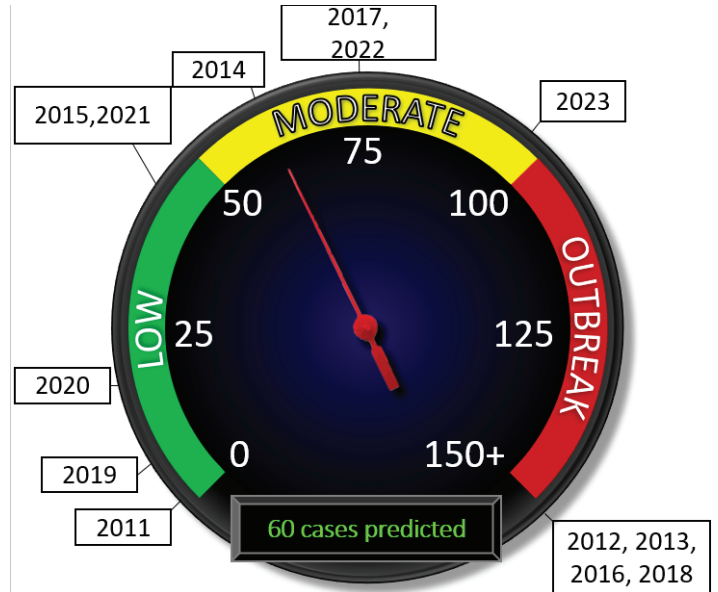
19 human cases (Beadle, Brookings, Codington, Davison, Dewey, Gregory, Hand, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Lawrence, Pennington, Potter, Roberts, Walworth, Ziebach ) and 1 death

4 human viremic blood donors (Brule, Dewey, Pennington, Sanborn)

9 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Codington, Davison, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha, Pennington)

US WNV (as of October 22): 1,132 cases (AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WI, WV, WY)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2024, South Dakota (as of October 23)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2024, South Dakota, Week Ending October 19, 2024 (MMWR Week 42)

There were no mosquito pools or collections reported for MMWR Week 42.

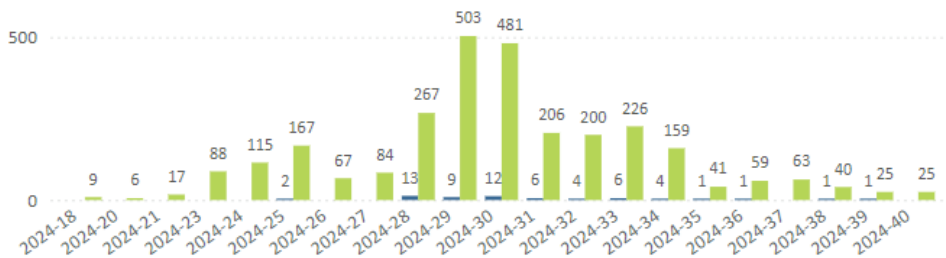
Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 77

Total mosquito pools tested: 2,908

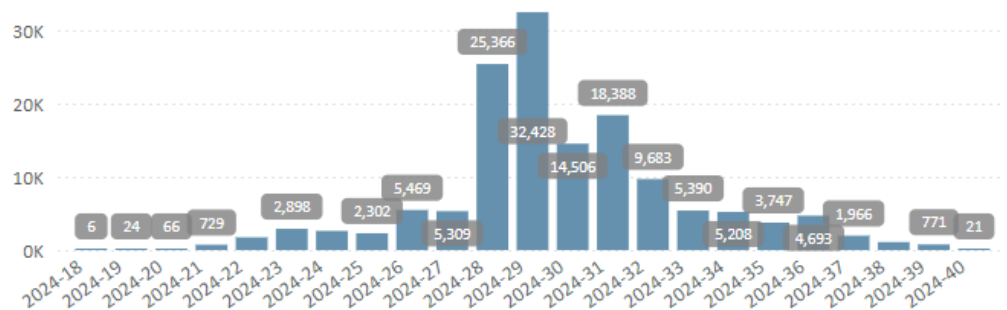
% positivity: 2.06%

Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week



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## Phillips shares inspiring message to students

Sunday Oct 13th, guest speaker Nicole Phillips shared her inspiring message to around 40 middle and high school students. Nicole started off sharing some information about her family, which led into her youth years, how they were hard at times and how she didn't understand why some adults made the choices they did. She went on to explain the bitterness she carried around at times, but had to lean into her faith, journal and intentionally carry out acts of kindness that would turn her day around. In closing, she read about King David to the students while reminding the students that each of them were created for a purpose and to never underestimate the talents in which they were given. After the guest speaker, student leader Teagan Hanten led a group activity where all students participated with a partner to catch the cup before it hit the ground.



**Liam Lord and Drew Fjeldheim.** (Courtesy Photo)



**Nicole Phillips took a group photo with the FCS students, parents and leaders that attended.** (Courtesy Photo)



**David and Suri Jetto.** (Courtesy Photo)



**Kinsley Rowan.** (Courtesy Photo)

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**Group activity lead by student leader Teagan Hanten.** (Courtesy Photo)



**Students intently listened to Nicole Phillip's story what her youth years entailed in the GHS library conference room.** (Courtesy Photo)



## NOTICE OF SALE

November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 10:00 AM

State Nebraska Bank & Trust vs Brian Dolan & Kristen Dolan

(06CIV22-000424-01)

2012 Chevy Avalanche



An Execution of Judgement in the above referenced matter was received by the Brown County Sheriff's Office on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. The amount of the Judgment is \$33,157.48, \$260.50 Cost, \$373.39 Pre-Judgement interest, plus continuing costs, and interest, as provided by law. This amount does not include Sheriff's Office fees and costs related to this matter. The property to be sold pursuant to the Execution is: 2012 Chevy Avalanche, VIN 3GNTKFE79CG124632. Odometer Reading: 206,206.

**THIS PROPERTY WILL BE AUCTIONED AND SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER, WITH THE SALE BEING FINAL, SOLD AS IS WITH NO WARRANTIES EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED. CASH IS REQUIRED ON THE DAY OF SALE.**

The sale will be held at the Brown County Court House, 101 1<sup>st</sup> Ave SE, Aberdeen, SD 57401 on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 10:00 AM.

DAVE LUNZMAN, SHERIFF OF BROWN COUNTY.

By: Nate Smith, Deputy, 605-626-7100 ext. 509.

## 2025 DOG LICENSES DUE BY 12/31/2024



LICENSE YOUR DOG.



**Licenses due by December 31, 2024**

**Fines start January 1, 2025**

**Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog,  
otherwise \$10 per dog**

**Proof of rabies shot information is REQUIRED!!**

Email proof to [city.kellie@nvc.net](mailto:city.kellie@nvc.net)

fax to (605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that  
were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422

## Working to Protect & Promote Traditional American Values

- ✓ Pro Police
- ✓ Pro Constitution
- ✓ Pro Family



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[ManhartForHouse.com](https://ManhartForHouse.com)



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# MANHART

## STATE REPRESENTATIVE

### DISTRICT 1

[facebook.com/ManhartLogan](https://facebook.com/ManhartLogan) | [ManhartForHouse.com](https://ManhartForHouse.com)

**General Election - Nov. 5**  
**Absentee Voting has begun**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Judge dismisses lawsuit from neighbors opposed to men's prison site

State law trumps county ordinances, Lincoln County judge rules

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 23, 2024 4:44 PM

A Lincoln County judge has dismissed a lawsuit that claimed state officials need a county permit to build a men's prison.

Judge Jennifer Mammenga sided with the state Wednesday, based on arguments presented in a January hearing. A group of neighbors to the Department of Corrections' selected site for a 1,500-bed prison complex filed the lawsuit a year ago.

The neighbors argued that the state should not be allowed to bypass the county's rules for conditional use permits, under which entities seek approval from county commissioners to build things that fall outside county zoning rules.

Mammenga agreed with the state, which argued, among other things, that the state is not subject to the rules of local governments. Lawmakers have passed bills that fund the prison's construction and grant authority to the DOC to spend the money and select a site, and the judge ruled that state law trumps county ordinances.

"A county by its very nature is a legislative creation, and therefore seemingly lacks the authority to preempt state law," Mammenga wrote.

Had the group been successful, DOC officials would have been forced to seek such a permit in public hearings, at which members of the public would be allowed to voice their support or opposition ahead of a vote by county commissioners to approve or deny a permit.



**The entryway to a Sept. 26, 2024, public forum hosted by Neighbors Opposed to Prison Expansion, which is working to upend South Dakota's plans for a new men's prison in Lincoln County.** (John Hult/South

Dakota Searchlight)

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## Opponents respond

The neighbors who sued are part of a nonprofit group called Neighbors Opposed to Prison Expansion, or NOPE, formed to push back against the state's plans to build on the rural site 15 miles south of Sioux Falls.

The land is owned by the state and was leased to farmers, with proceeds helping to fund education. The DOC obtained the property about a year ago through an \$8 million funds transfer. That money was transferred from the DOC into a state trust fund whose proceeds will continue to flow to K-12 schools.

A Wednesday press release from NOPE said the group is disappointed with the outcome but will respect Mammenga's decision. The release also pledged a continued fight with the state over its prison site selection.

"We are currently evaluating the next steps and anticipate that our efforts will shift to Pierre," the release says. "There, we will work with the Legislature to address the hasty and rushed nature of the current plans, and will continue to engage with stakeholders to address concerns surrounding the proposed location."

The group has talked through many of its concerns in public forums. It's also had representatives on hand for discussions of the prison project in Pierre, and for discussions in the city of Harrisburg on the possibility of the state hooking into that city's water and sewer infrastructure to service the prison site.

## Concerns raised at forums

Harrisburg would have gotten \$7.1 million as a one-time payment for agreeing to service the prison, and would have collected around \$500,000 a year in fees from the state.

The Harrisburg City Council ultimately rebuffed the state, but the city of Lennox has since approached the state to discuss a potential connection to that town's water and sewer infrastructure.

The NOPE group held a public forum on the issue just outside of Lennox late last month. The Lennox City Council has yet to make a decision. The matter is up for city council discussion again on Oct. 28.

"We're not endorsing anything at this point," Lennox City Council Member Chad Swier said during the Sept. 26 forum. "We're just here gathering information. We're going to do what is best for Lennox."

As with previous forums, the speakers' tables left places for Gov. Kristi Noem and DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko, both of whom were invited but did not attend the forums.

Speakers at the Sept. 26 forum questioned the feasibility of infrastructure upgrades and road paving that would accompany a men's prison, suggesting that the area could see more flooding problems from the addition of impervious surfaces in an area hit hard by last spring's heavy rains.

Others spoke about potential safety risks to families in the event of an escape, increased traffic flow, and the potential for strain on emergency medical services in a location removed from medical facilities in Sioux Falls.

## Lawmaker: 'not a done deal'

Rep. Kevin Jensen, R-Canton, was one of two lawmakers on hand for the forum. Jensen said the new prison would be a strain on the area's rural water system, and argued that the DOC could expand the Jameson Annex, a newer facility on the current penitentiary grounds, to suit the DOC's space needs. The proposed men's prison is intended to replace much of the existing Sioux Falls penitentiary, which dates to 1881.

"This is a whole lot bigger than just the location, folks," Jensen told the crowd. "I will stand here and tell you that it is my wholehearted belief that we do not need a new prison. What we need is a little more space, and we can do that."

When asked if the mood in the Legislature has shifted on the issue – lawmakers voted overwhelmingly in favor of funding the men's prison – Jensen said more of his fellow elected officials are asking questions about the wisdom of the project.

Some members of the budget-setting Appropriations Committee have pushed Wasko during meetings this year about her assertions that a Jameson Annex expansion wouldn't give the DOC enough space, as well as on the project's price tag. Lawmakers have allocated \$569 million for the men's prison, which does not yet have a locked-in cost estimate.

"I would say right now, this is not a done deal," Jensen said.

Rep. Karla Lems, R-Canton, said she's hearing more questions from lawmakers on the prison project, and that the answers coming from the DOC haven't done enough to address their concerns.

"We better make sure that we got the right location, the right building, and that this is really what is going to be right for South Dakota before we say yes," Lems said.

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Legislative committee punts on app store regulation, endorses age verification for adult websites

**Bill proposal mirrors Texas law currently awaiting US Supreme Court action**

**BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 23, 2024 2:58 PM**

A South Dakota summer legislative study committee has endorsed a bill that would require users to prove their age with identification documents to access online pornography.

The Study Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Regulation of Internet Access by Minors made the decision at its final meeting on Wednesday in Pierre.

It also scrapped plans for bills that would aim to protect children from the harms of social media and other addictive apps.

The porn restriction bill was endorsed after months of meetings. The committee heard testimony at previous meetings from tech company representatives and advocates about both pornography and potential regulations for the other activities kids engage with on their phones.

The age verification bill closely mirrors a Texas age verification law that awaits a hearing and decision on its legality from the U.S. Supreme Court. The adult entertainment industry argues that age verification violates the free speech of users by forcing them to disclose personal information to access content.

Committee members passed two amendments to a prior draft of the age verification bill. One of them clarifies which websites would be required to ask adults for their driver's licenses, credit card numbers, military IDs or other identifying information to prove they're older than 18. Again mirroring the Texas law, the amended bill would apply to sites where a third or more of the content is "material harmful to minors."



**Clouds gather over the South Dakota Capitol building in Pierre on Sept. 17, 2022.** (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

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That material is defined throughout the bill with passages like “predominantly appeals to the prurient, shameful, or morbid interest.” The bill defines “prurient” as “a shameful or morbid interest in nudity, sex, or excretion.”

Rep. Bethany Soye, R-Sioux Falls, opposed that particular change, saying it’s too restrictive and that lawmakers should spend some time working on the exact language to define covered websites. She voted against the amendment, but ultimately voted to advance the full bill to be introduced with the committee’s imprimatur when the Legislature convenes in January.

The amendment’s supporters — every committee member but Soye and Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, R-Pierre — agreed that passing Texas language would make South Dakota’s version less likely to see court challenges.

The other amendment removed a section on deceptive trade practices, which would have opened adult websites up to enforcement actions from the state’s Consumer Protection Division.

Instead of that, the bill would level criminal penalties against websites that fail to age-gate their adult content.

Previously, the committee had tentatively advanced app store and device-based age verification proposals for further discussion. No state in the nation has tried that approach, which is endorsed by Facebook’s parent company Meta. One of the bills would have required app stores and apps to offer more parental controls, including controls on apps a child would download. The device-based version would have restricted content available on phones or tablets designated as belonging to or primarily used by minors.

South Dakota lobbyist Doug Abraham testified against that idea Wednesday on behalf of the App Association, a trade group funded in part by Apple. Abraham pointed out that current parental controls offer most of the same tools the bills would expect app developers to use.

Abraham said the bill would upend those tools in favor of new ones that would be needed to comply with the letter of the law. He also suggested that the bills could run afoul of the First Amendment by restricting access to protected speech by adults.

“Everyone using a smartphone is going to have to use their personally identifying information,” Abraham said.

Lawmakers voted against endorsing the app- and device-based verification bills in part over fears of potential legal action. Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, said he doesn’t believe it’s wise for the state to be the first to pass a bill that’s almost certain to draw a legal challenge.

“To be the tip of the spear on this one probably goes too far,” Wheeler said.

Representatives from Attorney General Marty Jackley’s office told lawmakers they would be comfortable defending such a law, but they did not tell the committee whether or not to endorse the ideas.

The committee’s recommendations or rejections would not stop individual lawmakers from proposing their own tech regulations during the 2025 legislative session.

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

## Tumultuous period at penitentiary culminates in warden's departure

**Exit of Teresa Bittinger came one day after closed-door meeting with lawmakers; 'nationwide' search for replacement begins**

**BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 23, 2024 8:42 AM**

Teresa Bittinger is no longer warden of the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Department of Corrections (DOC) employees got an email late Tuesday evening from Director of Prisons Amber Pirraglia announcing the warden's departure. Within minutes, the email was posted to a Facebook group for the friends and families of inmates. The email was sent independently to South Dakota Searchlight by sources connected to the DOC.

"This decision was made after careful consideration and in alignment with the goals and standards of the department," Pirraglia wrote.

The email goes on to say that Pirraglia will serve as interim warden, and that a

"nationwide search is underway" to find wardens for the South Dakota State Penitentiary and the maximum security Jameson Annex, which is located on the Sioux Falls prison site.

That would mean an additional warden. Bittinger had been warden for both facilities.

DOC spokesman Michael Winder confirmed in a Wednesday morning email that Bittinger is no longer warden. He did not characterize the nature of Bittinger's departure and said no other personnel information will be shared.

Bittinger was warden of the prison campus in Sioux Falls for less than two years. She was appointed in March 2023 to fill the role on an interim basis and became permanent warden the following month.

Bittinger's departure came one day after lawmakers on a legislative oversight committee spent nearly an hour and a half in a closed discussion with DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko.

The committee went into executive session after a short discussion of a weekslong lockdown at the Sioux Falls prison's three housing units. Commission Chairman Ernie Otten, R-Tea, closed the session in part to discuss "personnel and contractual matters."

No one mentioned Bittinger during the public portions of the hearing.

Her departure comes at a tumultuous time for the DOC. The Sioux Falls lockdown was reportedly undertaken as a preemptive action, meant to weed out and seize contraband across three buildings.



**The South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, as seen on Jan. 9, 2023.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)



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The campus-wide searches included teardowns of three large sweat lodges, prompting a letter last week from Oglala Sioux Tribal President Frank Star Comes Out demanding an explanation.

Those were only the most recent controversies. The agency is also dealing with the fallout from incidents of inmate-on-inmate violence at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield in June, and from two bouts of unrest in March at the penitentiary that injured a correctional officer and sparked criminal charges for a handful of inmates. Those events came in the weeks following a temporary shutdown of electronic tablet-based communications.

The DOC has also faced criticism from the family members of inmates, who organized a group meant to pressure officials to respond to their concerns about safety, the price of commissary items for inmates and the impact of repeated lockdowns.

Meanwhile, the agency aims to build a new men's prison in Lincoln County, about 15 miles south of the penitentiary, to replace most of the existing Sioux Falls facility that dates to 1881. The state has already committed \$569 million to the plan, but has yet to lock in a guaranteed price.

Neighbors to the site, long used as farmland, have presented fierce resistance. They formed a nonprofit called Neighbors Opposed to Prison Expansion, filed a zoning-related lawsuit against the DOC that was dismissed Wednesday, have organized multiple public forums and have helped spark questions from lawmakers to the DOC on the feasibility of its site selection and construction plans.

If built, the new prison will be the most expensive taxpayer-funded capital project in state history. Another construction project — an \$87 million women's prison in Rapid City, to relieve overcrowding at the women's prison in Pierre — is underway, so far without any of the controversy that has dogged the men's prison project.

Bittinger herself arrived in the wake of scandal. She took over for warden Dan Sullivan, who took over for former Deputy Corrections Secretary Doug Clark, who'd served as interim warden after a 2021 shake-up tied to allegations of nepotism and sexual harassment that have never been explained by Gov. Kristi Noem's administration.

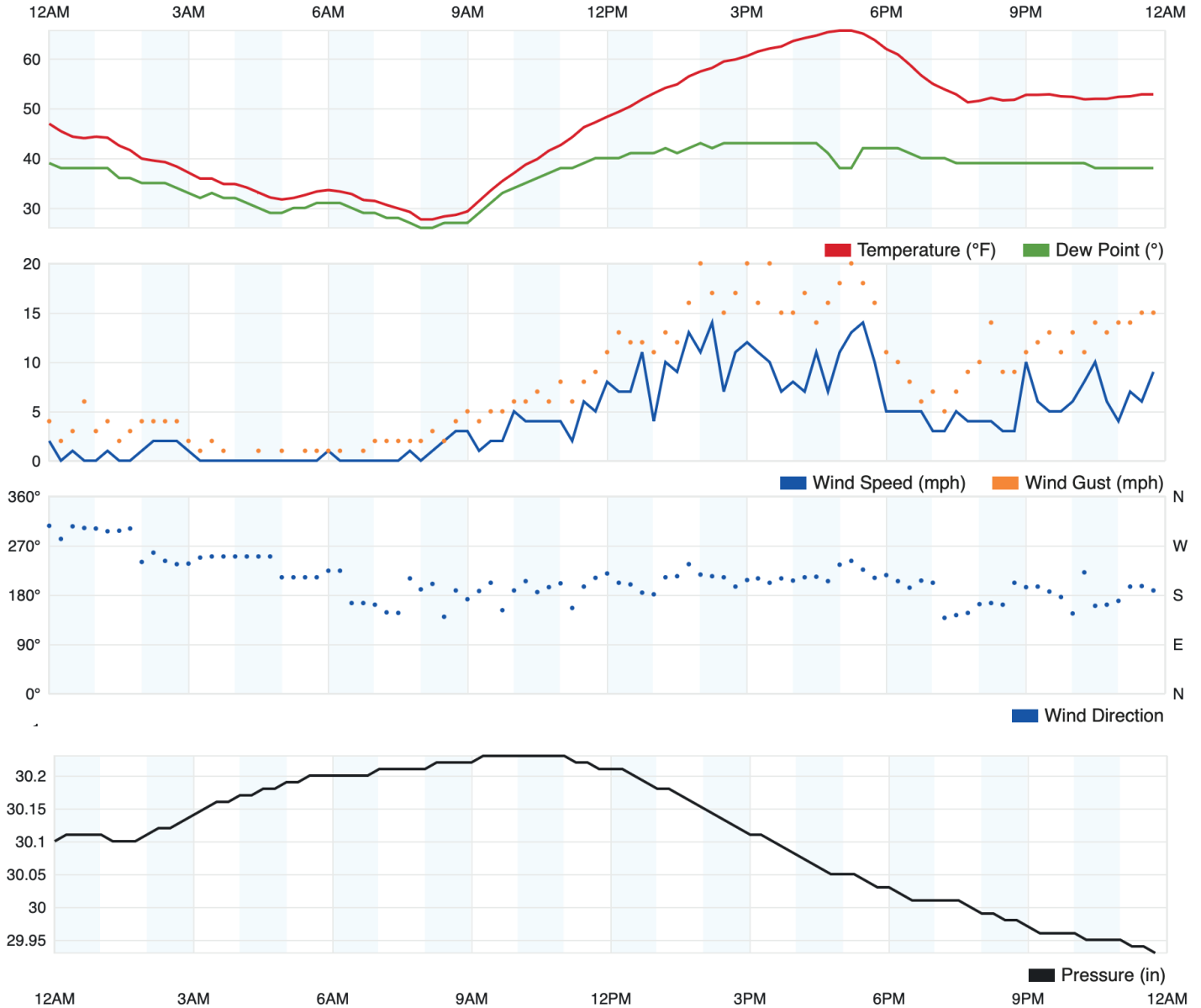
The shake-up resulted in the ouster of former warden Darin Young and others at the Sioux Falls facility. Sullivan, a 23-year veteran of the federal prison system who came to Sioux Falls by way of Minnesota, served less than two years before Bittinger's appointment.

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 60 °F

Slight Chance  
Showers

Tonight



Low: 31 °F

Decreasing  
Clouds

Friday



High: 57 °F

Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 30 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 62 °F

Mostly Sunny

Above Average  
Temperatures

Today  
Clouds clearing in the PM  
Highs: 57 - 62°F  
Lows: 28 - 35°F

Friday  
Clear skies  
Highs: 54 - 59°F  
Lows: 30 - 38°F

Some 30+ mph wind  
gusts possible  
Saturday

Saturday  
Clear to mostly sunny skies  
Highs: 57 - 71°F  
Lows: 34 - 41°F

NOAA

October 24, 2024 3:39 AM

Temperatures through the first half of the weekend are expected to be above average. Some areas could dip below freezing overnight both tonight and Friday night. Also, some 30+ mph wind gusts are possible Saturday afternoon.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 66 °F at 5:03 PM

Low Temp: 27 °F at 8:10 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 1:58 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 32 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 83 in 1989

Record Low: 6 in 1917

Average High: 55

Average Low: 30

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.77

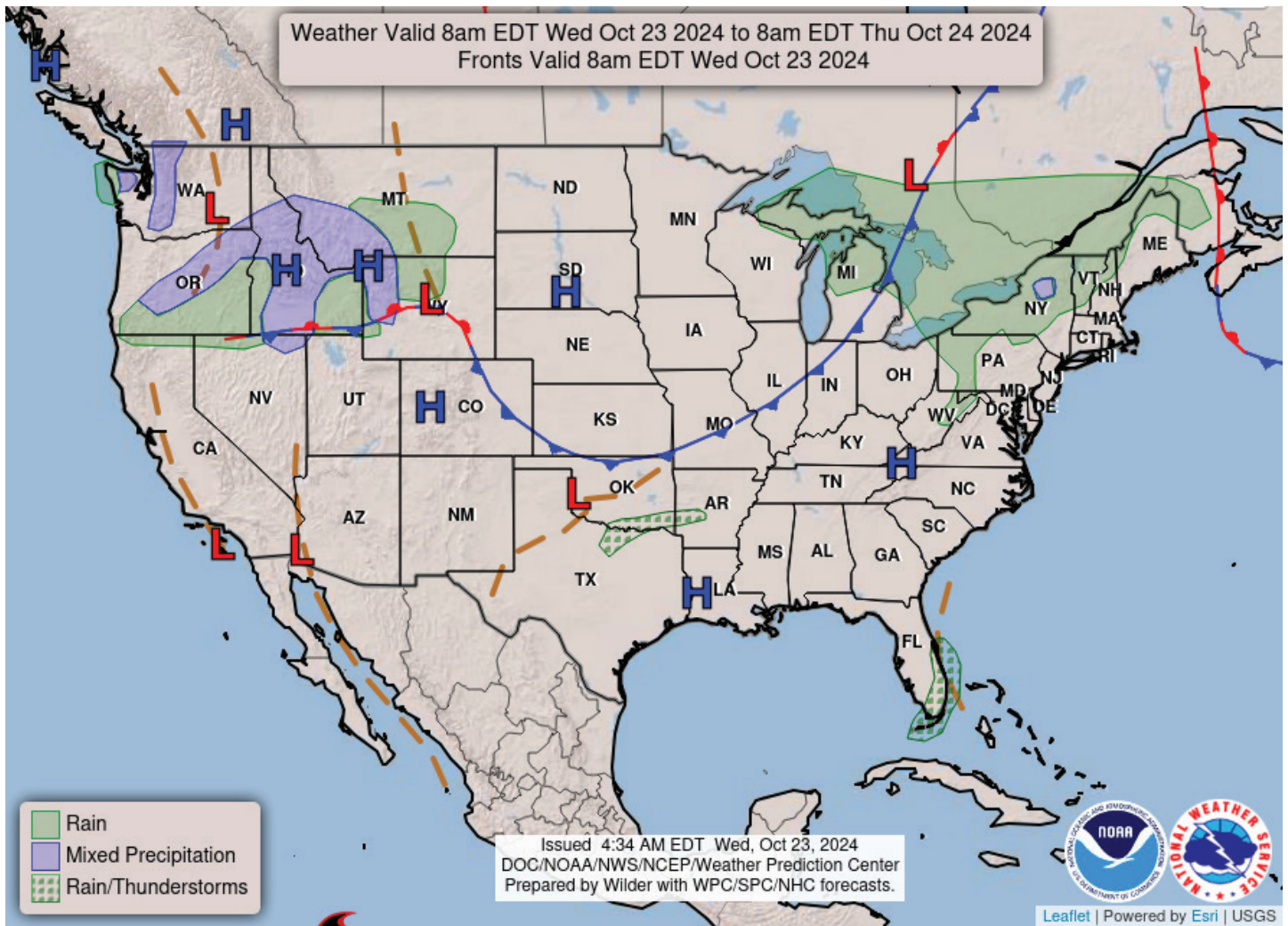
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.02

Average Precip to date: 20.10

Precip Year to Date: 19.77

Sunset Tonight: 6:32:40 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:01:40 am



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## Today in Weather History

October 24, 1989: A storm in the western U.S. produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe, with 21 inches reported at Donner Summit. Thunderstorms in northern California produced 3.36 inches of rain at Redding to establish a 24 hour record for October, and bring their rainfall total for the month to a record 5.11 inches. Chiefly "Indian Summer" type weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s. Record highs included 74 degrees at International Falls, Minnesota and 86 degrees at Yankton, South Dakota. Record highs also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. The record highs were 80 degrees at Mobridge and Sisseton, 83 degrees at Aberdeen, and 84 degrees at Pierre.

1878: The Gale of 1878 was an intense Category 2 hurricane that was active between October 18 and October 25. It caused extensive damage from Cuba to New England. Believed to be the strongest storm to hit the Washington - Baltimore region since hurricane records began in 1851.

1785 - A four day rain swelled the Merrimack River in New Hampshire and Massachusetts to the greatest height of record causing extensive damage to bridges and mills. (David Ludlum)

1937 - A snow squall in Buffalo NY tied up traffic in six inches of slush. (David Ludlum)

1947 - The Bar Harbor holocaust occurred in Maine when forest fires consumed homes and a medical research institute. The fires claimed 17 lives, and caused thirty million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1951 - Sacramento, CA, reported a barometric pressure of 29.42 inches, to establish a record for October. (The Weather Channel)

1969 - Unseasonably cold air gripped the northeastern U.S. Lows of 10 degrees at Concord, NH, and 6 degrees at Albany NY established October records. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Snow fell across northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin overnight, with five inches reported at Poplar Lake MN and Gunflint Trail MN. Thunderstorm rains caused flash flooding in south central Arizona, with street flooding reported around Las Vegas NV. Strong northwesterly winds gusting to 50 mph downed some trees and power lines in western Pennsylvania and the northern panhandle of West Virginia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Strong winds circulating around a deep low pressure centered produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region, with six inches reported at Ironwood MI. Wind gusts to 80 mph were reported at State College PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A storm in the western U.S. produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains around Lake Tahoe, with 21 inches reported at Donner Summit. Thunderstorms in northern California produced 3.36 inches of rain at Redding to establish a 24 hour record for October, and bring their rainfall total for the month to a record 5.11 inches. Chiefly "Indian Summer" type weather prevailed across the rest of the nation. Fifteen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s. Record highs included 74 degrees at International Falls MN, and 86 degrees at Yankton SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 - Hurricane Wilma reached the U.S. coastline near Everglades City in Florida with maximum sustained winds near 120 mph. The hurricane accelerated across south Florida and the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area, exiting the coast later the same day. There were 10 fatalities in Florida, and nearly 6 million people lost power, the most widespread power outage in Florida history. Preliminary estimates of insured losses in Florida were over \$6 billion, while uninsured losses were over \$12 billion.

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Our Daily Bread®

Love God. Love Others.

## Food for the Hungry

**Bible in a Year :**  
**Jeremiah 3-5**  
**1 Timothy 4**

**Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter?**

**Isaiah 58:7**

### **Today's Scripture & Insight : Isaiah 58:3-9**

For years, the Horn of Africa has suffered from a brutal drought that has devastated crops, killed livestock, and imperiled millions. Among the most vulnerable—like the people at Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp who've fled from wars and oppression—it's even more dire. A recent report described a young mother bringing her baby to camp officials. The infant suffered from severe malnutrition, leaving "her hair and skin . . . dry and brittle." She wouldn't smile and wouldn't eat. Her tiny body was shutting down. Specialists immediately intervened. Thankfully, even though the needs are still great, an infrastructure has been built to provide immediate, life-or-death necessities.

These desperate places are exactly where God's people are called to shine His light and love (Isaiah 58:8). When people are starving, sick, or threatened, God summons His people to be the first to provide food, medicine, and safety—all in Jesus' name. Isaiah rebuked ancient Israel for thinking they were being faithful with their fasting and prayers while ignoring the actual compassionate work the crisis required: sharing "food with the hungry," providing "the poor wanderer with shelter," and clothing "the naked" (v. 7).

God desires for the hungry to be fed—both physically and spiritually. And He works in and through us as He meets the need.

By: Winn Collier

### **Reflect & Pray**

What kinds of hunger do you see around you? Where is God inviting you to offer help?

Dear God, please help me be part of how You bring food, love, and comfort to those who are hungry and in distress.

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.22.24

8 43 48 58 60 4

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$229,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 16  
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.23.24

18 38 42 44 47 3

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$12,600,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 31  
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.23.24

9 12 22 25 44 9

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 46 Mins  
DRAW: 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.23.24

10 16 17 31 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$73,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 46  
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.23.24

1 42 43 58 66 20

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 15  
DRAW: Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.23.24

2 15 27 29 39 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 15  
DRAW: Mins 38 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



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## Upcoming Groton Events

07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center  
07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm  
07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm  
07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day  
07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm  
07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church  
07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm  
08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center  
**Cancelled:** Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm  
08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament  
08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm  
09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am  
10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm  
11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm  
12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.  
12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close  
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp  
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm  
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary Salad Luncheon  
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm  
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **Palestinian officials say an Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza has killed 16**

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli strike on a school where displaced people were sheltering in the central Gaza Strip killed at least 16 people on Thursday, Palestinian medical officials said.

Another 32 people were wounded in the strike in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp, according to the Awda Hospital, which received the casualties.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Israel has carried out several strikes on schools-turned-shelters in recent months, saying it precisely targets Hamas militants hiding out among civilians. The strikes often kill women and children.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were combatants but says women and children make up more than half the fatalities. The Israeli military says it has killed over 17,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

The war has displaced around 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands of people are crammed into tent camps along the coast after entire neighborhoods in many areas were pounded to rubble.

Months of cease-fire negotiations brokered by the United States, Egypt and Qatar sputtered to a halt over the summer. The war has meanwhile expanded to Lebanon, where Israel launched a ground invasion more than three weeks ago after trading fire with the Hezbollah militant group for much of the past year.

### **Russia amplified hurricane disinformation to drive Americans apart, researchers find**

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia has helped amplify and spread false and misleading internet claims about recent hurricanes in the United States and the federal government's response, part of a wider effort by the Kremlin to manipulate America's political discourse before the presidential election, new research shows.

The content, spread by Russian state media and networks of social media accounts and websites, criticizes the federal response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton, exploiting legitimate concerns about the recovery effort in an attempt to paint American leaders as incompetent and corrupt, according to research from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. The London-based organization tracks disinformation and online extremism.

In some cases, the claims about the storms include fake images created using artificial intelligence, such as a photo depicting scenes of devastating flooding at Disney World that never happened, researchers say.

The approach is consistent with the Kremlin's long-standing practice of identifying legitimate debates and contentious issues in the U.S. and then exploiting them. Previous disinformation campaigns have harnessed debates about immigration, racism, crime and the economy in an effort to portray the U.S. as corrupt, violent and unjust.

U.S. intelligence officials and private tech companies say Russian activity has increased sharply before the Nov. 5 election as Moscow tries to capitalize on an opportunity to undermine its chief global adversary.

By seizing on real concerns about disaster recovery, Russia's disinformation agencies can worm their way into U.S. discourse, using hot-button issues to undermine Americans' trust in their government and each other.

"These are not situations that foreign actors are creating," said Melanie Smith, director of research at ISD. "They're simply pouring gasoline on fires that already exist."

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The content identified by ISD included English-language posts obviously meant for Americans, as well as Russian-language propaganda intended for domestic audiences. Much of the disinformation took aim at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Democratic administration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. She is her party's nominee in the White House race against former President Donald Trump.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine remains the Kremlin's prime motivation for spreading lies about the hurricane response. If Russia can persuade enough Americans to oppose U.S. support for Ukraine, that could ease the way for a Moscow victory, officials and analysts have said.

U.S. intelligence officials have said Russia's disinformation seems designed to support Trump, who has praised Russian President Vladimir Putin and disparaged the NATO alliance and Ukraine's leaders. Posts linked to Russia routinely denigrate Harris, saying she is ignoring the pleas of storm victims. By contrast, a recent post from Russian state media company RT called Trump "a mystical figure of historic proportions."

Intelligence officials confirmed Tuesday that Russia created a manipulated video to smear Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

Russia has rejected claims that it is trying to meddle in the U.S. election. The Russian Embassy hasn't responded to messages this week seeking comment about recent allegations by researchers and intelligence officials.

Researchers at ISD found that Russian disinformation agents exploited weak content moderation on U.S.-owned social media platforms such as X to spread their content far and wide. Before it was purchased and renamed by Elon Musk, the platform once known as Twitter required labels on content from authoritarian state media. Musk rescinded that rule and gutted the platform's content moderation efforts, leading to a surge in foreign propaganda, hate speech and extremist recruitment.

Often the false or misleading claims come from fake accounts or websites that mimic Americans or legitimate news outlets, making it difficult to determine their true origin. Unsuspecting Americans then repost and spread the content.

In July, American intelligence officials warned that "unwitting Americans" were helping do Russia's work for it.

Vast armies of fake or automated accounts help spread the material further.

Researchers at the Israeli tech firm Cyabra analyzed popular posts on X that criticized FEMA for its storm response. A significant number could not be verified as belonging to a real person; one-quarter of all the responses to popular posts were deemed fake. The posts were seen by users over half a billion times.

In response, a spokesperson for X pointed to the platform's system that allows users to add context to posts with false claims. The company did not respond to questions about its labeling policy.

"The false claims, ranging from FEMA diverting funds to aid migrants to conspiracy theories about weather manipulation, undermine public trust in government as we near election day, which could seriously impact voter confidence," Cyabra researchers said in a report.

Politicians also have helped spread Russia's talking points.

Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Ariz., gave an interview to the Russian state media outlet Sputnik News for a piece that played up criticism of the hurricane response. He told Sputnik that the federal response was "non-existent," a claim easily debunked by photos and videos of FEMA recovery workers as well as the firsthand accounts of local leaders and residents in hard-hit regions.

Gosar repeated another misleading claim that "billions of FEMA disaster funds" had been given instead to immigrants without legal status. In truth, money that funds U.S. border control and immigration programs comes from a different source than disaster funds.

Gosar's office did not respond to messages seeking comment Wednesday.

## Middle East latest: Blinken in Doha to discuss Gaza cease-fire with Qatari officials

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Doha on Thursday to meet with Qatari officials who have been key mediators for Hamas, as the U.S. struggles to break the logjam of cease-fire negotiations between Israel and the militant group.

Blinken is on his 11th trip to the Middle East since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese military said Thursday an Israeli strike killed three of its troops, including an officer, as they were evacuating wounded people in southern Lebanon, and French President Emmanuel Macron said his country will provide a 100 million-euro (\$108 million) aid package to support Lebanon.

The Israel-Hamas war began after Hamas-led militants on Oct. 7, 2023, blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed in, killing some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting 250 others. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not differentiate between militants and civilians.

United Nations humanitarian officials are reporting "harrowing levels of death, injury and destruction" in northern Gaza as Israel wages another major operation there.

Israel is also fighting Hezbollah in Lebanon. Lebanon's Health Ministry says the total toll over the past year is over 2,500 killed and 12,000 wounded. The fighting in Lebanon has driven 1.2 million people from their homes, including more than 400,000 children, according to the United Nations children's agency.

Hezbollah confirmed Wednesday that Hashem Safieddine, one of its top officials who had been widely expected to be the group's next leader, was killed in an Israeli airstrike. Over the past several weeks, Israeli strikes have killed much of Hezbollah's top leadership.

Here's the latest:

Lebanon's caretaker prime minister calls for immediate cease-fire

BEIRUT — Lebanon's caretaker prime minister is calling for an immediate cease-fire, the full implementation of the U.N. resolution that ended the last Israel-Hezbollah war and the deployment of 8,000 Lebanese troops to a buffer zone along the border with Israel.

Najib Mikati spoke Thursday at a conference in Paris in support of Lebanon.

The Lebanese army has largely kept to the sidelines in the latest conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. It says Israeli forces have targeted its soldiers on eight occasions, killing and wounding several. Israel apologized for a deadly strike on Sunday.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 war, called for Hezbollah and Israeli forces to withdraw from areas south of Lebanon's Litani River and for the area to be controlled by the Lebanese army and U.N. peacekeepers.

Israel says the resolution was never implemented and that Hezbollah built up military infrastructure all the way to the border. Lebanon has accused Israel of ignoring other provisions, including by violating its airspace.

The Lebanese army has around 80,000 forces, with around 5,000 deployed in the south.

Representing the Lebanese Army at the Paris conference, Brig. Gen. Youssef Haddad said that Lebanon is working on recruiting 1,500 additional soldiers to help implement the U.N. resolution, the state-run National News Agency reported.

Hezbollah boasts tens of thousands of fighters. Lebanon's military is not strong enough to impose its will on the militant group or to resist Israel's ground invasion.

Hospital director in Gaza warns of 'catastrophic' shortage of medical supplies

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — The director of a hospital in the northern Gaza Strip says it is facing a "catastrophic" shortage of basic supplies and that ambulances can no longer service the facility.

Israel has been carrying out a major offensive in northern Gaza for more than two weeks. Hundreds of people have been killed and tens of thousands have fled their homes. The military says it is battling Hamas fighters who regrouped in the north, which was one of the first targets of the ground offensive at

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the start of the war.

Dr. Hossam Abu Safiyeh, the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital, said in a video message released Thursday that some 150 wounded people are being treated there, including 14 children in intensive care or the neonatal department.

"There is a very large number of wounded people, and we lose at least one person every hour because of the lack of medical supplies and medical staff," he said.

"Our ambulances can't transfer wounded people," he said. "Those who can arrive by themselves to the hospital receive care, but those who don't just die in the streets."

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Footage shared with The Associated Press shows medical staff tending to premature babies and several older children in hospital beds, some with severe burns. One child is seen attached to a breathing machine, with bandages on her face and flies hovering over her.

"We are providing the bare minimum to patients. Everyone is paying the price of what is happening now in northern Gaza," Abu Safiyeh said.

Kamal Adwan is one of three hospitals in the north left largely inaccessible because of the fighting. The war has gutted the health system across Gaza, with only 16 of 39 hospitals even partially functioning, according to the World Health Organization.

French President Macron pledges 100 million euros in aid to support Lebanon

PARIS — France pledged to provide a 100-million euro (\$108-million) package to support Lebanon at an international conference Thursday, as President Emmanuel Macron said "massive aid" is needed to support the country where war between Hezbollah militants and Israel has displaced a million people, killed over 2,500 and deepened an economic crisis.

"In the immediate term, massive aid is needed for the Lebanese population, both for the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the war and for the communities hosting them," Macron said in his opening speech at the conference.

French organizers hope participants' financial pledges of humanitarian aid will meet the \$426 million the United Nations says is urgently needed.

Italy this week announced new aid of 10 million euros (\$10.8 million) and Germany on Wednesday pledged an additional 60 million euros (\$64.7 million) for people in Lebanon.

An Israeli strike kills 3 members of Lebanon's military, including an officer

BEIRUT — The Lebanese military says an Israeli strike killed three of its troops, including an officer, as they were evacuating wounded people in southern Lebanon.

In a Thursday post on X, it said the strike hit the outskirts of the southern town of Yater. The army says Israeli forces have targeted it on eight occasions since all-out war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah in September.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which said it was looking into the reports. It apologized for an earlier strike on Sunday that killed three Lebanese soldiers, saying it had targeted a vehicle in an area where Hezbollah had recently launched attacks without realizing it belonged to the army.

Lebanon's armed forces have largely kept to the sidelines in the latest conflict. The army is not powerful enough to impose its will on Hezbollah or to resist Israel's ground invasion.

## Tropical storm battering Philippines leaves at least 24 people dead in flooding and landslides

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Widespread flooding and landslides set off by a tropical storm in the north-eastern Philippines on Thursday left at least 24 people dead, swept away cars and prompted authorities to scramble for motorboats to rescue trapped villagers, some on roofs.

The government shut down schools and offices — except those urgently needed for disaster response — for the second day on the entire main island of Luzon to protect millions of people after Tropical Storm

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Trami slammed into the country's northeastern province of Isabela after midnight.

The storm began to move away from the coast of the northwestern Philippine province of Ilocos Sur toward the South China Sea on Thursday afternoon with sustained winds of up to 95 kph (59 mph) and gusts up to 115 kph (71 mph). It was blowing southwestward and could strengthen into a typhoon over the South China Sea, according to state forecasters.

At least 24 people died, mostly due to drowning in the hard-hit Bicol region and nearby Quezon province but the toll was expected to rise as towns and villages isolated by flooding and roads blocked by landslides and toppled trees manage to send out reports, police and provincial officials said.

Most of the storm deaths were reported in the six-province Bicol region, southeast of Manila, where at least 21 people died, including 8 residents in Naga city, which was inundated by flash floods as Trami was approaching Tuesday, dumping more than two months' worth of rainfall in just 24 hours at high tide, regional police chief Brig. Gen. Andre Dizon and other officials said.

While thousands of villagers, who were trapped in floodwaters, have been rescued by government forces, many more needed to be saved Thursday in the Bicol region, including some on roofs. About 1,500 police officers have been deployed for disaster-mitigation work, Dizon said.

"We can't rescue them all at once because there are so many and we need additional motorboats," Dizon told The Associated Press by telephone. "We're looking for ways to deliver food and water to those who were trapped but could not be evacuated right away."

Flash floods swept away and submerged cars in some parts of Naga city while mudflows from Mayon, one of the country's 24 active volcanoes, in nearby Albay province, engulfed several vehicles, Dizon said.

Stormy weather remained in the region, hampering relief efforts, officials said.

The government's disaster-mitigation agency said more than 2 million people were affected by the storm, including 75,400 villagers who were displaced from their homes and are sheltering on safer ground.

More than 1,000 houses were damaged, mostly in the Bicol region, and nearly 300 roads and bridges were not passable due to flooding, landslides or toppled trees, the government's disaster-mitigation agency said.

The storm prompted the suspension of inter-island ferry services in more than 120 seaports, stranding nearly 7,000 passengers and cargo workers, the Philippine coast guard said.

About 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines each year. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest recorded tropical cyclones in the world, left more than 7,300 people dead or missing and flattened entire villages.

## **Dodgers pitcher Fernando Valenzuela served as a cultural ambassador for Mexican Americans, Mexicans**

By FERNANDA FIGUEROA Associated Press

For baseball fans, "Fernandomania" marked a flash of pitching brilliance, the emergence of a unique talent in the history of one of the sport's most storied franchises.

For Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Fernando Valenzuela was something even greater: a beacon of hope, inspiration and pride.

Valenzuela, a Mexican-born phenomenon for the Los Angeles Dodgers, died Tuesday night at a Los Angeles hospital, the team said. He was 63.

For some, his death prompted memories of watching the left-hander pitch at home with their parents, not out of a love of sports but because of a surge of Mexican or Latino pride. They reflect on the doors he opened for future generations and the cultural impact he ushered as a Mexican.

Valenzuela's rise from humble beginnings as the youngest of 12 children in Mexico and his feats on the mound made him hugely popular and influential in the Latino community while helping attract new fans to Major League Baseball. Their fondness for him continued after his retirement.

Baseball fanatic or not, there isn't a person in Mexico who does not know who Valenzuela is, said Mexican journalist Arturo Angel. He was born in 1983 and said his knowledge of Valenzuela came from his dad,

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who isn't a sports fan, among other people. The way people talked about him made Angel realize how much of an idol he was to many.

Nathaly Morga, who knows of Valenzuela because of her parents, said no matter how many other Latinos in baseball there are, "Fernando was always the big one, like the God."

Angel said that the explosion of television in the 1980's and the broadcast of Dodgers games in Mexico catapulted Valenzuela into the phenomenon he became. The Dodgers, who had broadcast games in Spanish since 1959, saw a ratings increase and interest in expanding their radio network into Mexico once Valenzuela started playing. Years after his playing career ended, Valenzuela joined those radio broadcasts as a color commentator.

"The LA Dodgers in Mexico have a great fan base," Angel said. "The taste of baseball expanded in Mexico, that is because of Fernando Valenzuela."

Morga grew up in Tijuana in a soccer family. Yet they all knew Valenzuela. Morga recalls her mom, who does not understand how baseball is played, telling her how at the height of "Fernandomania," she would watch Dodgers games at a local burger joint because Valenzuela was pitching.

The Dodgers, longing for a star to connect with the Latino population in LA, finally found one in Valenzuela, whose impact would transform what had been predominantly a white fan base. The city's Mexican community began to flock to Dodger Stadium during his starts. The Dodgers, who had become the first franchise to draw 3 million fans in 1978, averaged 48,430 fans during Valenzuela's home starts and 42,523 overall during the strike-interrupted 1981 season — the highest average attendance in Dodger Stadium history to that point. That year, Valenzuela became the first in baseball history to win Rookie of the Year and a Cy Young Award as baseball's top pitcher in the same season.

"In Mexico, obviously everyone knows him," Morga said. "Everybody loves the Dodgers because of him."

Rob Martinez said for those growing up in Mexico, Valenzuela was the baseline. With Dodgers games always broadcasted in Mexico, Valenzuela became all anyone could talk about and someone to look up to, he said.

Watching Valenzuela was a family affair. Martinez said he remembers having cookouts to watch the games with his dad and friends. When Valenzuela would be taken out of a game, everyone would stop watching.

But seeing Valenzuela on television made Martinez believe that his dreams were achievable, too. Martinez has played baseball since he was 3 and is now the associate head coach and recruiting coordinator for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley baseball team.

"It was a big push for everyone, watching him compete and be the guy in the big leagues," Martinez said. "It gave us all hope."

Valenzuela is widely considered one of Mexico's top athletes of all time, along with soccer player Hugo Sánchez and boxer Julio César Chávez.

Valenzuela's rise from his tiny hometown of Etchohuaquila in the Mexican state of Sonora to stardom in the U.S. was improbable. He was the youngest child in a large family who tagged along when his older brothers played baseball.

His rise inspired many athletes. Martinez said he was able to have the career he has had because he saw Valenzuela, a guy who came from an identical background as him be successful.

"I don't have to be (6-foot-3), 240 pounds to do what I love to do," Martinez said. "As long as you work hard at it. So that was a big deal for me. Just giving us a chance to believe that, hey, man, you know, we can do it coming from someone else."

In 2013, Morga was living in California and met Valenzuela at Petco Park in San Diego.

"He invited me to sit at the table with him," Morga said. "Which was crazy for me because this was a person that my parents talked about, such an idol, and he was just a typical Mexican dad."

Angel said reading profiles on Valenzuela published since his death, he has a better understanding of how not only was he a baseball legend but a cultural ambassador at a time when the racial discourse was looked at differently than it may be now.

"The fact that we are not baseball fans and know him shows that his figure was important," Angel said. "Younger people now may have more representation in other sports but for that generation Valenzuela was it."

## Turkey strikes Kurdish militant targets in Syria and Iraq for a second day

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey struck suspected Kurdish militant targets in Syria and Iraq for a second day on Thursday following an attack on the premises of a key defense company which killed at least five people, the state-run news agency reported.

The National Intelligence Organization targeted numerous “strategic locations” used by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK, or by Syrian Kurdish militia that are affiliated with the militants, the Anadolu Agency reported. The targets included military, intelligence, energy and infrastructure facilities and ammunition depots, the report said. A security official said armed drones were used in Thursday’s strikes.

On Wednesday, Turkey’s air force carried out airstrikes against similar targets in northern Syria and northern Iraq, hours after government officials blamed the deadly attack at the headquarters of the aerospace and defense company TUSAS, on the PKK.

Defense Minister Yasar Guler said Thursday that 47 alleged PKK targets were destroyed in Wednesday’s airstrikes — 29 in Iraq and 18 in Syria.

“Our noble nation should rest assured that we will continue with increasing determination our struggle to eliminate the evil forces that threaten the security and peace of our country and people, until the last terrorist disappears from this geography,” Guler said.

The assailants — a man and a woman — arrived at the TUSAS premises in the outskirts of Ankara in a taxi they commandeered after killing its driver, reports said. Armed with assault rifles, they set off explosives and opened fire, killing four people at TUSAS, including a security personnel and a mechanical engineer.

Security teams were dispatched as soon as the attack started at around 3:30 pm, the interior minister said. The two assailants were also killed and more than 20 people were injured in the attack.

There was no immediate statement from the PKK on the attack or the Turkish airstrikes.

In Syria, the main U.S.-backed force said Turkish strikes in the north of the country killed 12 civilians and wounded 25.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said Turkish warplanes and drones struck bakeries, power stations, oil facilities and local police checkpoints.

TUSAS designs, manufactures and assembles civilian and military aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and other defense industry and space systems. Its defense systems have been credited as key to Turkey gaining an upper hand in its fight against Kurdish militants.

The attack occurred a day after the leader of Turkey’s far-right nationalist party that’s allied with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan raised the possibility that the PKK’s imprisoned leader could be granted parole if he renounces violence and disbands his organization.

Abdullah Ocalan, who was captured in 1999, is serving a life sentence on a prison island off Istanbul.

In a related development, his nephew Omer Ocalan announced on the social platform X that on Wednesday family members were allowed to visit him for the first time since March 2020.

Omer Ocalan, a lawmaker from Turkey’s pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party, also conveyed a message from Abdullah Ocalan, saying he was being kept in isolation and offering to work to end the conflict “if the conditions are right.”

“I have the theoretical and practical power to (transform) this process from one grounded in conflict and violence to one that is grounded on law and politics,” Omer Ocalan quoted his uncle as saying.

The PKK has been fighting for autonomy in southeast Turkey in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people since the 1980s. It is considered a terrorist group by Turkey and its Western allies.



## Putin presides over BRICS summit seeking to expand Russia's clout

KAZAN, Russia (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday presided over a closing session of a summit of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, hailing its role as a counterbalance to the West.

The three-day summit in the city of Kazan covered the deepening of financial cooperation, including the development of alternatives to Western-dominated payment systems, as well as settling regional conflicts and moving to expand the BRICS group of countries.

The alliance that initially included Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa has expanded to embrace Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Turkey, Azerbaijan and Malaysia have formally applied to become members, and several other countries have expressed interest in joining.

Speaking during Thursday's session, which included countries that consider joining the grouping, Putin said they all "share similar aspirations and values and a vision of new democratic global order."

The summit was attended by 36 countries, highlighting the failure of U.S.-led efforts to isolate Russia over its actions in Ukraine. The Kremlin touted the summit as "the largest foreign policy event ever held" by Russia.

Russia has specifically pushed for the creation of a new payment system that would offer an alternative to the global bank messaging network SWIFT and allow Moscow to dodge Western sanctions and trade with partners.

In a joint declaration issued Wednesday, the summit participants voiced concern about "the disruptive effect of unlawful unilateral coercive measures, including illegal sanctions" and reiterated their commitment to enhancing financial cooperation within BRICS. They noted the benefits of "faster, low-cost, more efficient, transparent, safe and inclusive cross-border payment instruments built upon the principle of minimizing trade barriers and non-discriminatory access."

China's President Xi Jinping has emphasized the bloc's role in ensuring global security. Xi noted that China and Brazil have put forward a peace plan for Ukraine and sought to rally broader international support for it. Ukraine has rejected the proposal.

Putin and Xi had announced a "no-limits" partnership weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. They already met twice earlier this year, in Beijing in May and at a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Kazakhstan in July.

Russia's cooperation with India has also flourished as New Delhi sees Moscow as a time-tested partner since Cold War times despite Russia's close ties with India's main rival, China. While Western allies want India to be more active in persuading Moscow to end the fighting in Ukraine, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has avoided condemning Russia while emphasizing a peaceful settlement.

Putin, who held a series of bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the summit, was set to meet Thursday with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who is making his first visit to Russia in more than two years. Guterres's trip to Kazan has drawn an angry reaction from Kyiv.

## Macron says France will provide 100 million-euro aid package to support Lebanon

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France pledged to provide a 100-million euro (\$108-million) package to support Lebanon at an international conference Thursday, as President Emmanuel Macron said "massive aid" is needed to support the country where war between Hezbollah militants and Israel has displaced a million people, killed over 2,500 and deepened an economic crisis.

"In the immediate term, massive aid is needed for the Lebanese population, both for the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the war and for the communities hosting them," Macron said in his opening speech at the conference.

French organizers hope participants' financial pledges of humanitarian aid will meet the \$426 million the

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United Nations says is urgently needed.

Italy this week announced new aid of 10 million euros (\$10.8 million) and Germany on Wednesday pledged an additional 60 million euros (\$64.7 million) for people in Lebanon.

Macron condemned Israel for continuing its military operations in Lebanon, "in the South, in Beirut, elsewhere, and that the number of civilian victims continues to rise," and reiterated his call for a ceasefire.

Paris also seeks to help restore Lebanon's sovereignty and strengthen its institutions. The country, where Hezbollah effectively operates as a state within a state, has been without a president for two years while political factions fail to agree on a new one.

But the international conference comes as critics say French President Emmanuel Macron's diplomatic approach in the Middle East has been blurred by his apparent evolving approach and sometimes chaotic communication.

Still, France's historic links with Lebanon, a former colony, and its influential diplomacy give Paris momentum to coordinate "a proper response to the massive challenge that the war in Lebanon now poses," said Middle East expert Rym Montaz, editor in chief of Carnegie Europe's blog Strategic Europe.

The French "are trying to make sure that international donors get to hear firsthand from the actors on the ground in Lebanon who can best describe the most immediate needs caused by the Israeli aggression that has forcibly displaced 20% of the Lebanese population over the course of two weeks," she said.

Israel in the past month has launched a major aerial bombardment and ground invasion of Lebanon as it targets Hezbollah, with strikes hitting the capital, Beirut, and elsewhere.

The International Organization for Migration has said about 800,000 people are displaced, with many now in overcrowded shelters, while others have fled across the border into Syria.

The cash-strapped Lebanese government is ill-prepared to deal with the crisis or the increased demands on its health system. A number of hospitals have been evacuated because of nearby airstrikes and fears that they might be targeted.

In recent weeks, Macron appeared to toughen his stance against Israel while repeatedly calling for a cease-fire in both Lebanon and Gaza, condemning the "unbearable human toll." He reiterated his call on Monday while speaking by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his office said.

There have been recent tensions between the French and Israeli leaders, especially after Macron called for a halt to arms exports for use in Gaza.

Macron has also strongly condemned the "deliberate" targeting by Israel of U.N. peacekeepers in southern Lebanon, which Israel has denied.

Thursday's conference involves ministers and officials from over 70 countries and international organizations, including the European Union and regional partners, Macron's office said. Acting Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who met with Macron on Wednesday, will attend.

France also aims at coordinating international support to strengthen Lebanon's armed forces so they can "deploy more broadly and efficiently" in the country's south as part of a potential deal to end the war. Such a deal could see Hezbollah withdraw its forces from the border.

International support may include equipment, training and financial aid to hire troops and ensure the army's daily needs, Macron's office said.

Lebanon's army has been hit hard by five years of economic crisis. It has an aging arsenal and no air defenses, leaving it in no position to defend against Israeli incursions or confront Hezbollah.

The Lebanese army has about 80,000 troops, around 5,000 of them deployed in the south. Hezbollah has more than 100,000 fighters, according to the militant group's late leader, Hassan Nasrallah. The militant group's arsenal — built with support from Iran — is more advanced.

Conference participants also are to discuss how to support the 10,500-soldier-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL. European nations including France, Italy and Spain provide a third of its troops.

Italy, which has over 1,000 troops in the UNIFIL, is notably pushing for the peacekeeping force to be strengthened to "be able to face the new situation" on the ground, an Italian diplomat said, speaking anonymously to discuss ongoing talks.

"What we do know is that without a strengthened Lebanese armed forces and UNIFIL, there can be no sustainable peace and stability at the border between Lebanon and Israel," Montaz said. "As such, the French efforts are important and crucial for the way forward."

## No end for Boeing labor strike as workers reject latest contract proposal

By DAVID KOENIG and MANUEL VALDES Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Boeing factory workers voted against the company's latest contract offer and remain on the picket lines six weeks into a strike that has stopped production of the aerospace giant's bestselling jetliners.

Local union leaders in Seattle said 64% of members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers who cast ballots Wednesday voted against accepting the contract offer.

"After 10 years of sacrifices, we still have ground to make up, and we're hopeful to do so by resuming negotiations promptly," Jon Holden, the head of the IAM District 751 union, said in a statement Wednesday evening. "This is workplace democracy — and also clear evidence that there are consequences when a company mistreats its workers year after year."

A spokesperson for Boeing said officials didn't have a comment on the vote.

The labor standoff comes during an already challenging year for Boeing, which became the focus of multiple federal investigations after a door panel blew off a 737 Max plane during an Alaska Airlines flight in January.

The strike has deprived the company of much-needed cash that it gets from delivering new planes to airlines. On Wednesday, the company reported a third-quarter loss of more than \$6 billion.

Union machinists assemble the 737 Max, Boeing's best-selling airliner, along with the 777 or "triple-seven" jet and the 767 cargo plane at factories in Renton and Everett, Washington.

The latest rejected offer included pay raises of 35% over four years. The version that union members rejected when they voted to strike last month featured a 25% increase over four years.

The union, which initially demanded 40% pay boosts over three years, said the annual raises in the revised offer would total 39.8%, when compounded.

Boeing has said that average annual pay for machinists is currently \$75,608.

Boeing workers told Associated Press reporters that a sticking point was the company's refusal to restore a traditional pension plan that was frozen a decade ago.

"The pension should have been the top priority. We all said that was our top priority, along with wage," Larry Best, a customer-quality coordinator with 38 years at Boeing, said on a picket line outside a Boeing factory in Everett, Washington. "Now is the prime opportunity in a prime time to get our pension back, and we all need to stay out and dig our heels in."

Theresa Pound, a 16-year Boeing veteran, also voted against the deal. She said the health plan has gotten more expensive and her expected pension benefits would not be enough, even when combined with a 401(k) retirement account.

"I have put more time in this place than I was ever required to. I have literally blood, sweat and tears from working at this company," the 37-year-old said. "I'm looking at working until I'm 70 because I have this possibility that I might not get to retire based on what's happening in the market."

The strike started Sept. 13 and has served as an early test for Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg, who became chief executive in August.

In his first remarks to investors, Ortberg said earlier Wednesday that Boeing needs "a fundamental culture change," and he laid out his plan to revive the aerospace giant after years of heavy losses and damage to its reputation.

Ortberg repeated in a message to employees and on the earnings call that he wants to "reset" management's relationship with labor "so we don't become so disconnected in the future." He said company leaders need to spend more time on factory floors to know what is going on and "prevent the festering

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of issues and work better together to identify, fix, and understand root cause.”

Ortberg, a Boeing outsider who previously ran Rockwell Collins, a maker of avionics and flight controls for airline and military planes, said Boeing is at a crossroads.

“The trust in our company has eroded. We’re saddled with too much debt. We’ve had serious lapses in our performance across the company, which have disappointed many of our customers,” he said.

But Ortberg also highlighted the company’s strengths, including a backlog of airplane orders valued at a half-trillion dollars.

“It will take time to return Boeing to its former legacy, but with the right focus and culture, we can be an iconic company and aerospace leader once again,” he said.

In recent weeks, Ortberg announced large-scale layoffs — about 17,000 people — and a plan to raise enough cash to avoid a bankruptcy filing.

Boeing hasn’t had a profitable year since 2018, and Wednesday’s numbers represented the second-worst quarter in the manufacturer’s history. Boeing lost \$6.17 billion in the period ended Sept. 30, with an adjusted loss of \$10.44 per share. Analysts polled by Zacks Investment Research had expected a loss of \$10.34 per share.

Revenue totaled \$17.84 billion, matching Wall Street estimates.

The company burned nearly \$2 billion in cash, in the quarter, weakening its balance sheet, which is loaded down with \$58 billion in debt. Chief Financial Officer Brian West said the company will not generate positive cash flow until the second half of next year.

Boeing’s fortunes soured after two of its 737 Max jetliners crashed in October 2018 and March 2019, killing 346 people. Safety concerns were renewed this January, when a panel blew off a Max during an Alaska Airlines flight.

Ortberg needs to convince federal regulators that Boeing is fixing its safety culture and is ready to boost production of the 737 Max — a crucial step to bring in much-needed cash. That can’t happen, however, until the striking workers return to their jobs.

Early in the strike, Boeing made what it termed its “best and final” offer. The proposal included pay raises of 30% over four years, and angered union leaders because the company announced it to the striking workers through the media and set a short ratification deadline.

Boeing backed down and gave the union more time. However, many workers maintained the offer still wasn’t good enough. The company withdrew the proposed contract on Oct. 9 after negotiations broke down, and the two sides announced the latest proposal on Saturday.

Charles Fromong, a mechanic who has worked at Boeing for 38 years, said Wednesday night after the results were announced that the company needs to take care of its workers.

“I feel sorry for the young people,” he said. “I’ve spent my life here and I’m getting ready to go, but they deserve a pension and I deserve an increase.”

The last Boeing strike, in 2008, lasted eight weeks and cost the company about \$100 million daily in deferred revenue. A 1995 strike lasted 10 weeks.

## **A melodic greeting between women in Burundi is at risk of being lost**

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA and GASPARD MAHEBURWA Associated Press

NGOZI, Burundi (AP) — The hug between the two women looked like it would last forever. A spirited 85-year-old had embraced a younger woman she hadn’t seen for months, and she chanted a number of questions in the peculiar yodeling routine of her ancestors.

How are you? How is your husband? How are the kids? How are your cows? Are you on good terms with your neighbors?

And so on.

Prudencienne Namukobwa paused in the melody to allow the younger woman’s rhythmic affirmation, a

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pattern she has mastered over the decades.

"Ego," Emelyne Nzeyimana replied over and over in the local Kirundi language. "Yes."

A group of neighbors watched in amazement. Many were seeing their first performance of the traditional form of musical greeting, known to Burundians as akazehe. It is performed exclusively by women on a range of occasions.

But akazehe is fading, despite its unique status in this central African country that is better known for its world-famous percussionists. That's according to cultural officials, teachers and others who say the practice is worth preserving.

They cited the threat from public health measures that discourage unnecessary contact during disease outbreaks, in addition to the perceived failure to promote akazehe among school-going youth.

Among young Burundians, it is hard to find people who know what akazehe means and even harder to find someone who can perform it.

"At a certain time, unfortunately, it was abandoned," said Sandrine Kitonze, a culture advisor in the office of the governor of Ngozi province.

She said akazehe and its minutes-long embrace "made you feel that the person who greets you loves you."

Some academics have noted akazehe's potential role in fostering social cohesion in Burundi, which is now largely peaceful after a period of deadly civil war followed by political instability.

Annonciate Baragahorana, a teacher in the province of Bujumbura, which includes the commercial capital, told The Associated Press that while she was not born in a place where akazehe was widely practiced, she was astonished as a young girl when women embraced and addressed her in the polyphonic way during visits to other regions.

"The women who often did this lived in the central plateau provinces. When we went there during the holidays, a woman from the interior of the country kissed you strongly while wishing you wonders and she hugged you for a long time," she said with a chuckle. "I wanted her to finish quickly, even if it was sweet words to hear."

Baragahorana said she feared "tenderness in social relationships will disappear" among Burundians amid threats from contagious diseases such as COVID-19 and Mpox.

"People greet each other from a distance for fear of contaminating each other," she said. "This will contribute enormously to the demise of akazehe."

In Ngozi, a hilly province in Burundi's north, akazehe remains familiar to some locals, and women such as Namukobwa are impressive at performing it.

She lives in a decaying house set in the side of a verdant hill. One recent morning, she was sitting on a mat outside when she glimpsed Nzeyimana, the visiting daughter of a former neighbor. She overcame her bad hip to rise and welcome the woman, whom she addressed as if she were her biological daughter.

"I felt that the first love she had when I was just a girl is kept until now," said Nzeyimana, a broadcaster in Ngozi. "This means that I am still her daughter."

Akazehe can seem like a race to perfect accord, a search for harmony, in the interwoven vocalizations. While most questions are routine, some can be unexpected. Nzeyimana said afterward that she had been anxious over possibly facing a question for which she was not ready with a positive response. There was none.

Serena Facci, an Italian scholar at the University of Rome Tor Vergata who has written about akazehe, said that even by 1993, when she went to Burundi for research in ethnomusicology, "this beautiful female greeting wasn't very common in the ordinary life." Its continuing disappearance could be due to changing lifestyles, she said.

A custom such as akazehe should be preserved at all costs because of its role in protecting families, said Isaac Nikobiba, an anthropologist in Bujumbura. Among communities that practiced it, women could alert mother figures to any turbulence at home, triggering supportive measures from the extended family, he said.

Nikobiba called the potential disappearance of akazehe symptomatic of wider cultural losses stemming from modernization.

"Normally, before starting a home in traditional Burundi, the girl would first receive advice from her paternal aunt who would tell her, 'I will come to greet you after a certain time. If you notice an anomaly in the home, you will have to tell me everything,'" he said. "In short, if she does not find someone to whom she can confide her marital intimacies, she spends all the time in a very bad psychological atmosphere."

Floride Ntakirutimana was among the small group of women who gathered to witness the spectacle of Namukobwa greeting Nzeyimana. She said she grew up in a farming community where no mother could perform akazehe, and only heard of it through radio programs.

The exchange she watched left her feeling she wanted to learn akazehe herself.

"I feel better, and I saw that it was good," Ntakirutimana said.

## Abortion bans are top of mind for young women in North Carolina as they consider Harris or Trump

By AMANDA SEITZ and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (AP) — The TikTok videos haunt 26-year-old Christy Kishbaugh.

One seared into her memory shows a young mom talking about how several Idaho emergency rooms rejected her because of the state's abortion ban, leaving her to bleed for weeks after a miscarriage.

Kishbaugh sends videos like that to friends, saying "Can you believe this?"

She can't.

In a hushed voice near a popular park, the married suburbanite worried about her own future under the new patchwork of state laws that have prevented thousands of women across the country from having abortions.

"Thinking ahead, if anything were to go wrong," Kishbaugh nearly whispered, iced coffee in hand. "The idea that myself, my friends, people close to me, that they could potentially die or never have kids or lose a child because they're not getting access to the health care they need, that really dwells with me."

Two years after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, the tensions over abortion have only intensified, setting up the presidential election as a referendum on fundamental rights for tens of millions of women.

Republicans have long relied on deep support from white women in states such as Georgia, Florida and Texas who back them at higher levels compared to white women nationwide, data from AP VoteCast, a sweeping survey of the electorate, show. But in a battleground state like North Carolina, where Donald Trump won 60% of the vote of white women in 2020, their allegiance could be strained by the state's new 12-week abortion ban.

If Trump's support among white women in North Carolina drops closer to the group's national average of 52% in 2020, he could find it difficult to earn the state's 16 electoral votes again. Vice President Kamala Harris could narrowly win if just a fraction of white women decide to support her instead of Trump, who took North Carolina by just 1.3 percentage points in 2020, Trump's narrowest margin of victory.

Abortion was a top issue for just 3% of North Carolina voters in 2020, with nearly all of them backing Trump and his promise to appoint Supreme Court justices who would overturn Roe v. Wade, the high court ruling that had guaranteed a woman's right to abortion for nearly half a century.

Now the court has left abortion rights up to the states and the issue is far from settled, with legislatures passing a range of restrictions. Harris has made fallout from the laws a focus of her campaign. And a different crop of North Carolina voters — 10% of them in 2022 — have named abortion as their highest priority, according to AP VoteCast data. Nearly 8 in 10 of North Carolina voters in 2022 who prioritized abortion backed a Democratic candidate statewide.

This presidential contest will reveal how much abortion access really matters to them and whether it's enough to overcome their misgivings about Harris on the economy, immigration and other matters.

Did Republicans set off a hand grenade on abortion?

Targeting women under 35, North Carolina Democrats are telling voters that Republicans are too extreme

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on abortion and want control over women, said Morgan Jackson, a campaign adviser for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Josh Stein.

"Republicans have set off their hand grenade in their own hands," Jackson said. "They thought you were with them all the way. It's way more complicated than that."

Nationally, 4 in 10 women under 30 years old say abortion is their top issue, according to a poll released Oct. 11 by KFF, a health policy research organization.

North Carolina, however, is one of the only southern states that hasn't instituted the type of strict ban that have made abortions nearly impossible to obtain. That moderate approach will make this a less pressing issue for the state's voters, said Republican state senator Vickie Sawyer.

Sawyer considers what she hears from her own young adult daughters. Abortion comes up, she said, but not as much as worries about the cost of housing or everyday items.

"It's right in the wheelhouse of something that could affect them," Sawyer said. But "they know their rights are protected" because the state's 12-week abortion ban also allows for some exceptions in the second trimester.

But Democrats are telling voters that bigger threats to abortion rights linger with the Republican candidate for governor, Mark Robinson, who once promised to outlaw "abortion in North Carolina for any reason." During NFL games on Sunday, commercial breaks feature an ad of a woman sitting on an operating room table, explaining how she nearly bled out in a Texas emergency room because doctors were afraid to treat her with a dilation and curettage surgery — a procedure often used during abortions — after she gave birth.

With enthusiasm already high among Black women, the Harris campaign will focus on using the abortion issue to win over suburban white and Latino women, Jackson said. No Democratic presidential candidate has won North Carolina since Barack Obama in 2008.

In the final weeks of the campaign, North Carolina has had a series of dueling visits from the presidential candidates and their surrogates. Trump surveyed storm damage in western North Carolina on Monday, after Harris stopped by a predominantly Black church and rallied a crowd of 7,000 at Eastern Carolina University earlier this month.

Last Thursday, as a record 353,166 votes were cast at polling sites across the state, Harris' running mate Tim Walz implored the crowd at a Winston-Salem high school gymnasium to consider that abortion access could be restricted further under a second Trump presidency. Voters, he argued, should not believe the former president's statement that he would refuse to sign a national abortion ban.

"The people in our lives — our wives, our daughters, our mothers, our friends, for Christ's sake, our neighbors -- their lives are literally at stake on how we vote," Walz said.

The Harris campaign has 29 field offices and over 340 staff in the state, and has made contacting Black and younger voters a priority, the campaign said. Trump's team referred an emailed request for details on his campaign's presence to Sawyer, who represents a conservative patch of Charlotte's suburbs.

Harris' campaign might find the votes she needs tucked in the hills of fast-growing Forsyth County, flush with women, college students and young working professionals. The county seat of Winston-Salem, dotted with trendy apartment lofts converted from old cigarette factories and artsy coffee shops, has added the most people, a shift that's helped Democrats take power in the once-blue collar town after years of Republican control. The city's economy runs in part on more than a half-dozen colleges, including Wake Forest University.

It's on one of those college campuses where 21-year-old Jenny Gonzalez said the issue of abortion motivated her to register to vote in her first election. She'll cast a ballot for Harris.

"It should be access to all women, no matter the situation, because everyone goes through different things and you don't know why they decide to get the abortion," said Gonzalez, who is studying pharmacy technology at Forsyth Technical Community College.

About 120 miles southeast of Winston-Salem, 48-year-old Christine Ducheneaux sat on a bench in downtown Fayetteville as she explained why abortion is her top issue, too.

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"For me, it's just about body autonomy," said Ducheneaux, a mother of three children. "I hate to use generalizations, but, you know, like older white men, making a decision about what's good, what's best for me and my family or my life, is crazy. You're not my doctor, you know?"

Ducheneaux said she wasn't excited about voting for President Joe Biden, but once he dropped out she became "super excited" to support Harris.

Abortion restrictions have 44-year-old tattoo artist Liz "Gruesome" Haycraft, a former Republican who once opposed abortion, feeling on edge. Haycraft doesn't plan to have children, but worries about women who have faced hurdles getting medical care.

"There is no reason that women should have to give up their lives or their bodies," said Haycraft, who plans to vote for Harris.

Standing outside of a Planned Parenthood clinic, armed with bags of snacks and anti-abortion pamphlets for those walking into the facility, 45-year-old Laura Browne tried to persuade women to talk to her instead. The retired Air Force staff sergeant and mother of two daughters believes Democrats are using horror stories about abortion to scare young women.

"I believe they're being told there's only one option, and that they're too young to have children," said Browne, who works for a nearby anti-abortion center that counsels pregnant women. "And I would say that that is wrong."

Browne declined to share how she'd vote in the election.

It's still all about the economy, Republicans say

Republicans, for the most part, are downplaying the subject. Trump's campaign is running ads in the state instead attacking Harris for supporting taxpayer-funded transgender surgery. And locally, GOP loyalists are raising questions about how well the Biden administration has responded to Hurricane Helene's devastation.

Abortion may resonate deepest with younger women, but they're also a historically unreliable voting bloc, said Linda L. Petrou, a longtime Forsyth County Republican and district chair.

"There might be more women – younger women – coming out and voting for Harris because of that," Petrou acknowledged, but she added, "the percentage of young people who vote is relatively small."

Older women — even Democrats — see abortion as more of a peripheral issue when compared to their younger counterparts.

To Donna Klein, an 80-year-old retiree, women's rights are "important," but the environment is her top concern, a worry punctuated only by the hurricane destruction for the longtime Democrat.

"It's very important we try to figure out what's going on, what we can do it about it," Klein said. "As an older person, as I think about my grandkids. What kind of earth are they going to inherit?"

Petrou said Republicans are counting on widespread dissatisfaction with the economy to keep their voters firmly in Trump's camp.

Inflation has 20-year-old Wake Forest student Leyla Herrera considering a vote for Trump in her first presidential election. The biology student, who doesn't align with a party, says increased prices have been tough on her middle-class family, based in a Charlotte suburb.

"Donald Trump, when he was in office, there was better prices, especially for gas. Food is a really big thing, all of that has really gone up," she said.

But on abortion, Herrera is conflicted. She's doesn't like new laws that have prevented women who have been raped from ending a pregnancy. But she thinks about her mom, born and adopted the year before the U.S. Supreme Court initially affirmed national abortion rights in 1973.

"I feel really lucky because if she was born a year later, I wouldn't be here," Herrera said. "It really weighs on me."

Some Republican women also struggle with where they stand.

Weeks out from the election, Robin Spadt, a Canadian immigrant who doesn't like the influx of immigrants that have crossed the U.S. border illegally, is still unsure how she'll vote. Harris won't get her vote, she says. But after voting for Trump in the 2016 and 2020 elections, she describes his recent remarks as "a lot of crazy."



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And the 68-year-old suburban grandmother has another problem she's trying to reconcile before she heads to the voting booth.

"I've got five granddaughters, and I don't like the government telling them what to do with their bodies," Spadt added.

## **Voters trust Harris on a number of issues. But is that what they'll vote on?**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — If the presidential election hinged on abortion or climate change, Kamala Harris might be feeling pretty comfortable about her chances on Nov. 5, based on the polls. The Democratic nominee is also competitive on economic issues against Republican Donald Trump.

But Harris knows this is an extremely tight race — and that it could well serve as a test of just how much policy matters to voters, and which policies ultimately matter the most.

The vice president leads Trump on abortion, election integrity, climate change, taxes for the middle class and management of natural disasters, according to the latest survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs.

She's essentially split with Trump on several specific economic issues such as jobs and the cost of groceries and gasoline. The two are basically even as well on crime and the situation in the Middle East. Trump has a slight advantage over Harris on tariffs, and a bigger edge on immigration.

Despite Harris' advantage on a number of issues, her campaign still has plenty of anxiety about a historically close race. It's a sign that policy can matter — but it doesn't always outshine issues like personality, partisan loyalty or even demographic factors that shape voters' identities.

The latest polling marks something of a shift from 2020, when the pandemic was the top priority for many voters. But it also shows that Trump can no longer claim the economy as a relative strength for his candidacy, as it was when President Joe Biden was still in the race. How voters think about the economy could prove decisive; a September AP-NORC poll identified that as the top issue for many voters.

The Harris campaign, in its own polling, finds that the Democratic nominee is competitive against Trump on the economy, and sees that as a reflection of how she's emphasized the middle class in her speeches and advertising.

"She outperforms Trump very significantly on understanding the needs of middle class and working families," said Molly Murphy, a Harris campaign pollster. "Voters tend to trust that if you talk about something relentlessly that you care about it."

Xiaowen Xu, a psychologist at the College of William & Mary, stressed that there are many factors at play when understanding people's political leanings.

"Some will place more emphasis on policy, whereas others just have it as a 'check box' so to speak," Xu said. "And factors like personality differences, political identity, strength of political leaning, media consumption ... all can contribute to how policy-related info is digested."

Biden experienced this disconnect firsthand before exiting the race. His aides would point to data suggesting that he bettered Trump on policy specifics, yet he still rated poorly on the economy due to the impact of inflation spiking in 2022 as well as doubts about his age. The policy edge was insufficient to boost his popularity.

Trump has leaned into his persona as a property tycoon. He claimed at a recent roundtable that Harris' time as San Francisco's district attorney ruined the city and that he understands this because "I own property there." At the same time, while saying that inflation was bad, Trump said that illegal border crossings were a bigger issue than the economy.

Trump had a 45% to 37% advantage on immigration in October's poll, roughly in line with his edge in the September and August polling. And it's an issue that was particularly important to GOP voters during their primaries earlier this year, with Trump pledging mass deportations of immigrants without authorized status.

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"Americans trust President Trump to get our economy back on track because he is a businessman with a proven track record of economic success from his first term in the White House," said Karoline Leavitt, the Trump campaign's national press secretary.

Trump has gone after Harris on various issues such as her 2019 call to ban fracking (which she has since disowned) and her willingness that same year to cut funding for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (she has since called for more funding on border security). He has also attacked her support for transgender rights and the meandering answers she has given at times to interview questions.

"I think she's narrowed a lot of advantages that Trump had earlier in the year, but it seems like some of the attacks on her are taking a toll," said Patrick Ruffini, a Republican strategist who says that persuadable voters still appear to prefer Trump on issues like the economy and immigration.

Ruffini noted that Harris and her Democratic surrogates are increasingly focused on Trump's own foibles, such as claims by former aides that he's a fascist, his sometimes rambling speeches and the limits of his campaign schedule. That suggests that Harris knows there's a greater advantage to attacking Trump than promoting policy.

"What we see from the Harris campaign in the final stretch is they're trying to emphasize Trump's instability," he said.

Still, Harris is making a case on the economy and pushing multiple messages at the same time. Her campaign on Wednesday highlighted a letter signed by 23 Nobel economists who said her policies would be "vastly superior" to Trump's ideas. Her campaign has also labeled his tariff plans a "national sales tax."

Ads run by groups backing Harris have featured voters who ditched Trump because they saw him as caring more about tax cuts for billionaires than the middle class. Other ads go after Trump's tariffs for increasing expenses for everyday people, messages all designed to suggest that the former president prioritizes himself.

The Democratic nominee has called for \$25,000 in down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers, expanded tax breaks for parents, new benefits to encourage more start-ups, and the doubling of registered apprenticeships to bolster blue-collar work. Her campaign has proposed high taxes on corporations and the wealthy to cover the costs of her programs without adding to projected budget deficits.

"These things do resonate," said Steven Durlauf, an economist at the University of Chicago. "There are really stark differences between the candidates."

## Massive displacement from Israel-Hezbollah war transforms Beirut's famed commercial street

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Inside what was once one of Beirut's oldest and best-known cinemas, dozens of Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians displaced by the Israel-Hezbollah war spend their time following the news on their phones, cooking, chatting and walking around to pass the time.

Outside on Hamra Street, once a thriving economic hub, sidewalks are filled with displaced people, and hotels and apartments are crammed with those seeking shelter. Cafes and restaurants are overflowing.

In some ways, the massive displacement of hundreds of thousands of people from south Lebanon, the eastern Bekaa Valley and Beirut's southern suburbs has provided a boost for this commercial district after years of decline as a result of Lebanon's economic crisis.

But it is not the revival many had hoped for.

"The displacement revived Hamra Street in a wrong way," said the manager of a four-star hotel on the boulevard, who requested anonymity to speak candidly about the problems the influx has caused for the neighborhood.

For three weeks after the war intensified in mid-September, his hotel enjoyed full occupancy. Today, it stands at about 65% capacity — still good for this time of year — after some left for cheaper rented apartments.

But, he said, the flow of displaced people has also brought chaos. Traffic congestion, double parking and

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motorcycles and scooters scattered on sidewalks has become the norm, making it difficult for pedestrians to walk. Tensions regularly erupt between displaced people and the district's residents, he said.

Hamra Street has long been a bellwether for Lebanon's turbulent politics. During the country's heyday in the 1960s and early 1970s, it represented everything that was glamorous, filled with Lebanon's top movie houses and theaters, cafes frequented by intellectuals and artists, and ritzy shops.

Over the past decades, the street has witnessed rises and falls depending on the situation in the small Mediterranean nation that has been marred by repeated bouts of instability, including a 15-year civil war that ended in 1990. In 1982, Israeli tanks rolled down Hamra Street after Israel invaded the country, reaching all the way to west Beirut.

In recent years, the district was transformed by an influx of Syrian refugees fleeing the war in the neighboring nation, and businesses were hammered by the country's financial collapse, which began in 2019.

Israel dramatically escalated its attacks on parts of Lebanon on Sept. 23, killing nearly 500 people and wounding 1,600 in one day after nearly a year of skirmishes along the Lebanon-Israel border between Israeli troops and the militant Hezbollah group. The intensified attacks sparked an exodus of people fleeing the bombardment, including many who slept in public squares, on beaches or pavements around Beirut.

More than 2,574 people have been killed in Lebanon and over 12,000 wounded in the past year of war, according to the country's Health Ministry, and around 1.2 million people are displaced.

Many have flooded Hamra, a cosmopolitan and diverse area, with some moving in with relatives or friends and others headed to hotels and schools turned into shelters. In recent days several empty buildings were stormed by displaced people, who were forced to leave by security forces after confrontations that sometimes turned violent.

Mohamad Rayes, a member of the Hamra Traders Association, said before the influx of displaced people, some businesses were planning to close because of financial difficulties.

"It is something that cannot be imagined," Rayes said about the flow of displaced people boosting commerce in Hamra in ways unseen in years. He said some traders even doubled prices because of high demand.

At a cellular shop, Farouk Fahmy said during the first two weeks his sales increased 70%, with people who fled their homes mostly buying chargers and internet data to follow the news.

"The market is stagnant again now," Fahmy said.

Since many fled their homes with few belongings, men's and women's underwear and pajama sales grew by 300% at the small boutique business owned by Hani, who declined to give his full name for safety reasons.

The 60-year-old movie theatre, Le Colisee, a landmark on Hamra Street, had been closed for more than two decades until earlier this year when Lebanese actor Kassem Istanbouli, founder of the Lebanese National Theater, took over and began renovating it. With the massive tide of displacement, he transformed it into a shelter for families who fled their homes in south Lebanon.

Istanbouli, who has theaters in the southern port city of Tyre and the northern city of Tripoli, Lebanon's second-largest, has turned all three into shelters where people, no matter their nationality, can take refuge.

This week, displaced people in the Beirut movie theater sat on thin mattresses on its red carpeting, checking their phones and reading. Some were helping with the theater's renovation work.

Among them was Abdul-Rahman Mansour, a Syrian citizen, along with his three brothers and their Palestinian-Lebanese mother, Joumana Hanafi. Mansour said they fled Tyre after a rocket attack near their home, taking shelter at a school in the coastal city of Sidon, where they were allowed to stay since their mother is a Lebanese citizen.

When the shelter's management found out that Mansour and his brothers were Syrian they had to leave because only Lebanese citizens were allowed. With no place to stay, they returned to Tyre.

"We slept for a night in Tyre, but I hope you never witness such a night," Hanafi said of the intensity of the bombardment.

She said one of her sons knew Istanbouli and contacted him. "We told him, 'Before anything, we are Syrians.' He said, 'It is a shame that you have to say that.'"

Istanbouli spends hours a day at his theaters in Beirut and Tripoli to be close to the displaced people

sheltering there.

"Normally people used to come here to watch a movie. Today we are all at the theater and the movie is being played outside," Istanbouli said of the ongoing war.

## **The RNC is rebuilding its legal operation after Trump allies' failed effort to undo the 2020 race**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last time Donald Trump ran for president, the lawyers most directly involved in his efforts to overturn the election wound up sanctioned, criminally prosecuted or even sued for millions of dollars.

This time around, Republican party leaders are working to present a more organized, skilled legal operation even as Trump continues to deny he lost the 2020 election and sows doubt about the integrity of the upcoming one.

"It has been very important to make sure that in every aspect, we are going to have a fully professional operation," RNC Chairman Michael Whatley told The Associated Press.

As Republicans and Democrats fight in court over election rules, the Trump team finds itself under a particularly intense microscope given the aftermath of the 2020 race when meritless legal efforts challenging the results were repeatedly rejected by judges appointed by presidents of both political parties. Scrambling to undo the results, Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in a violent clash with law enforcement.

The chaotic court challenges were pushed by a loosely organized group of lawyers who ascended in Trump's orbit after experienced, establishment attorneys who had advised the then-president during the campaign backed away from his false claims of widespread fraud. This year, the Republican National Committee has launched a coordinated "election integrity" initiative that involves the recruitment of thousands of lawyers, polling-place monitors and poll workers, who officials insist will operate within the law.

"What we have seen in court over the course of the last six months and as we've ramped up to these 130-plus lawsuits is a testament to making sure that we're working with the states and working with the courts to get a really truly, responsible program up and running," Whatley added.

But there's no guarantee that a well-credentialed team will equal better results if the arguments are again rooted in baseless claims, or that the effort, like in 2020, won't be co-opted after the election by different attorneys.

A new legal team takes shape

Among the lawyers with prominent roles are Steven Kenny, the RNC's senior counsel, who worked at the high-powered law firm of Jones Day; Gineen Bresso, who was nominated by then-President George W. Bush to serve on the U.S. Election Assistance Commission and later became chair; and Josh Helton, general counsel for Mike Huckabee's 2016 presidential campaign.

David Warrington, who represented Trump during the congressional Jan. 6 investigation, has also been involved in lawsuits, including one in Michigan challenging the designation of voter registration agencies.

The RNC's litigation so far has been aimed at ensuring voter ID requirements; asserting that non-citizens are improperly voting; and challenging what they see as lax rules on mail-in and absentee voting.

Democrats have sounded alarms about the election integrity initiative, calling it an effort to sow distrust in the process and pave the way to cry foul if Trump loses. They have warned that election deniers installed in voting-related positions may refuse to certify legitimate results. And they've assembled a team of veteran attorneys, including longtime Democratic lawyer Marc Elias, and filed their own lawsuits, including challenging Georgia rules they fear could be used by Trump allies to delay or avoid certification. A judge last week invalidated seven of the rules.

The flurry of litigation is hardly surprising in a competitive election between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, that could turn on about a half-dozen battleground states.

Familiar figures from 2020 have resurfaced

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Cleta Mitchell, an attorney who participated in a January 2021 phone call in which Trump implored Georgia officials to “find” enough votes to declare him the winner, has championed lawsuits challenging rules on how overseas voters, including military members abroad, cast their ballots. (On Monday, judges in North Carolina and Michigan rejected efforts to disqualify ballots of certain overseas voters.)

The RNC earlier this year named Christina Bobb to head its election integrity division. A former reporter for the conservative One America News Network, Bobb has been indicted by Arizona’s attorney general, accused of joining an effort to promote a slate of Trump electors after the 2020 election even though Democrat Joe Biden won the state. Her attorney, Thomas Jacobs, said Bobb “had no involvement in the arrangements to select or present these alternate electors” and would seek to dismiss the charges.

Trump has been criminally charged with trying to overturn the 2020 election, yet his continued insistence that the contest was marred by fraud has been adopted by many within the party even though judges, election officials and Trump’s own attorney general found no evidence of that.

Trump says there’s no evidence of cheating so far in 2024

In May, Charlie Spies, a veteran election law attorney with ties to Mitt Romney and Ron DeSantis, resigned as the RNC’s chief counsel after about two months. He made waves at the 2021 Conservative Political Action Conference by saying there was “zero evidence” a voting machine software glitch had caused thousands of votes to switch in the 2020 election.

Whatley said in a radio interview in the weeks after the 2020 election that there was “massive fraud.” But he has largely avoided using Trump’s characterization of Biden’s victory, and said in one 2021 interview that Biden “absolutely” was legitimately elected.

Standing together Monday in North Carolina, Trump praised Whatley as having been “very much into stopping the steal” in 2020. Though Trump has said he hasn’t seen evidence of cheating in 2024, he has repeatedly raised doubts about the process, telling his supporters they need to turn out to make the result “too big to rig.”

Among the established Republican political lawyers who resisted the legal challenges in 2020 was Justin Riemer, a lawyer for John McCain’s 2008 campaign who was later chief counsel for the RNC but clashed with Trump allies after the election. He warned an RNC colleague in a November 2020 email that the legal efforts were getting “laughed out of court.”

“It’s setting us back in our fight for election integrity and they are misleading millions of people who have wishful thinking that the president is going to somehow win this thing,” Riemer wrote in the email about Rudy Giuliani and Jenna Ellis, two lawyers who helped engineer Trump’s efforts to overturn the election.

Consequences for Trump-allied lawyers

Giuliani was disbarred in New York and Washington; Ellis lost her law license in Colorado. The two, along with Sidney Powell, another lawyer central to advancing Trump’s claims, were among 19 people charged in Fulton County, Georgia, with conspiring to overturn the election.

Both Powell and Ellis pleaded guilty.

Giuliani was ordered to pay \$148 million to two former Georgia poll workers who sued him over lies he spread about them in 2020 that upended their lives. He subsequently filed for bankruptcy.

“All of that,” said UCLA law professor Rick Hasen, “should be a deterrent to a thinking lawyer who might want to replicate something like that.”

## **By moving to podcasts, Harris and Trump are turning away from legacy media to spread their messages**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Among the legacy news outlets that have come up empty in their efforts to interview Kamala Harris and Donald Trump during the general election campaign: NPR, The New York Times, PBS and The Washington Post.

Yet Harris chose to meet with Alex Cooper for her “Call Her Daddy” podcast and talk a little Bay Area

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basketball with the fellows on "All the Smoke." Trump rejected "60 Minutes," but has hung out with the bros on the "Bussin' With the Boys" and "Flagrant."

During this truncated campaign, some of the traditional giants of journalism are being pushed aside. The growing popularity of podcasts and their ability to help candidates in a tight race target a specific sliver of the electorate is a big reason why.

There are certainly exceptions. Harris spoke to NBC News' Hallie Jackson on Tuesday and held a CNN town hall on Wednesday. But political columnist John Heilemann of Puck noticed what he called "an ancient, dying beast railing against the diminishment of its status and stature in the new world."

"The campaigns have their structures and their media plans are very carefully thought through, even if we don't agree with them," said Sara Just, senior executive producer of the PBS "NewsHour." "Obviously, we hope they will do long, probing interviews with PBS."

Journalists consider that an important service. Said Eric Marrapodi, vice president for news programming at NPR: "I think Americans deserve to hear the candidates have their ideas challenged."

Big-media interviews used to be a staple for candidates

That sounds like a campaign staff's worst nightmare, infinite opportunities for their candidates to trip up and have an unplanned story dominate the news cycle. And to what end? Most legacy news organizations don't have the reach they used to, and their audience skews old.

For half a century, a "60 Minutes" interview near the election was considered a key stop for presidential candidates. But Trump shunned broadcast television's most influential news show this year, and has criticized the way its interview with Harris was edited.

The former president has stuck largely to what he perceives as friendly venues with direct access to his base audience, and continually feeds interviews to Fox News Channel despite grumbling he doesn't find the network loyal enough. Indeed, Fox has also proven important to the Democratic ticket, which believes that appearing on its shows demonstrates willingness to deal with a hostile environment.

Harris' interview with Bret Baier was so contentious that it became fodder for a "Saturday Night Live" parody. After her running mate, Tim Walz, was interviewed by Shannon Bream on "Fox News Sunday" earlier this month, the campaign sought and received a return engagement the next week.

"I was a little surprised," Bream admitted to Walz. "What's that about?"

Many news outlets don't reach as many people as they used to

In general, television networks don't have the audience they once did. CNN, for example, reached 1.24 million viewers per evening during the third quarter of 2016, when Trump first ran, and 924,000 this year, according to the Nielsen company. Broadcast networks are so named for their ability to reach a broad audience; sometimes candidates need that, often they don't.

The picture is more dire at newspapers, which collectively boasted 37.8 million in Sunday circulation in 2016 and dropped to 20.9 million by 2022, the Pew Research Center said. Candidates once submitted to tough interviews with newspaper editorial boards in the hope of winning an endorsement; now many newspapers don't even bother making that choice.

For years, candidates have been able to target advertising messages with great specificity — a swing state, even competitive cities, for example. The media now offers more opportunities to micro-message in the same way. Eager to shore up support among Black men, Harris appeared on Charlamagne Tha God's influential radio program — CNN and MSNBC even simulcast it — and was interviewed by MSNBC's Al Sharpton.

"The View" and Stephen Colbert's "Late Show," where Harris has appeared, enabled her to talk to people less inclined to follow the news.

Podcasts allow for more precise audience targeting

Few outlets offer the opportunity to zero in on an audience better than podcasts, which have essentially doubled in listenership since 2016.

The format is narrowcasting at its finest, said Andy Bowers, co-founder of the on-demand audio company Spooler Media. People who listen to podcasts often feel an intense loyalty to their favorites, almost

like they're part of a club of people with similar traits and interests — and a candidate has been invited into that club for a day.

"You're talking to a specific audience with a specific bent and frame of mind," said Tom Bettag, a University of Maryland journalism professor. "That's very helpful to somebody who is trying to avoid saying the wrong thing at the wrong time."

For her interview with Alex Cooper on "Call Her Daddy," Harris appeared on the most popular podcast for women. They discussed abortion, and one of Cooper's questions sounded like a grooved pitch: "What do you think of Trump saying he will be a protector of women?"

On the "Flagrant" podcast, hosts asked questions about Trump's children and how he felt during his assassination attempt. Host Akaash Singh interrupted Trump at one point to compliment him on how he raised his children.

"I think I like this interview," Trump said. His appearance on the podcast, one of several efforts he has made to reach young men, has been seen by nearly 5.5 million people on YouTube alone.

Issues come up during these discussions, often mixed with the personal. On "All the Smoke," the hosts began by asking Harris about the blind date where she met her husband.

Don't write off legacy outlets yet

Certainly not everyone is writing an obituary for traditional journalists and their coverage of campaigns. "I don't view it as a big break that takes away from legacy media," said Rick Klein, ABC's Washington bureau chief. ABC's opportunity to question the candidates came in the most public of forums, when the network hosted the only debate between Harris and Trump.

Of the 10 sources of campaign news with the most views on TikTok over the past 60 days, six were legacy news outlets, according to Zelf, a social video analytics company. They were ABC News, CNN, NBC News, MSNBC, Univision and the Daily Mail.

For a strong news organization, there's also a lot more that goes into covering a presidential campaign than sit-down interviews with candidates.

"I don't think journalists should worry too much about access journalism," said Mark Lukasiewicz, dean of the Hofstra University School of Communication and a former NBC News producer. "We should do journalism."

David Halbfinger, political editor of The New York Times, cautioned against drawing too many conclusions based on a campaign that was unusually short due to Harris' late entrance into the race. The Times has followed the campaign aggressively with trend stories, investigations and spot news coverage.

"It's hard to know what the lessons will be," Halbfinger said. "For a long time, candidates have tried to go around the news media. One way or another, the mainstream media does its job so I don't know how effective that strategy is. But it will be an interesting case study someday to see."

## **Boeing factory workers vote to reject contract and continue 6-week strike**

By DAVID KOENIG and MANUEL VALDES Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Boeing factory workers voted Wednesday to reject the company's latest contract offer and to continue a six-week strike that has halted production of the aerospace giant's bestselling jetliners.

Local union leaders in Seattle said 64% of members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers who cast ballots voted against accepting the proposal.

"After 10 years of sacrifices, we still have ground to make up, and we're hopeful to do so by resuming negotiations promptly," Jon Holden, the head of the IAM District 751 union, said in a statement Wednesday evening. "This is workplace democracy — and also clear evidence that there are consequences when a company mistreats its workers year after year."

A spokesperson for Boeing said officials didn't have a comment on the vote.

The labor standoff comes during an already challenging year for Boeing, which became the focus of multiple federal investigations after a door panel blew off a 737 Max plane during an Alaska Airlines flight

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in January.

The strike has deprived the company of much-needed cash that it gets from delivering new planes to airlines. On Wednesday, the company reported a third-quarter loss of more than \$6 billion.

Union machinists assemble the 737 Max, Boeing's best-selling airliner, along with the 777 or "triple-seven" jet and the 767 cargo plane at factories in Renton and Everett, Washington.

The offer rejected Wednesday included pay raises of 35% over four years. The version that union members rejected when they voted to strike last month featured a 25% increase over four years.

The union, which initially demanded 40% pay boosts over three years, said the annual raises in the revised offer would total 39.8%, when compounded.

Boeing has said that average annual pay for machinists is currently \$75,608.

Boeing workers told Associated Press reporters that a sticking point was the company's refusal to restore a traditional pension plan that was frozen a decade ago.

"The pension should have been the top priority. We all said that was our top priority, along with wage," Larry Best, a customer-quality coordinator with 38 years at Boeing, said on a picket line outside a Boeing factory in Everett, Washington. "Now is the prime opportunity in a prime time to get our pension back, and we all need to stay out and dig our heels in."

Theresa Pound, a 16-year Boeing veteran, also voted against the deal. She said the health plan has gotten worse, with higher premiums and more out-of-pocket expenses, and her expected pension benefits would not be enough, even when combined with a 401(k) retirement account.

"I have put more time in this place than I was ever required to. I have literally blood, sweat and tears from working at this company," the 37-year-old said. "I'm looking at working until I'm 70 because I have this possibility that I might not get to retire based on what's happening in the market."

The strike, which began Sept. 13, has served as an early test for Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg, who became chief executive in August.

In his first remarks to investors, Ortberg said earlier Wednesday that Boeing needs "a fundamental culture change," and he laid out his plan to revive the aerospace giant after years of heavy losses and damage to its reputation.

Ortberg repeated in a message to employees and on the earnings call that he wants to "reset" management's relationship with labor "so we don't become so disconnected in the future." He said company leaders need to spend more time on factory floors to know what is going on and "prevent the festering of issues and work better together to identify, fix, and understand root cause."

Ortberg, a Boeing outsider who previously ran Rockwell Collins, a maker of avionics and flight controls for airline and military planes, said Boeing is at a crossroads.

"The trust in our company has eroded. We're saddled with too much debt. We've had serious lapses in our performance across the company, which have disappointed many of our customers," he said.

But Ortberg also highlighted the company's strengths, including a backlog of airplane orders valued at a half-trillion dollars.

"It will take time to return Boeing to its former legacy, but with the right focus and culture, we can be an iconic company and aerospace leader once again," he said.

In recent weeks, Ortberg announced large-scale layoffs — about 17,000 people — and a plan to raise enough cash to avoid a bankruptcy filing.

Boeing hasn't had a profitable year since 2018, and Wednesday's numbers represented the second-worst quarter in the manufacturer's history. Boeing lost \$6.17 billion in the period ended Sept. 30, with an adjusted loss of \$10.44 per share. Analysts polled by Zacks Investment Research had expected a loss of \$10.34 per share.

Revenue totaled \$17.84 billion, matching Wall Street estimates.

The company burned nearly \$2 billion in cash, in the quarter, weakening its balance sheet, which is loaded down with \$58 billion in debt. Chief Financial Officer Brian West said the company will not generate positive cash flow until the second half of next year.

Shares of The Boeing Co. fell 2% in regular trading Wednesday.



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Boeing's fortunes soured after two of its 737 Max jetliners crashed in October 2018 and March 2019, killing 346 people. Safety concerns were renewed this January, when a panel blew off a Max during an Alaska Airlines flight.

Ortberg needs to convince federal regulators that Boeing is fixing its safety culture and is ready to boost production of the 737 Max — a crucial step to bring in much-needed cash. That can't happen, however, until the striking workers return to their jobs.

Early in the strike, Boeing made what it termed its "best and final" offer. The proposal included pay raises of 30% over four years, and angered union leaders because the company announced it to the striking workers through the media and set a short ratification deadline.

Boeing backed down and gave the union more time. However, many workers maintained the offer still wasn't good enough. The company withdrew the proposed contract on Oct. 9 after negotiations broke down, and the two sides announced the latest proposal on Saturday.

Charles Fromong, a mechanic who has worked at Boeing for 38 years, said Wednesday night after the results were announced that the company needs to take care of its workers.

"I feel sorry for the young people," he said. "I've spent my life here and I'm getting ready to go, but they deserve a pension and I deserve an increase."

The last Boeing strike, in 2008, lasted eight weeks and cost the company about \$100 million daily in deferred revenue. A 1995 strike lasted 10 weeks.

## **Harris says Trump 'is a fascist' after John Kelly says he wanted generals like Hitler's**

By DAN MERICA Associated Press

ASTON, Pa. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris said Wednesday that she believes that Donald Trump "is a fascist" after his longest-serving chief of staff said the former president praised Adolf Hitler while in office and put personal loyalty above the Constitution.

Harris seized on comments by former chief of staff John Kelly, a retired Marine Corps general, about his former boss in interviews with The New York Times and The Atlantic published Tuesday warning that the Republican nominee meets the definition of a fascist and that while in office he suggested that the Nazi leader "did some good things."

Speaking at a CNN town hall, Harris said they offer a window into who the former president "really is" and the kind of commander in chief he would be.

When asked if she believed that Trump is a fascist, Harris replied twice, "Yes, I do." Later, she brought it up herself, saying Trump would, if elected again, be "a president who admires dictators and is a fascist."

The Democratic presidential nominee said Kelly's comments, less than two weeks before voters will decide whether to send Trump back to the Oval Office, were a "911 call to the American people" by the former chief of staff. They were quickly seized by Harris as part of her closing message to voters as she works to sharpen the choice at the ballot box for Americans.

"I believe Donald Trump is a danger to the well-being and security of the United States of America," she said, saying the American people deserve a president who maintains "certain standards," which include "certainly not comparing oneself, in a clearly admiring way, to Hitler."

She added that if reelected, Trump would no longer be tempered by people who would "restrain him" from his worst impulses.

Earlier Wednesday, Harris repeated her increasingly dire warnings about Trump's mental fitness and his intentions for the presidency.

"This is a window into who Donald Trump really is, from the people who know him best, from the people who have worked with him side by side in the Oval Office and in the Situation Room," Harris told reporters outside the vice president's residence in Washington.

The comments from Kelly, the retired Marine general who worked for Trump in the White House from 2017 to 2019, built on past warnings from former top Trump officials as the election enters its final two weeks.

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Kelly has long been critical of Trump and previously accused him of calling veterans killed in combat "suckers" and "losers." His new warnings emerged as Trump seeks a second term vowing to dramatically expand his use of the military at home and suggesting he would use force to go after Americans he considers "enemies from within."

"He commented more than once that, 'You know, Hitler did some good things, too,'" Kelly recalled to the Times. Kelly said he would usually quash the conversation by saying "nothing (Hitler) did, you could argue, was good," but Trump would occasionally bring up the topic again.

In his interview with The Atlantic, Kelly recalled that when Trump raised the idea of needing "German generals," Kelly would ask if he meant "Bismarck's generals," referring to Otto von Bismarck, the chancellor who oversaw the unification of Germany. "Surely you can't mean Hitler's generals," Kelly recalled asking Trump. To which the former president responded, "Yeah, yeah, Hitler's generals."

Trump said on his Truth Social media platform that Kelly had "made up a story" and went on to heap insults on his former chief of staff, including that Kelly's "toughness morphed into weakness."

Trump's campaign also denied the accounts. Campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said Kelly had "be-clowned himself with these debunked stories he has fabricated" and, after Harris' statement, accused the Democratic candidate of sharing "outright lies and falsehoods."

Chris Sununu, New Hampshire's Republican governor and onetime Trump critic, said Kelly's comments did not change his plans to vote for the former president.

"Look, we've heard a lot of extreme things about Donald Trump, from Donald Trump. It's really par for the course," the governor told CNN. "Unfortunately, with a guy like that, it's kind of baked into the vote at this point."

Some of the former president's supporters in swing states responded to Kelly's comments with a shrug.

"Trump did his four years, and we were in great shape. Kelly didn't have anything good to say about Trump. He ought to have his butt kicked," said Jim Lytner, a longtime advocate for veterans in Nevada who served in the Army in Vietnam and co-founded the nonprofit Veterans Transition Resource Center.

Harris said Wednesday that Trump admired Hitler's generals because he "does not want a military that is loyal to the United States Constitution, he wants a military that is loyal to him. He wants a military who will be loyal to him personally."

Polls show the race is tight in swing states, and both Trump and Harris are crisscrossing the country making their final pitches to the sliver of undecided voters. Harris' campaign has spent considerable time reaching out to independent voters, using the support of longtime Republicans such as former Rep. Liz Cheney and comments like Kelly's to urge past Trump voters to reject his candidacy in November.

Harris' campaign held a call with reporters Tuesday to elevate the voices of retired military officials who highlighted how many of the officials who worked with Trump now oppose his campaign.

"People that know him best are most opposed to him, his presidency," said retired Army Brig. Gen. Steve Anderson.

Anderson said he wished Kelly would fully back Harris over Trump, something he has yet to do. But retired Army Reserve Col. Kevin Carroll, a former senior counselor to Kelly, said Wednesday that the former top Trump official would "rather chew broken glass than vote for Donald Trump."

Before serving as Trump's chief of staff, Kelly worked as the former president's secretary of homeland security, where he oversaw Trump's attempts to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Kelly was also at the forefront of the administration's crackdown in immigration policy that led to the separation of thousands of immigrant parents and their children along the southern border. Those actions made him a villain to many on the left, including Harris.

After Kelly left the Trump administration and joined the board of a company operating the nation's largest detention center for unaccompanied migrant children, Harris wrote during her 2019 run for president that he was "the architect" of the administration's "cruel child separation policy. Now he will profit off the separation of families. It's unethical. We are better than this."

When she was in Miami for a primary debate in June 2019, Harris was also one of a dozen Democratic

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presidential candidates who visited the detention center south of the city and protested against the administration's harsh treatment of young migrants.

In his interview with the Times, Kelly also said Trump met the definition of a fascist. After reading the definition aloud, including that fascism was "a far-right authoritarian, ultranationalist political ideology and movement characterized by a dictatorial leader," Kelly concluded Trump "certainly falls into the general definition of fascist, for sure."

Kelly added that Trump often fumed at any attempt to constrain his power, and that "he would love to be" a dictator.

"He certainly prefers the dictator approach to government," Kelly told the Times, adding later, "I think he'd love to be just like he was in business — he could tell people to do things and they would do it, and not really bother too much about whether what the legalities were and whatnot."

Kelly is not the first former top Trump administration official to cast the former president as a threat.

Retired Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, who served as Trump's chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Bob Woodward in his recent book "War" that Trump was "fascist to the core" and "the most dangerous person to this country." And retired Gen. Jim Mattis, who worked as secretary of defense under Trump, reportedly later told Woodward that he agreed with Milley's assessment.

Throughout Trump's political rise, the businessman-turned-politician benefited from the support of military veterans.

AP VoteCast found that about 6 in 10 military veterans said they voted for Trump in 2020, as did just over half of those with a veteran in the household. Among voters in this year's South Carolina Republican primary, AP VoteCast found that close to two-thirds of military veterans and people in veteran households voted for Trump over former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, Trump's toughest opponent in the 2024 Republican primary.

## **US confirms North Korea has sent 3,000 troops to Russia for training and possible Ukraine combat**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, LOLITA C. BALDOR and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. said Wednesday that 3,000 North Korean troops have been deployed to Russia and are training at several locations, calling the move very serious and warning that those forces will be "fair game" if they go into combat in Ukraine.

The deployment raises the potential for the North Koreans to join Russian forces in Ukraine and suggests expanded military ties between the two nations as Moscow seeks weapons and troops to gain ground in a grinding war that has stalemated after more than two years.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin called it a "next step" after the North has provided Russia with arms, and said Pyongyang could face consequences for aiding Russia directly. His comments were the first public U.S. confirmation of North Korea sending troops to Russia — a development South Korean officials disclosed but was denied by Pyongyang and Moscow.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. believes that at least 3,000 North Korean soldiers traveled by ship to Vladivostok, Russia's largest Pacific port, in early to mid-October.

"These soldiers then traveled onward to multiple Russian military training sites in eastern Russia, where they are currently undergoing training," Kirby said. "We do not yet know whether these soldiers will enter into combat alongside the Russian military, but this is certainly a highly concerning probability."

Kirby said they could go to western Russia and then engage in combat against Ukraine's forces, but both he and Austin said the U.S. continues to assess the situation.

Exactly what the North Korean troops are doing in Russia was "left to be seen," Austin told reporters in Rome.

He added: "If they're co-belligerents, their intention is to participate in this war on Russia's behalf, that is a very, very serious issue, and it will have impacts not only in Europe, it will also impact things in the Indo-Pacific."

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Kirby warned, however, that "I can tell you one thing, though, if they do deploy to fight against Ukraine, they're fair game."

He said a key question is what North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un is getting out of this.

Russia and North Korea have sharply boosted their cooperation in the past two years, and in June they signed a major defense deal requiring both countries to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked.

South Korean officials worry that Russia may reward North Korea by giving it sophisticated weapons technologies that could boost its nuclear and missile programs that target South Korea. South Korea said Tuesday it would consider supplying weapons to Ukraine in response to the reported troop dispatch.

South Korea's spy chief had told lawmakers that 3,000 North Korean troops are now in Russia receiving training on drones and other equipment before being deployed to battlefields in Ukraine.

South Korean intelligence first publicized reports that the Russian navy had taken 1,500 North Korean special warfare troops to Russia this month, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said his government had intelligence that 10,000 North Korea soldiers were being prepared to join the invading Russian forces.

On Wednesday, South Korean National Intelligence Service Director Cho Tae-yong told lawmakers that another 1,500 North Korean troops have entered Russia, according to lawmaker Park Sunwon, who attended Cho's closed-door briefing.

Cho told lawmakers his agency assessed that North Korea aims to deploy a total of 10,000 troops to Russia by December, Park told reporters.

Park cited Cho as saying the 3,000 North Korean soldiers sent to Russia have been split among multiple military bases. Cho told lawmakers that NIS believes they have yet to be deployed in battle, Park said.

Also speaking jointly about the briefing, lawmaker Lee Seong Kweun said the NIS found that the Russian military is teaching those North Korean soldiers how to use military equipment such as drones.

Lee cited the NIS chief as saying Russian instructors have high opinions of the morale and physical strength of the North Korean soldiers but think they will eventually suffer heavy casualties because they lack an understanding of modern warfare. Lee, citing Cho, said Russia is recruiting a large number of interpreters.

Lee said NIS has detected signs that North Korea is relocating family members of soldiers chosen to be sent to Russia to special sites to isolate them. The NIS chief told lawmakers that North Korea hasn't disclosed its troop dispatch to its own people.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on Tuesday said North Korea sending troops to Ukraine would mark a "significant escalation," and said he asked South Korea's president to send experts to Brussels next week to brief the military alliance.

Ukraine's Military Intelligence Directorate head, Kyrylo Budanov, told the online military news outlet The War Zone on Tuesday that North Korean troops were to arrive to Russia's Kursk region on Wednesday to help Russian troops fighting off a Ukrainian incursion.

Last week, South Korea's spy agency said North Korea had sent more than 13,000 containers of artillery, missiles and other conventional arms to Russia since August 2023 to replenish its dwindling weapons stockpiles.

Reports that the North is sending troops to Russia stoked security jitters in South Korea. It has shipped humanitarian and financial support to Ukraine, but it has so far avoided directly supplying arms in line with its policy of not supplying weapons to countries actively engaged in conflicts.

North Korea has 1.2 million troops, one of the largest standing armies in the world, but it hasn't fought in large-scale conflicts since the 1950-53 Korean War. Experts question how much North Korean troops would help Russia, citing a shortage of battle experiences.

Experts say North Korea wants Russia's economic support and its help to modernize the North's outdated conventional weapons systems as well as its high-tech weapons technology transfers.

## Israel accuses 6 Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza of being Palestinian militants

By JACK JEFFERY and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — The Israeli army on Wednesday accused six Al Jazeera journalists covering the war in Gaza of also being current or former paid fighters for Palestinian militant groups. Al Jazeera rejected the claims.

Israel cited documents it purportedly found in Gaza, and other intelligence it gathered, in making the accusations against the journalists, all of whom are Palestinian men. It said four are or have been affiliated with Hamas, and two with Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Al Jazeera said the accusations were “fabricated” and “part of a wider pattern of hostility” toward the pan-Arab network. It said the claims were “a blatant attempt to silence the few remaining journalists in the region, thereby obscuring the harsh realities of the war from audiences worldwide.”

The Associated Press has been unable to independently verify the authenticity of the documents Israel posted online to support its claims.

Al Jazeera is based in the energy-rich nation of Qatar, where many senior Hamas officials are based. The Gulf Arab country, which funds Al Jazeera, also has been a key player in Gaza cease-fire negotiations, along with the U.S. and Egypt.

Al Jazeera journalists Anas al-Sharif, Hossam Shabat, Ismael Abu Omar, and Talal Arrouki were accused by Israel of ties to Hamas. Ashraf Saraj and Alaa Salameh were accused of ties to Islamic Jihad.

The men have held various roles, according to documents Israel cited -- sniper, infantry soldier, fighter, captain, training coordinator and “propaganda.”

The Committee to Protect Journalists released a statement on Wednesday that was critical of Israel, which it said “has repeatedly made similar unproven claims without producing credible evidence.”

In July, after an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City killed two Al Jazeera journalists, including Ismail Al Ghoul, Israel “produced a similar document, which contained contradictory information, showing that Al Ghoul, born in 1997, received a Hamas military ranking in 2007 – when he would have been 10 years old,” the committee said in its statement.

Militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad led last year’s attack on Israel that killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took some 250 hostages into Gaza. They have been fighting alongside each other against Israeli troops in Gaza for the past year.

In January, Israel detailed allegations against 12 employees of a United Nations agency that it says were involved in the Hamas attack on Israel last year that ignited the war in Gaza. The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA, subsequently fired at least 21 staffers for their roles in the attack. UNRWA has been the main supplier of food, water and shelter to civilians in Gaza during the war.

Four Al Jazeera journalists have been killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza over the past 12 months, according to the network. Several of the dead later have been accused by Israel of being members of either Hamas or Islamic Jihad, accusations rejected by the Qatari outlet.

In May, after an Israeli court ordered the closure of Al Jazeera’s operations and broadcasts within Israel, police raided a hotel room in East Jerusalem from where the network had been broadcasting live images.

It was the first time Israel had ever shuttered a foreign news outlet. Four months later, Israel raided Al Jazeera’s office in the Palestinian-governed West Bank city of Ramallah, shutting down the bureau there.

Several of those named by Israel on Wednesday, including al-Sharif, have become mainstay figures of the outlet’s 24-hour live coverage of Gaza. They have acquired celebrity-like status among Palestinians and in other countries across the Middle East.

Al Jazeera is one of a handful of news organizations still broadcasting daily from the besieged enclave.

The documents and intelligence Israel released Wednesday purportedly show the rank, role, enlistment date, and battalion of each of the six Al Jazeera journalists.

At least 128 journalists have been killed in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, and Lebanon since last October, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. They include 123 Palestinians, two Israelis and three

Lebanese.

Israel has killed more than 42,000 Palestinians in Gaza since the war began, according to the local health ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and militants but says more than half of the dead are women and children.

Even before the war, tensions between Al Jazeera and Israel ran high. Israeli forces shot and killed Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American journalist, in May 2022 as she reported on a story in the West Bank.

Israel isn't the only critic of Al Jazeera. The U.S. singled out the broadcaster during its occupation of Iraq after its 2003 invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, and for airing videos of the late al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden, who orchestrated the Sept. 11, 2001 attack against the U.S.

Al Jazeera has been closed or blocked by other governments in the Middle East. In 2013, Egyptian authorities seeking to crush mass protests against President Mohammed Morsi raided a luxury hotel used by Al Jazeera.

## What to know about E. coli and the McDonald's outbreak

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

A food poisoning outbreak tied to McDonald's Quarter Pounders was caused by a common type of E. coli bacteria that can cause serious illness and death.

Particularly vulnerable are young children, older people or those with weakened immune systems.

About 50 people have fallen ill in the McDonald's outbreak, and one has died, with ages ranging from 13 to 88, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A preliminary investigation suggests raw slivered onions served on Quarter Pounders are a likely source of the outbreak.

Here's what to know about the dangerous germ:

What is E. coli?

E. coli is a type of bacteria found in the environment, including water, food and in the intestines of people and animals. There are many kinds of harmless E. coli, but a few types can make people seriously ill. The McDonald's outbreak is caused by E. coli O157:H7, which produces a toxin that causes dangerous diarrhea and can lead to kidney failure and other serious problems, according to the CDC.

How is it spread?

People can get sick from E. coli poisoning when they consume contaminated foods or through contact with animals, the environment or other people who are infected. Health officials initially focused on fresh slivered onions and beef patties as the possible sources of the McDonald's outbreak. But the beef patties are an unlikely source because of federal requirements for testing meat and McDonald's protocols that call for cooking it to a temperature that kills the bacteria. The onions are served raw.

What are the symptoms of E. coli poisoning?

Symptoms occur quickly, within a day or two of eating contaminated food, and typically include fever, vomiting, diarrhea or bloody diarrhea and signs of dehydration — little or no peeing, increased thirst and dizziness. The infection can cause a type of serious kidney injury, especially in kids younger than 5. E. coli poisoning in young children requires immediate medical attention.

How often does E. coli make people sick?

The type of bacteria implicated in this outbreak causes about 74,000 infections in the U.S. annually, leading to more than 2,000 hospitalizations and 61 deaths each year, according to the CDC. In general, E. coli infections were lower in 2023 than in recent years and cases of severe kidney injury caused by the bacteria remained stable, according to latest federal data.

What other germs can cause food poisoning?

Food poisoning sickens at least 48 million people in the U.S. each year, including 128,000 who are hospitalized and 3,000 who die. E. coli poisoning is only one cause of such infections. Other germs can make people sick, too. The most common is norovirus, a group of viruses that cause between 19 million and 21 million cases of food poisoning in the U.S. each year, according to the CDC. Salmonella bacteria in food

sickens about 1.3 million people. Listeria bacteria cause fewer illnesses, about 1,600 each year, but are responsible for about 260 deaths.

## Ron Ely, TV's 'Tarzan' in the 1960s, dies at 86

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Ron Ely, the tall, musclebound actor who played the title character in the 1960s NBC series "Tarzan," has died at age 86.

Ely's daughter, Kirsten Casale Ely, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that her father died Sept. 29 at his home in Los Alamos, California, an unincorporated community in Santa Barbara County.

While Ron Ely was not quite as well-known as Johnny Weismuller, the Olympic swimmer who played Tarzan in movies in the 1930s and 1940s, Ely helped form the image of the shirtless, loincloth-wearing character further immortalized by Disney.

"He was an actor, writer, coach, mentor, family man and leader," Kirsten Ely said in an Instagram post. "He created a powerful wave of positive influence wherever he went. The impact he had on others is something that I have never witnessed in any other person - there was something truly magical about him."

In 2019, he tragically returned to the news when his 62-year-old wife, Valerie Lundeen Ely, was stabbed to death at their Santa Barbara, California, home by their 30-year-old son, Cameron Ely, who was subsequently shot and killed by police. Ron Ely, who was home during the stabbing, challenged the prosecutor's report that his son's shooting was justified.

"If he didn't have a gun or he didn't have a weapon, what was the basis of shooting him?" Ely's attorney John Burris said in 2020. "They may have very well thought he was involved in some other activity involving the mom. But that's not a basis to shoot and kill him. You have to have a lawful basis to do that."

In the early 1980s, Ely was host of the Miss America pageant and met Valerie, a Miss Florida, there. They married in 1984. The couple had three children, and Ely retired from acting to focus on his family in 2001.

"Late in life I had a young family. I decided to stop acting and work at home, as an author, that way I could be with the kids all through school and be able to attend their sports games and things," he told London's Daily Express in 2013, expressing interest in the time at reentering acting. He would return briefly in the 2014 TV movie "Expecting Amish."

Ely's Tarzan didn't speak in the monosyllabic grunts often associated with the character, originally created by novelist Edgar Rice Burroughs. He was instead an educated bachelor who had grown sick of civilization and had returned to African jungle where he was raised.

Ely said in interviews that he did his own stunts on the show, working directly and precariously with the tigers, chimpanzees and other wild animals that were Tarzan's friends and servants.

"They first tried to cast a former American football player called Mike Henry but he didn't like chimpanzees and from the moment he got on set, things went south in a hurry," Ely told London's Daily Express in 2013.

A chimp attacked Henry and injured his jaw when the show's pilot was being filmed, and Ely was cast in his place at the last moment.

"I met with them on a Monday and when they offered me the role I thought: 'No way do I want to step into that bear trap. You do Tarzan and you are stamped for life,'" Ely told the Daily Express. "Was I ever right! But my agent convinced me it was a quality show and was going to work. So on the Friday I was on a plane to Brazil to shoot the first episode."

Ely also played the title character in the 1975 action film "Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze," but otherwise had mostly small roles in TV and films, including the 1958 movie musical "South Pacific."

He also wrote a pair of mystery novels featuring a detective named Jake Sands, 1994's "Night Shadows" and 1995's "East Beach."

Born in Hereford, Texas, and raised in Amarillo, he married his high school sweetheart in 1959, but divorced two years later.

Along with Kirsten Casale Ely, he is survived by daughter Kaitland Ely Sweet.

## Israeli strikes pound Lebanese coastal city after residents evacuate

By MOHAMMED ZAATARI and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

TYRE, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli jets struck multiple buildings in Lebanon's southern coastal city of Tyre on Wednesday, sending up large clouds of black smoke, while Hezbollah confirmed that a top official widely expected to be the militant group's next leader had been killed in an Israeli strike.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported that an Israeli strike on the nearby town of Maarakkeh killed three people. There were no reports of casualties in Tyre, where the Israeli military had issued evacuation warnings prior to the strikes.

Hezbollah meanwhile fired more rockets into Israel, including two that set off air raid sirens in Tel Aviv before being intercepted. A cloud of smoke could be seen in the sky from the hotel where U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was staying on his latest visit to the region to try to renew cease-fire talks.

On Wednesday night, the Israeli military said another four "projectiles" crossed from Lebanon into Israel, with two intercepted and one falling in open land. There were no immediate reports of injuries, the military said.

Hezbollah confirmed that top official Hashem Safieddine had been killed in an announcement one day after Israel said it had killed him in a strike earlier this month in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Safieddine, a powerful cleric within the party ranks, had been expected to succeed Hassan Nasrallah, one of the group's founders, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike last month.

Hezbollah said Safieddine had "joined his brother, our most noble and precious martyr," Nasrallah.

The militant group began firing rockets, missiles and drones into Israel, drawing retaliatory airstrikes, after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack from Gaza triggered the war there. All-out war erupted in Lebanon last month, and Israeli strikes killed Nasrallah and most of his senior commanders. Israeli ground forces invaded southern Lebanon at the beginning of October.

Tyre, a provincial capital, had largely been spared, but strikes in and around the city have intensified recently.

The 2,500-year-old city, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Beirut, is known for its pristine beaches, ancient harbor and imposing Roman ruins and hippodrome, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is among Lebanon's largest cities and a vibrant metropolis popular with tourists.

The buildings struck Wednesday were between several heritage sites, including the hippodrome and a cluster of seaside sites associated with the ancient Phoenicians and the Crusaders.

The Israeli military issued evacuation warnings a couple of hours before the strikes for dozens of buildings in the heart of the city. It told residents to move north of the Awali River, dozens of kilometers (miles) to the north.

Avichay Adraee, an Israeli military spokesman, said on the platform X there were Hezbollah assets in the area, without elaborating or providing evidence.

The Shiite Muslim Hezbollah has a strong presence in the city, and its legislators are members of the group or its allies. But Tyre is also home to civilians with no ties to the group, including a sizable Christian community.

Civil Defense first responders warned residents through loudspeakers to evacuate and helped older adults and others who had difficulty leaving. Ali Safieddine, the head of the Civil Defense, told The Associated Press there were no casualties.

Dr. Wissam Ghazal, a health official in Tyre, said the strikes hit six buildings, flattening four of them, around 2 1/2 hours after the evacuation warnings. People displaced by the strikes could be seen in parks and sitting on the sides of nearby roads.

The head of Tyre's disaster management unit, Mortada Mhanna, told the AP that although many had fled, thousands of residents and others displaced from other areas remain. Many people, including hundreds of families, previously had fled villages in South Lebanon to seek refuge in shelters in Tyre.

An estimated 15,000 people remain in the city out of a pre-war population of about 100,000, Mhanna said.



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On Wednesday night the pan-Arab TV channel Al-Mayadeen, which is politically allied with Hezbollah, said the Israeli military struck its office building on the outskirts of Beirut's southern suburbs.

"Al-Mayadeen holds the Israeli occupation accountable for the attack on a known media office for a known media outlet," the TV station said. It added that the office had been evacuated. The Israeli army did not issue a warning prior to the strike.

On Nov. 21, an Israeli strike in southern Lebanon killed two Al-Mayadeen journalists reporting on military activity along the border with Israel.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said 28 people were killed and 139 wounded over the past 24 hours, raising the death toll since the conflict began last year to 2,574, with 12,001 people wounded. The fighting has driven 1.2 million people from their homes, including more than 400,000 children, according to the U.N. children's agency.

On Wednesday, rescuers recovered the bodies of a mother and her 7-year-old child two days after an Israeli airstrike on Monday hit a densely populated slum near Beirut's main public hospital, Saad al-Ahmar, the commander of the Civil Defense's southern district fire and rescue unit, told The Associated Press.

Monday's strike killed at least 18 people, including four children, and wounded over 60 others, the Health Ministry said. It also damaged the nearby Rafik Hariri University Hospital, Beirut's primary public medical facility.

The Israeli military said it had targeted a Hezbollah site, without providing further details, and stated the hospital itself was not the intended target.

On the Israeli side, Hezbollah attacks have killed around 60 people, half of them soldiers. Near-daily rocket barrages have emptied communities across northern Israel, displacing some 60,000 people. In recent weeks Hezbollah has extended its range, launching scores of rockets daily and regularly targeting the northern Israeli city of Haifa. Most are intercepted or fall in open areas.

In Gaza, the Israeli military has pressed ahead with a major operation in the northern part of the territory, where the United Nations' humanitarian office has said Israel has severely restricted aid deliveries. During his visit to the region, Blinken reiterated a warning that hindering aid could force the U.S. to scale back crucial military support for Israel.

Israel's army said it had arrested about 150 suspected Palestinian militants, while about 20,000 people left Jabaliya, a refugee camp that has turned into a densely built neighborhood over the decades. The military released drone footage showing thousands of people walking past bombed buildings. Over the past few days, several Palestinians said the Israeli military forced them to leave.

The U.N. estimates 60,000 people have fled the far north of Gaza southwards over more than a two-week period.

A Palestinian resident of Beit Lahiya, near Jabaliya, told the AP that Israel's military has rounded up hundreds of men in northern Gaza, separating them as families try to flee the area.

Hisham Abu Zaqout, a father of four, said he was held for at least three hours along with dozens of men in a school near a hospital.

The Israeli army says it is trying to uproot Hamas militants from Jabaliya, as well other parts of northern Gaza, issuing mass evacuation orders there earlier this month. Jabaliya has been the scene of on-and-off fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas militants for months, leaving parts of it destroyed.

## **Quarter Pounders are off the menu at 20% of McDonald's in US as E. coli cases are investigated**

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

McDonald's worked Wednesday to reassure customers that its U.S. restaurants are safe as federal investigators tried to pinpoint the cause of a deadly E. coli outbreak linked to the fast-food giant's Quarter Pounder hamburgers.

McDonald's pulled Quarter Pounders from one-fifth of its U.S. stores Tuesday as a result of the outbreak,

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which the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said had sickened at least 49 people in 10 states. One person died and 10 were hospitalized, according to the CDC.

A preliminary investigation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration suggested fresh slivered onions that are served raw on Quarter Pounder hamburgers were a likely source of the contamination. McDonald's also serves raw, slivered onions on one of its breakfast sandwiches, but that sandwich isn't available at the impacted stores. Other burgers, like the Big Mac, use diced, cooked onions.

McDonald's said it was searching for a new regional supplier for fresh onions. In the meantime, Quarter Pounders were removed from menus in Colorado, Kansas, Utah, Wyoming, and portions of Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

Adriean Madden pulled up outside a McDonald's outside Denver on Wednesday for his usual afternoon snack but then decided against it. He said he was unsure how E. coli spreads or contaminates other foods, and he thinks McDonald's should be more forthcoming.

"This affects my decision with coming to McDonald's in the future," Madden said. "I feel like the information isn't as widely spread. I didn't see any notices on the door, and then I saw vehicles going through the drive through just as if nothing was going on."

Colorado has had the most reported cases of any state so far, and it's where the one death involving an older adult occurred.

McDonald's said it has worked closely with federal food safety regulators since late last week, when it was alerted to the potential outbreak. The company said the scope of the problem and the popularity of its products have complicated efforts to identify the contamination source.

McDonald's has more than 14,000 U.S. stores and serves 1 million Quarter Pounders every two weeks in the affected 12-state area.

McDonald's is known for its stringent food safety guidelines and protocols, said Chris Gaulke, a professor of food and beverage management at Cornell University's Nolan School of Hotel Administration. The company said Wednesday that the supplier regularly tested its onions for E. coli, for example.

"Given the volume of food that they go through, how infrequently this happens to McDonald's is a testament to the effort that they take," Gaulke said.

But some experts questioned why McDonald's simply stopped selling one sandwich and didn't close restaurants for further investigation.

"Good practice would have been to close all the restaurants," said Bill Marler, a Seattle lawyer who has sued companies over food poisoning outbreaks. "Until we know definitively what the product was that made people sick, consumers should be aware."

Marler said cross-contamination remains a potential possibility at the affected restaurants until they are thoroughly cleaned.

Asked why it didn't close any restaurants, McDonald's said nothing in the government's investigation indicated there were issues with its food preparation practices. In an interview on the "Today" show Wednesday, McDonald's U.S. President Joe Erlinger also said it's likely that whatever product was contaminated has already passed through the company's supply chain.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the outbreak late Tuesday. It said infections were reported between Sept. 27 and Oct. 11 in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oregon, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

State and local public health officials were interviewing people about the foods they ate in the week before they got sick. Of the 18 people interviewed as of Tuesday, all reported eating at McDonald's, and 16 people reported eating a beef hamburger. Twelve reported eating a Quarter Pounder.

McDonald's said it's unlikely the beef in the Quarter Pounder was the source, since it comes from multiple suppliers and is cooked at a high enough temperature to kill E. coli.

McDonald's said its initial findings suggest that some of the reported illnesses were linked to onions from a single supplier, which the company didn't name. McDonald's said the onions are cleaned and sliced by the supplier and then packaged for use on individual Quarter Pounders.

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The incubation period for E. coli is only a couple of days, so illness would be quickly apparent to anyone affected, said Donald Schaffner, a food safety expert at Rutgers University. "If you ate these burgers in September and now it's the middle of October and you didn't get sick, you're probably OK," he said.

E. coli bacteria are harbored in the guts of animals and found in the environment. Infections can cause severe illness, including fever, stomach cramps and bloody diarrhea. People who develop symptoms of E. coli poisoning should seek health care immediately and tell the provider what they ate.

The type of bacteria implicated in the McDonald's case causes about 74,000 infections in the U.S. annually, leading to more than 2,000 hospitalizations and 61 deaths each year, according to the CDC. In general, E. coli infections were lower in 2023 than in recent years and cases of severe kidney injury caused by the bacteria remained stable, according to latest federal data.

Outbreaks at restaurant chains are rare, but they do happen.

In 2020, Chipotle agreed to pay a record \$25 million fine to resolve criminal charges that it served tainted food that sickened more than 1,100 people with E. coli between 2015 and 2018. In that case, poor safety practices, such as not keeping food at proper temperatures to prevent pathogen growth, were to blame.

In 2006, Taco Bell ordered the removal of green onions from its restaurants nationwide after samples taken by investigators appeared to contain a harsh strain of E. coli. The outbreak sickened at least 71 people.

"The worst thing you can have at a restaurant is a food safety problem. It's the equivalent of an airline losing the plane," said Aaron Allen, a restaurant consultant and founder of Aaron Allen and Associates.

But Allen said McDonald's has enough experience and safety protocols in place that it won't suffer long-term damage from the outbreak.

"No one would be better equipped to mitigate and respond to this than McDonald's," he said.

McDonald's shares fell 5% Wednesday.

## North Carolina government calculates Hurricane Helene damages, needs at least \$53B

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The catastrophic flooding and destruction caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina likely caused at least a record \$53 billion in damages and recovery needs, Gov. Roy Cooper's administration said Wednesday.

The state budget office generated the preliminary figure for direct or indirect damages and potential investments to prevent similar destruction in future storms.

Cooper told reporters the state's previous record for storm damage was \$17 billion from Hurricane Florence, which struck eastern North Carolina in 2018.

"It is no exaggeration to describe Helene as the deadliest and most damaging storm ever to hit North Carolina," Cooper said while unveiling his request to the General Assembly for \$3.9 billion to help pay for repairs and revitalization. He called it a "down payment on western North Carolina's future."

North Carolina state officials have reported 96 deaths from Helene, which brought historic levels of rain and flooding to the mountains in late September.

The storm and its aftermath caused 1,400 landslides and damaged over 160 water and sewer systems, at least 6,000 miles (9,650 kilometers) of roads, more than 1,000 bridges and culverts and an estimated 126,000 homes, the budget office said. Some 220,000 households are expected to apply for federal assistance.

"This jaw-dropping damage figure reminds us that we are very much on the front end of this recovery effort," the Democratic governor said.

The report with Cooper's spending request was released the day before the Republican-controlled legislature planned to meet for a one-day session to advance additional Helene recovery legislation.

Lawmakers unanimously approved two weeks ago a \$273 million package that also included language to provide flexibility to state agencies, displaced residents and officials running elections in 25 western

counties. Thirty-nine of the state's 100 counties are within the federally declared disaster area.

State government coffers include several billion dollars that can be accessed for future recovery spending. Almost \$4.5 billion is in the state's savings reserve alone.

Legislative leaders had not disclosed as of late Wednesday afternoon specifics about what they would attempt to pass Thursday. Lawmakers were still reviewing Cooper's request that they received Tuesday, according to Lauren Horsch, a spokesperson for Senate leader Phil Berger. Any legislation is unlikely to be the full package presented by Cooper and State Budget Director Kristin Walker. After Thursday, legislators are expected to return to Raleigh on Nov. 19.

The damage report projects \$48.8 billion in direct or indirect damages, along with \$4.8 billion of anticipated mitigation expenses. The budget office estimates the federal government will cover \$13.6 billion, with private and other sources covering \$6.3 billion.

Most of the losses won't ever be recovered, Walker said.

The private-source share of expenses likely will be relatively low because so few homeowners and farmers in the disaster areas had flood or crop insurance. Close to 93% of homes with flood damage verified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency lacked flood insurance, the report said.

Cooper's request includes \$475 million for a two-phase recovery program for businesses in the hardest-hit areas, with grants from \$1,500 to \$50,000 in the first phase and up to \$75,000 in the second phase.

Other highlights include \$289 million in matching funds to access federal money to repair utilities and debris removal; \$225 million for grants to farmers for uninsured losses; and \$100 million for public school and community college capital needs.

Cooper also wants \$325 million to help homeowners and renters with rebuilding and minor repairs immediately while a larger program dependent on federal funds is implemented. It took nearly two years for Washington to send community development block grant funding for home repairs after Florence and Hurricane Matthew in 2016, the report said.

Wednesday's request also seeks \$175 million to cover remaining Matthew and Florence home repairs being made through the block grant program. Cooper's administration attributes the shortfall to rising construction costs, labor shortages, the COVID-19 pandemic and a congressional appropriation that was roughly half of what the state requested.

The fiscal gap prompted Berger and another leading Senate Republican to put out a news release Wednesday criticizing the \$175 million request and its timing, calling them yet another sign of poor management by the state Office of Recovery and Resiliency. The senators said an oversight committee would investigate the matter next month.

## **Turkey strikes Kurdish militant targets in Iraq and Syria following deadly attack on defense company**

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey's air force struck Kurdish militant targets in Iraq and Syria on Wednesday in an apparent retaliation for an attack at a key state-run defense company that killed five people and wounded more than 20 others.

The defense ministry said more than 30 targets were "destroyed" in the aerial offensive, without providing details on the locations that were hit. It said "all kinds of precautions" were taken to prevent harm to civilians.

The strike came hours after suspected Kurdish militants set off explosives and opened fire at the aerospace and defense company TUSAS. The two attackers — a man and a woman — also were killed, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said. At least 22 people, including seven security personnel, were injured during the attack.

Yerlikaya said the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, was believed to be behind the attack at the defense company. Defense Minister Yasar Guler also pointed the finger at the PKK.

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"We give these PKK scoundrels the punishment they deserve every time. But they never come to their senses," Guler said. "We will pursue them until the last terrorist is eliminated."

Turkey regularly conducts airstrikes against the PKK — which has a foothold in Iraq — and against a Kurdish militia group in Syria that is affiliated with the militants.

There was no immediate statement from the PKK.

The Islamic State group and leftist extremists have also carried out past attacks in Turkey.

"I condemn this heinous terrorist attack," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of a BRICS meeting in Russia.

Putin offered condolences. A U.S. Embassy statement said Washington "strongly condemns today's terrorist attack."

TUSAS designs, manufactures and assembles civilian and military aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and other defense industry and space systems. Its UAVs have been instrumental in Turkey gaining an upper hand in its fight against Kurdish militants.

The attack occurred a day after the leader of Turkey's far-right nationalist party that's allied with Erdogan raised the possibility that the PKK's imprisoned leader could be granted parole if he renounces violence and disbands his organization.

Abdullah Ocalan's group has been fighting for autonomy in southeast Turkey in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people since the 1980s. It is considered a terrorist group by Turkey and its Western allies.

The country's pro-Kurdish political party, which also condemned the TUSAS attack, noted that it had occurred at a time when the possibility of a dialogue to end the conflict had emerged.

Turkish media said the assailants arrived Wednesday at an entry to the TUSAS complex in a taxi. The assailants, carrying assault weapons, detonated an explosive device next to the taxi, causing panic and allowing them to enter.

One of the victims was identified as mechanical engineer Zahide Guclu, who had gone to the entrance to collect flowers sent by her husband, the state-run Anadolu Agency.

The taxi driver was also killed by the assailants and his body was found in the trunk of the vehicle, the agency reported.

Orhan Akdundar, a brother of a TUSAS employee, was among relatives waiting outside the complex for news of their loved ones.

"I called my brother who was inside and said, 'What happened?' He said a bomb had exploded and said that gunshots continued for a very long time," Akdundar said. "There was a huge commotion. The gendarmerie, special forces and other security forces were all here. There were lots of ambulances. Then the phones shut off and I wasn't able to establish communication."

An unidentified TUSAS employee shouted: "We will work harder and produce more in defiance of the traitors" as he and other colleagues were being evacuated from the premises, according to a video aired by HaberTurk.

Security camera images, aired on television, showed a man in plainclothes carrying a backpack and holding an assault rifle.

The interior minister said security teams were dispatched as soon as the attack started at around 3:30 p.m.

Multiple gunshots were heard after security forces entered the site, the DHA news agency and other media reported. Helicopters were seen flying above the premises.

Authorities issued a temporary blackout on the coverage of the attack and went on to throttle access to social media websites.

Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz said the target of the attack was Turkey's "success in the defense industry."

The Iraqi Embassy in Ankara issued a statement condemning the attack. It said the embassy "affirms Iraq's firm position in rejecting terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations, and expresses the solidarity of Iraq's government and people, with the government and people of the Republic of Turkey." Earlier this year, Iraq announced a ban on the PKK.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres both expressed their

solidarity with Turkey.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis also denounced the attack. "Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences go out to the families of the victims," he said on X.

## **Sweeping blackouts in Cuba raise the question: Why has the island's solar buildout been so slow?**

By ALEXA ST. JOHN, INGRID LOBET and ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba's large-scale blackouts that left 10 million people without power this month may not have happened if the government had built out more solar power to boost its failing electric grid as promised, some experts say.

In a nation with plentiful sunshine, Cuban officials have long had the opportunity to encourage solar power as one solution to national energy problems. But October's sweeping outages — the island's worst power failure in years — show little progress has been made.

"If you had extensive buildout of solar, solar farms, residential solar and storage, for the most part, you could avoid the problems they have," said Dan Whittle, associate vice president of the resilient Caribbean practice at the Environmental Defense Fund, an advocacy group. "But they haven't really built the policies to get there."

Cuban officials blame the blackouts on the U.S. trade embargo and other sanctions, the pandemic's effect on tourism, and emigration all inhibiting Cuba's economy.

But experts say the government hasn't updated its internal policies regarding foreign ownership and private financing, especially for critical solar projects, and are still focused on petroleum fuels. That's despite the fact that as part of the 2015 Paris Agreement, the Cuban government committed to 37% of its power coming from renewable energy by 2030, an ambitious increase from an initial 24% target.

John Kavulich, president of U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council Inc., said there was much hope in the business community two years ago when the U.S. changed policies enabling U.S. investment in private Cuban companies. But the Cuban government has failed to issue regulations necessary to allow the money to start flowing to the private sector, he said.

"So all of this investment and financing, not just from the U.S. but from other countries ... that are ready to take a chance in Cuba, sit idle, and that is hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars," he said.

The share of Cuba's electricity that comes from renewable sources like solar and burning sugar cane waste has increased only slightly, from 3.8% in 2012 to 5% as of 2022, according to research from the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia Law School and EDF. That's a very small change during a time when solar and wind have ramped up sharply globally and costs have come down.

Nearly all of the country's power — 95% — comes from burning fossil fuels. Much of that is from burning crude oil, a particularly polluting form of generation.

One of Cuba's biggest trading partners, China, makes 80% of the world's solar panels, according to the energy data and analytics firm Wood Mackenzie, and they are inexpensive. China committed in March to building 92 solar farms on the island that are expected to add more than 2,000 megawatts of energy, and reports in June said China donated three solar parks expected to add 1,000 more. But that trade relationship has not yet led to a buildout that would at least keep the lights on during the day. The whole country had only 252 megawatts of solar power at the end of 2022.

Kavulich said even China has its limits. The view of China's private sector, he said, is that Cuba "seems to make no effort whatsoever to pay money that it owes."

"The Cuban utility is the only buyer and it's a risky investment," said Whittle. European leaders tell him they "just can't in good faith encourage businesses in their countries to invest in Cuba."

Cuban officials acknowledged in recent days that more widespread solar power would have helped alleviate some of the misery from the recent outages. The minister of energy and head of the nation's electric utility encouraged Cubans to buy rooftop solar systems paired with batteries, instead of the gas and diesel generators purchased by Cubans who can afford them.

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"We are thinking about" some regulations that would stimulate these solar purchases, the chief of the nation's electric utility, Alfredo López, said.

Cuba has struggled with frequent power outages for decades. Besides the U.S. economic embargo, officials have cited aging and insufficiently maintained power plants, increased demand for air conditioning and a lack of fuel for the lack of electricity. The nation relies on imported fuel to meet electric needs, including from oil-rich ally Venezuela, Mexico and Russia.

This month's crisis, which shut down institutions including schools, closed gas stations and left people cooking their food on wood stoves on the streets, began with one of the island's major power plants failing.

Human-driven climate change has contributed to extreme weather events that also regularly affect Cuba's electrical grid. Desperation over the inability to carry out basic activities has sparked recent street protests.

Whittle noted the country has no shortage of good climate scientists. Korey Silverman-Roati, senior fellow of carbon management and negative emissions at the Sabin Center, said the Cuban government is trying. "There certainly has been a will and attempts to build out renewable energy infrastructure," he said. "It just hasn't happened."

On the island, technicians are working to install 26 solar projects in different provinces, López told official media last week.

Installations will ramp up fivefold over the next decade, said Lídice Vaillant, head of the Photovoltaic Research Laboratory at the University of Havana.

Besides the strong sunlight, there is another way that Cuba is a good candidate for solar. A significant share of its electricity comes from smaller power plants distributed around the country. Solar could be added or switched out in those locations. But it hasn't happened yet.

"There is still sort of this, I think, this lingering belief at the highest levels of government that, you know, fossil fuels is really the best solution," Whittle said.

## Angelenos mourn Mexican-born pitcher Fernando Valenzuela, who starred for the Dodgers in the 1980s

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Julia Mendez carefully positioned three candles in a row under a sign welcoming fans to Dodger Stadium. Then she pulled out a foil-wrapped burrito and rested it against the post.

"I know he ate a burrito all his life," said the 70-year-old fan from North Hollywood who had stuffed the flour tortilla with nopales and scrambled eggs in her kitchen.

The city of Los Angeles was mourning Wednesday for Mexican-born Fernando Valenzuela, the Dodgers pitcher who inspired "Fernandomania" with his unique delivery and dominant pitching performances in the early 1980s.

He died Tuesday night at age 63.

"I came here to the United States in 1976. He came in 1979. That's when all my pride and joy began," said Mendez, from the same Mexican state of Sonora as Valenzuela. "He put our names so high around the world, all the community became fans. My love for so many years."

Valenzuela's rise from humble beginnings as the youngest of 12 children in Mexico and his feats on the mound made him hugely popular and influential in Los Angeles' Latino community while helping attract new fans to Major League Baseball. Their fondness for him continued after his retirement.

Across the intersection, the ensemble Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuéllar played their guitars and trumpets.

The group frequently performs at Dodger games and was gathered for a scheduled television interview ahead of the World Series against the New York Yankees. They stuck around to pay their musical respects to the man nicknamed "El Toro."

Major League Baseball and the Dodgers were working on a plan to honor Valenzuela before Friday's Game 1 of the World Series.

On the left corner of the blue-and-white sign hung a large sombrero and a colorful serape. Mendez had

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added white butterfly wings above the second 'D' in Dodger. The sign was a similarly emotional gathering place in 2022 when Dodgers Hall of Fame broadcaster Vin Scully died at 94.

Henry Gomez of Gardena brought his 6-year-old daughter, Tianna, to the growing memorial outside the closed stadium. She carried a souvenir street sign that she and her father had written on and planned to leave.

"He's one of the Hispanic idols for us," the elder Gomez said. "He opened a lot of doors for a lot of people behind him. We're proud from that."

In the Boyle Heights neighborhood not far from the stadium, Robert Vargas was busy painting a mural of Valenzuela on the side of a building. The artist of Mexican descent is known for his large-scale works at outdoor locations around the world. His mural of Dodgers superstar Shohei Ohtani on the side of a Little Tokyo hotel has become a tourist attraction.

Back at the stadium, three men stood in the shade swapping stories about Valenzuela's exploits on the mound.

Gomez had a chance to shake hands with Valenzuela a couple times over the years.

"He was really cool, a good guy," he said. "When you're famous, that's the way to be, like Fernando's way."

Fans had been gathering outside the stadium since the sad news broke late Tuesday.

Marcello Ambriz showed off a photo of him as a 2-year-old with the pitcher.

"Mexicans wouldn't be Dodger fans without Fernando," he said.

The land on which Dodger Stadium sits was purchased from Spanish-speaking homeowners in the early 1950s by the city of Los Angeles. Initially, they refused to sell and the city used eminent domain to acquire the property from the tight-knit Mexican-American families, many of whom lived there after being discriminated against in other parts of the city.

"There's a lot of very sad sentiments about that," Ambriz said. "Fernando was able to somehow mend that. Obviously today there's a lot of people who are hurt and can't let that go, and that's understandable, but Fernando's presence and him being from Mexico was able to unite that."

Valenzuela would have turned 64 on Nov. 1, when the Dodgers could potentially host Game 6 of the World Series. Next Friday is also Dia de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, in Mexican culture when deceased loved ones are honored.

"There's no reason to be sad because he live always forever in our hearts," Mendez said. "He accomplished the American dream, more than the American dream really."

## Election officials are fighting a tsunami of voting conspiracy theories

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Voting machines reversing votes. More voters registered than people eligible. Large numbers of noncitizens voting.

With less than two weeks before Election Day, a resurgence in conspiracy theories and misinformation about voting is forcing state and local election officials to spend their time debunking rumors and explaining how elections are run at the same time they're overseeing early voting and preparing for Nov. 5.

"Truth is boring, facts are boring, and outrage is really interesting," says Utah's Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson, a Republican who oversees elections in her state. "It's like playing whack-a-mole with truth. But what we try to do is just get as much information out there as possible."

This year's election is the first presidential contest since former President Donald Trump began spreading lies about widespread voter fraud costing him reelection in 2020. The false claims, which he continues to repeat, have undermined public confidence in elections and in the people who oversee them among a broad swath of Republican voters. Investigations have found no widespread fraud or manipulation of voting machines four years ago, and each of the battlegrounds states where Trump disputed his loss has affirmed Democrat Joe Biden's win.

In the past week, U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene claimed a voting machine had changed a voter's



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ballot in her Georgia district during early voting, and Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of the social media platform X, has promoted various conspiracy theories about voting machines and voter fraud both online and at a rally for Trump in Pennsylvania.

The floodgates are "very much" open, said David Becker, a former U.S. Justice Department lawyer who now leads the Center for Election Innovation and Research, a nonpartisan group that works with state and local election officials.

"This is making election officials' lives much more difficult," he said.

Eric Olsen, who oversees elections in Prince William County, Virginia, said combatting misinformation has become an important and challenging part of the job.

"It's really difficult from our position, a lot of times, because social media feels like a giant wave coming at you and we're in a little canoe with a paddle," he said. "But we have to do that work."

On the campaign trail, Trump has repeatedly attempted to sow doubt about the upcoming election – something he did ahead of his two previous bids for the White House. Even after he won in 2016, he claimed he had lost the popular vote because of a flood of illegal votes and he formed a presidential advisory commission to investigate. The commission disbanded without finding any widespread fraud.

This year, Trump claims that Democrats will cheat again and uses "Too Big to Rig" as a rallying cry to encourage his supporters to vote. Election experts see it as laying the groundwork to again challenge the election should he lose.

Spreading bogus accusations about elections has other consequences. It's already led to a wave of harassment, threats and turnover of election workers as well as the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

The conspiracy theories that have surfaced in recent weeks are not new. There have long been claims of "vote flipping," with the most recent ones surfacing in Georgia and Tennessee.

A claim in Georgia's Whitfield County was highlighted by Greene on Alex Jones' "InfoWars" show. Jones has a history of spreading falsehoods and was ordered to pay \$1.5 billion for his false claims that the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school massacre was a hoax.

County election officials issued a statement, noting the case involved one voter out of 6,000 ballots that had been cast since early voting began. The ballot was spoiled, and the voter cast a replacement that was counted. Officials said there was no problem with the voting machine.

Gabriel Sterling, chief operating officer for the Georgia secretary of state's office, said every report they've seen so far of someone saying their printed ballot didn't reflect their selections on the touchscreen voting machine has been a result of voter error.

"There is zero evidence of a machine flipping an individual's vote," he said. "Are there elderly people whose hands shake and they probably hit the wrong button slightly and they didn't review their ballot properly before they printed it? That's the main situation we have seen. There is literally zero -- and I'm saying this to certain congresspeople in this state -- zero evidence of machines flipping votes. That claim was a lie in 2020 and it's a lie now."

In Shelby County, Tennessee, county election officials said human error was to blame for reports of votes being changed. Voters had been using their fingers instead of a stylus to mark their selections on voting machines, officials said.

In Washington state, Republican Jerrod Sessler, who is running for the state's 4th Congressional District seat, shared a video on social media this week that claimed to show how easily fraudulent ballots can be created. But the video did not make clear that voter information on each ballot is checked against the state's voter list.

"A ballot returned using fake voter registration information would not be counted and is illegal in Washington state," Charlie Boisner, a spokesperson for the Secretary of State's Office, said in an email.

Musk recently invoked Dominion Voting Systems as part of his remarks at a rally in Pennsylvania, seeming to suggest its equipment was not trustworthy. Dominion has been at the center of conspiracy theories related to the 2020 election and settled its defamation lawsuit against Fox News last year for \$787 million over false claims aired repeatedly on the network. The judge in the case said it was "CRYSTAL clear" that

none of the allegations made by Trump allies on the network were true.

In a statement, Dominion said it was "closely monitoring claims around the Nov. 2024 election" and was "fully prepared to defend our company & our customers against lies and those who spread them."

A request for comment from Musk was not immediately returned.

Musk, who has endorsed Trump, has repeatedly pushed misinformation about voter fraud to his 200 million followers on the X platform, where false information spreads largely unchecked.

He has often sparred online with Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. Recently, the two tangled over Musk's claim that there were more registered voters in Michigan, a presidential battleground state, than people eligible to vote. Benson said Musk was including in his count inactive voters who are scheduled for removal. A federal judge on Tuesday tossed out a lawsuit filed by the Republican National Committee claiming problems with the state's voter list.

During an interview last month, Benson said she was disheartened to see someone in Musk's position repeating false information.

"If he was sincerely committed, as he says he is, to ensuring people have access to information, then I would hope that he would amplify the truthful information -- the factual, accurate information -- about the security of our elections instead of just amplifying conspiracy theories and in a way that directs the ire of many of his followers onto us as individual election administrators," Benson said. "It's something that we didn't have to deal with in 2020 that creates a new battlefield and challenge for us."

## **Fernando Valenzuela, Mexican-born pitcher whose feats for Dodgers fueled 'Fernandomania,' dies at 63**

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Fernando Valenzuela, the Mexican-born phenom for the Los Angeles Dodgers who inspired "Fernandomania" while winning the NL Cy Young Award and Rookie of the Year in 1981, has died. He was 63.

The team said he died Tuesday night at a Los Angeles hospital but did not provide the cause or other details.

His death comes as the Dodgers prepare to open the World Series on Friday night at home against the New York Yankees. Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said Valenzuela would be honored during the series at Dodger Stadium.

Valenzuela left his color commentator job on the Dodgers' Spanish-language television broadcast in September without explanation. He was reported to have been hospitalized earlier this month. His job kept him as a regular at Dodger Stadium, where he held court in the press box dining room before games and remained popular with fans who sought him out for photos and autographs.

"God bless Fernando Valenzuela!" actor and Dodgers fan Danny Trejo posted on X.

Valenzuela was one of the most dominant players of his era and a wildly popular figure in the 1980s, although he was never elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. However, he is part of Cooperstown, which features several artifacts including a signed ball from his no-hitter in 1990.

"He is one of the most influential Dodgers ever and belongs on the Mount Rushmore of franchise heroes," Stan Kasten, team president and CEO, said in a statement. "He galvanized the fan base with the Fernandomania season of 1981 and has remained close to our hearts ever since, not only as a player but also as a broadcaster. He has left us all too soon."

Valenzuela's rise from humble beginnings as the youngest of 12 children in Mexico and his feats on the mound made him hugely popular and influential in Los Angeles' Latino community while helping attract new fans to Major League Baseball. Their fondness for him continued after his retirement.

"63 is way too young.... A piece of my childhood is gone," actor and "Access Hollywood" co-host Mario Lopez posted on X. "Growing up as a Mexican kid one of the main reasons I'm a Dodgers fan is because of Fernando. ... Not only a great player, but a great man to the community. What a legend."

Eva Torres, who is originally from Mexico City, drove from Anaheim to look at murals of Valenzuela on

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Sunset Boulevard near Dodgers Stadium.

"I wasn't a fan of baseball, but I am a fan of his," she said. "He's like me: an immigrant that came here to do great things."

In 1981, Valenzuela became the Dodgers' opening day starter as a rookie after Jerry Reuss was injured 24 hours before his scheduled start. He shut out the Houston Astros 2-0 and began the season 8-0 with five shutouts and an ERA of 0.50. He became the first player to win a Cy Young and Rookie of the Year in the same season.

His performances created the delirium known as "Fernandomania" among Dodgers fans. The ABBA hit "Fernando" would play as he warmed up on the mound.

"Fernando Valenzuela was a true icon of the Dodgers and the game," U.S. Rep. Jimmy Gomez, D-Calif., posted on X. "His legacy and connection with the Latino community in LA is one of the reasons I fell in love with the Dodgers."

Valenzuela was 13-7 and had a 2.48 ERA in his first season, which was shortened by a players' strike.

He was an All-Star selection every year from 1981-86, when he recorded 97 victories, 84 complete games, 1,258 strikeouts and a 2.97 ERA. He was 5-1 with a 2.00 ERA in eight postseason starts. He earned two Silver Slugger Awards and a Gold Glove.

Valenzuela's no-hitter on June 29, 1990, a 6-0 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals, was an emotional career highlight. He struck out seven and walked three.

"If you have a sombrero, throw it to the sky!" Hall of Fame broadcaster Vin Scully exclaimed in his game call.

Nicknamed "El Toro" by the fans, Valenzuela had an unorthodox and memorable pitching motion that included looking skyward at the apex of each windup. His repertoire included a screwball — making him one of the few pitchers of his era who threw that pitch regularly. It was taught to him by teammate Bobby Castillo after the Dodgers felt Valenzuela, who wasn't known as a hard thrower, needed another pitch.

Early in his Dodgers career, Valenzuela spoke little English and had trouble communicating with his catchers. Rookie Mike Scioscia learned Spanish and became Valenzuela's personal catcher before becoming the team's full-time catcher.

Valenzuela was a better-than-average hitter, with 10 career home runs.

Eventually, his pitching was compromised by nagging shoulder problems that kept him out of the 1988 postseason, when the Dodgers won the World Series.

The team released Valenzuela just before the 1991 season. He also pitched for the former California Angels, Baltimore Orioles, Philadelphia Phillies, San Diego Padres and St. Louis Cardinals.

He retired in 1997, going 173-153 with a 3.54 ERA in 17 seasons, the all-time major league leader in wins and strikeouts (2,074) by a Mexican-born player. In 11 seasons with the Dodgers, he was 141-116 with a 3.31 ERA.

After retiring from MLB, Valenzuela remained active in Mexico's winter league. He played for the Águilas de Mexicali in the Pacific League until he was 44. He retired on Dec. 20, 2006.

"We regret the passing of a Mexican baseball legend, his legacy will remain forever in our league and in the heart of our fans," the league said in a statement.

The baseball summer league as well other sports entities in Mexico, including the Mexican Soccer Federation and the National Sports Commission, also mourned his death.

"I think we, all Mexicans, are sad for the Valenzuela loss, and we express our solidarity with his family," new Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said at her daily news conference.

Valenzuela is not only considered Mexico's greatest baseball player, but he also is widely considered one of its top three athletes of all time, along with soccer player Hugo Sánchez and boxer Julio César Chávez.

"It's a sad night. The news has shocked me, my soul and my spirit, it's a tremendous loss," said Sánchez, now a sports analyst for ESPN. "He was a symbol for Mexican sports during a historic moment."

Valenzuela's rise from his tiny hometown of Etchohuaquila in the Mexican state of Sonora to stardom in the U.S. was improbable. He was the youngest child in a large family who tagged along when his older brothers played baseball.

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He signed his first pro contract at age 16, and soon began overpowering older players in the Mexican Central League.

In 1978, legendary Dodgers scout Mike Brito was in Mexico to watch a shortstop when Valenzuela entered the game as a reliever. He immediately commanded Brito's attention and at age 18, Valenzuela signed with the Dodgers in 1979. He was sent to the California League that same year.

In 1980, Valenzuela was called up to the Dodgers in September and soon made his big league debut as a reliever.

He remains the only pitcher in MLB history to win the Cy Young and Rookie of the Year awards in the same season. The left-hander was the National League's starting pitcher in the All-Star Game in 1981, the same year the Dodgers won the World Series.

During his career, he made the cover of Sports Illustrated and visited the White House.

In 2003, Valenzuela returned to the Dodgers as the Spanish-language radio color commentator for NL games. Twelve years later, he switched to the color commentator job on the team's Spanish-language TV feed.

"He consistently supported the growth of the game through the World Baseball Classic and at MLB events across his home country," Manfred said in a statement. "As a member of the Dodger broadcasting team for more than 20 years, Fernando helped to reach a new generation of fans and cultivate their love of the game. Fernando will always remain a beloved figure in Dodger history and a special source of pride for the millions of Latino fans he inspired."

He was inducted into the Mexican Professional Baseball Hall of Fame in 2014. Five years later, the Mexican League retired Valenzuela's No. 34 jersey. The Dodgers followed in 2023 after keeping his number out of circulation since he last pitched for the team in 1991. The team has a rule that requires a player to be in the Baseball Hall of Fame before the Dodgers retire his number, but they made an exception for Valenzuela.

The Dodgers named Valenzuela as part of the "Legends of Dodger Baseball" in 2019 and inducted him into the team's Ring of Honor in 2023.

He became a U.S. citizen in 2015.

Valenzuela served on the coaching staff for Mexico during the World Baseball Classic in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2017. He was a part-owner of the Mexican League team Tigres de Quintana Roo, with son Fernando Jr. serving as team president and son Ricky serving as general manager. Fernando Jr. played in the San Diego Padres and Chicago White Sox organizations as a first baseman.

"To talk about Mexican baseball is to talk about Fernando Valenzuela. Thank you for putting Mexico's name high," Baseball's National Teams Committee said on X. "We join the Valenzuela Burgos family in their sorrow."

In addition to his sons, he is survived by his wife, Linda, who was a schoolteacher from Mexico whom he married in 1981, and daughters Linda and Maria as well as seven grandchildren.

## Sensational mass trial shines a dark light on rape culture in France

By DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

AVIGNON, France (AP) — They are, on the face of it, the most ordinary of men. Yet they're all on trial charged with rape. Fathers, grandfathers, husbands, workers and retirees — 50 in all — accused of taking turns on the drugged and inert body of Gisèle Pelicot while her husband recorded the horror for his swelling private video library.

The harrowing and unprecedented trial in France is exposing how pornography, chatrooms and men's disdain for or hazy understanding of consent is fueling rape culture. The horror isn't simply that Dominique Pelicot, in his own words, arranged for men to rape his wife, it's that he also had no difficulty finding dozens of them to take part.

Among the nearly two dozen defendants who testified during the trial's first seven weeks was Ahmed T. — French defendants' full last names are generally withheld until conviction. The married plumber with three kids and five grandchildren said he wasn't particularly alarmed that Pelicot wasn't moving when he

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visited her and her now-ex-husband's house in the small Provence town of Mazan in 2019.

It reminded him of porn he had watched featuring women who "pretend to be asleep and don't react," he said.

Like him, many other defendants told the court that they couldn't have imagined that Dominique Pelicot was drugging his wife, and that they were told she was a willing participant acting out a kinky fantasy. Dominique Pelicot denied this, telling the court his co-defendants knew exactly what the situation was.

For the first time since early in the trial, Gisèle Pelicot spoke Wednesday about her husband's "immeasurable" betrayal, and expressed sympathy for the wives, mothers and sisters of his 50 co-defendants, French media reported.

"I always wanted to pull you up, toward the light," she said, addressing her ex-husband. "You have chosen the depths of the human soul."

Céline Piques, a spokesperson of the feminist group Osez le Féminisme!, or Dare Feminism! said she's convinced that many of the men on trial were inspired or perverted by porn, including videos found on popular websites. Although some sites have started cracking down on search terms such as "unconscious," hundreds of videos of men having sex with seemingly passed out women can be found online, she said.

Piques was particularly struck by the testimony of a tech expert at the trial who had found the search terms "asleep porn" on Dominique Pelicot's computer.

Last year, French authorities registered 114,000 victims of sexual violence, including more than 25,000 reported rapes. But experts say most rapes go unreported due to a lack of tangible evidence: About 80% of women don't press charges, and 80% of the ones who do see their case dropped before it is investigated.

In stark contrast, the trial has been unique in its scope, nature and openness to the public at the victim's insistence.

After a store security guard caught Pelicot shooting video up unsuspecting women's skirts in 2020, police searched his home and found thousands of pornographic photos and videos on his phone, laptop and USB stick. Dominique Pelicot later said he had recorded and stored the sexual encounters of each of his guests, and neatly organized them in separate files.

Among those he had over was Mahdi D., who testified that when he left home on the night of Oct. 5, 2018, he didn't intend to rape anyone.

"I thought she was asleep," the 36-year-old transportation worker told the panel of five judges, referring to Gisèle Pelicot, who has attended nearly every day of the trial and has become a hero to many sexual abuse victims for insisting that it be public.

"I grant you that you did not leave with the intention of raping anyone," the prosecutor told him. "But there in the room, it was you."

Like a few of the other men accused of raping Pelicot between 2011 and 2020, Mahdi D. acknowledged almost all of the facts presented against him. And he expressed remorse, telling the judges, "She is a victim. We can't imagine what she went through. She was destroyed."

But he wouldn't call it rape, even if admitting that it was might get him a lighter sentence. That led prosecutors to ask the court to screen the graphic videos of Mahdi D.'s visit to the Pelicot home.

In June, authorities took down the chatroom where they say Dominique Pelicot and his co-defendants met. Since the trial started on Sept. 2, it has resonated far beyond the Avignon courtroom's walls, sparking protests in French cities big and small and inspiring a steady flow of opinion pieces and open letters penned by journalists, philosophers and activists.

It has also drawn curious visitors to the city in southeastern France, such as Florence Nack, her husband and 23-year-old daughter, who made the trip from Switzerland to witness the "historical trial."

Nack, who noted that she, too, was a victim of sexual violence, said she was disturbed by the testimony of 43-year-old trucker Cyprien C., a defendant who spoke that day in court.

Asked by the head judge, Roger Arata, whether he recognized the facts, Cyprien C. answered that he "did not contest the sexual act."

"And the rape?" Arata pressed. The defendant stood silently before eventually responding, "I can't answer." Arata then began to describe what was on the videos implicating him. They are only shown as a last

resort and on a case-by-case basis. But for many in the courtroom, such detailed descriptions can last several minutes and be just as heavy as watching them. Gisèle Pelicot, who is in her early 70s, has chosen to remain in the courtroom while the videos are shown. Unable to watch, she usually closes her eyes, stares at the floor, or buries her face in her hands.

Experts and groups working to combat sexual violence say the defendants' unwillingness or inability to admit to rape speaks loudly to taboos and stereotypes that persist in French society.

For Magali Lafourcade, a judge and general secretary of the National Consultative Commission of Human Rights who isn't involved in the trial, popular culture has given people the wrong idea about what rapists look like and how they operate.

"It's the idea of a hooded man with a knife whom you don't know and is waiting for you in a place that is not a private place," she said, noting that this "is miles away from the sociological, criminological reality of rape."

Two-thirds of rapes take place at private homes, and in a vast majority of cases, victims know their rapists, Lafourcade said.

It can be difficult at times to reconcile the facts with the personalities of the accused — described by loved ones as loving, generous and considerate companions, brothers and fathers.

Cyril B.'s tearful older sister told the court: "It's my brother, I love him. He's not a mean person." His partner insisted that he isn't "macho" and that he had never forced her to do anything sexually that she wasn't comfortable with.

Although Lafourcade doesn't believe "all men are rapists," as some believe the trial shows, she said that unlike the #MeToo accusations that have ensnared French celebrities, the Pelicot case "makes us understand that in fact rapists could be everyone."

"For once, they're not monsters — they're not serial killers on the margin of society. They are men who resemble those we love," she said. "In this sense, there is something revolutionary."

## **As coal plants shut in Romania, some miners transition to green energy while others are reluctant**

By ANCA GURZU, Cipher News undefined

PETRILA, Romania (AP) — For many years, Sebastian Tirintică worked in a coal mine, just like his father and grandfather before him.

These days, Tirintică, now 38, is largely surrounded by solar panels and wind turbines as he travels across Romania to train former coal workers and others for jobs in renewable energies.

It's been a huge professional shift for a worker from one of the main coal regions of this formerly Communist Eastern European country.

"It's hard to unglue yourself from something you did your entire life," said Tirintică, who has a short beard sprinkled with grey hair. "It's hard to start again from zero, and not everyone has the strength and courage to do it."

Romania hopes to find more workers like Tirintică, but they are hard to come by.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This story is a collaboration between The Associated Press and Cipher News.

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In a region where coal mining was once a driving economic force, coal miners are witnessing a slow and steady decline of a decades-old industry as Romania prepares to phase out all coal-based activities by 2032.

However, not many miners have taken the leap to equip themselves with new skills, even when presented with opportunities, as tradition, uncertainty and fear keep people wedded to what they know. This is sometimes one of the largest challenges of the green energy transition: changing hearts and minds.

For that to happen, coal workers need incentives and guarantees, which experts say do not exist. The lack of a targeted strategy, mixed political messages and distrust are some of the main barriers for trans-

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forming regions that have long depended on coal.

Tirintică initially hesitated to make the jump. He was one of 10 miners who could have received free training and a job as a wind turbine installer as part of a pilot project in 2019. He declined because it would have taken him to Germany and away from his wife and two daughters.

Today, he said he is the only one of those original 10 who had left the coal industry. He did so in 2022 after having gone through two reskilling courses the year before, totalling about a month. Tirintică learned the basics of how to install solar panels on different surfaces and how to fix wind turbines, including first aid procedures and how to deal with heights. He later took additional specialized courses to train others in gaining new skills.

Romania, a European Union member country of about 19 million people, is known for its medieval castles in the region of Transylvania. The country has a flourishing information technology and software services sector, along with a good manufacturing and agricultural base. Yet unemployment in rural areas, corruption and bureaucracy are challenges. Millions have left in recent years in search of better economic opportunities.

A shift to a greener economy is also upending the country's energy sector, adding to the reluctance of some miners to embrace change amid an uncertain future.

Workers at the Oltenia Energy Complex (CE Oltenia), one of Romania's largest energy companies primarily involved in coal-based energy production in the southwestern county of Gorj, had the chance earlier this year to pursue an 18-day course to become an accredited installer of solar photovoltaic panels.

This summer, about 100 people completed the course provided by RenewAcad, a reskilling program spearheaded by renewable energy company Monsson and sponsored by energy major OMV Petrom.

Although a success for the project, the number represents only about 1.3% of CE Oltenia's workforce of about 8,000 employees across the company's mines and coal-based power plants.

In 2021, the RenewAcad project targeted a group of 800 coal-based workers for reskilling as solar panel and wind turbine installers. But the search for applicants had to be broadened to other parts of the country because the sign-up rates from the mining regions wasn't high enough.

"Grandpa, great-grandpa worked in the mine, what will the neighbor say if I leave the industry?" said Sebastian Enache, business development manager at Monsson, who is overseeing the project, explaining the reluctance of many coal miners.

The average monthly salary for a coal miner is around 800 to 1000 euros, locals say, but can also be higher for those working in power plants or with more education. Entry level salaries for solar panel installers are similar but often involve traveling across the country or abroad, making the switch less attractive.

Workers who participated in the Romanian training had to take time off or do the almost four-week course between their shifts, which was a disincentive.

"You can imagine the interest would have been much higher if people didn't have to take vacation for it," said Ciprian Nacu, 39, chief engineer at one of the main power plants in the region, who enjoyed the solar installer course after initially hesitating. He also runs a small lighting company and wants to slowly expand it towards PV installations.

The reskilling course is set to start again in November.

Locals worry that the closure of coal-based activities will bring poverty to their areas, which neighboring regions experienced as hundreds of mines started to close after the fall of Communism in the 1990s.

"We are not connected to any European road, we don't have a highway, who is going to come here and make something new?" said Constantin Buzarin, vice president at Ecocivica Gorj, a local nonprofit.

The renewables sector is expected to create thousands of jobs, but they will likely be spread across the country and appeal to people with different professional backgrounds.

Gorj County's troubles reflect the struggles many regions across Europe and the United States encounter as coal phase-out plans continue and decarbonization efforts gain momentum. Failure to ensure reskilling and economic opportunities for former fossil fuel workers could lead to inequalities, according to a recent labor market report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Romania received 2.14 billion euros through the EU's Just Transition Fund, set up to help transform European regions that historically have focused on fossil fuel production. Gorj County received the highest share, 550 million euros, which is set to gradually go to a series of programs through 2027, including one to reskill coal workers, according to the European Commission.

Although Romania's coal industry is on its way out, the topic remains politically sensitive, especially ahead of the parliamentary elections set to take place on Dec. 1, as the mining community still represents a powerful voting bloc.

"There is no political vision that can show people the light at the end of the tunnel," said Eliza Barnea from CEE Bankwatch Network, a climate-focused nonprofit.

Alin Şipanu, Gorj County council representative working on the energy transition, sees some progress, however. At the launch of the reskilling project earlier this year, workers who showed up were curious about what they could learn. A few years ago, when the energy transition talk started popping up in the region, workers were outwardly hostile.

"Four years ago, the topic was taboo," Şipanu said. "You would have seen tomatoes flying."

## Floods in Philippines kill at least 9 and trap others on roofs as storm approaches

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Torrential rain set off by an approaching tropical storm swamped the eastern Philippines with widespread flooding that killed at least nine people, trapped others on their roofs and sparked frantic appeals for help, officials said Wednesday.

The government shut down public schools and government offices — except those urgently needed for disaster response — on the entire main island of Luzon to protect millions of people as Tropical Storm Trami blew closer from the Pacific.

At least nine people died in five northeastern provinces and in the hard-hit city of Naga before the storm's expected landfall on the northeastern Philippine coast. Most of the deaths were caused by drowning and landslides, police and local officials said, adding that about seven were missing.

"People have been stuck on roofs of their houses for several hours now," former Vice President Leni Robredo, who lives in the northeastern city of Naga, said in a post on Facebook early Wednesday. "Many of our rescue trucks have stalled due to the floods."

Coast guard personnel have been rescuing residents in flooded villages in the eastern provinces of Sorsogon, Albay, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes and outlying regions since Tuesday, but provincial authorities said the number of rescue boats and personnel was not enough.

The storm was last tracked about 175 kilometers (109 miles) east of Echague town in the province of Isabela. It had strengthened with sustained winds of 95 kph (59 mph) per hour and gusts of up to 115 kph (71 mph).

The storm was forecast to hit Isabela's coast Wednesday night to early Thursday, then barrel across northern Luzon before exiting to the South China Sea late Thursday.

Its wide rain band could dump up to 20 centimeters (8 inches) of rainwater in one day of intense downpours in the most vulnerable provinces on its path, according to state forecasters.

Thousands of villagers have evacuated to emergency shelters in northeastern provinces. Storm warnings were raised in more than 30 northern and central provinces, including in the densely populated capital of Manila, which was not in the storm's direct path but could be lashed by its pounding rains.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. canceled all his appointments Wednesday and convened an emergency meeting to discuss disaster mitigation efforts, Communications Secretary Cesar Chavez said.

"The worst is yet to come, I'm afraid, so let's all prepare," Marcos said.

During the meeting, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said the military's aircraft and ships would be used for evacuations and disaster response. He said additional airlift power could be provided by friendly



countries, including Singapore, if needed.

Thousands of passengers and cargo workers were stranded in several seaports after the coast guard said it suspended inter-island ferry services and barred fishing boats from venturing into the increasingly rough seas.

"We need national intervention," Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte of Camarines Sur province told DZRH radio network, saying his flood-prone province has about 50 rescue boats but needs about 200.

In Quezon province, Gov. Angelina Tan said floods in some areas reached up to 3 meters (nearly 10 feet) and at least 8,000 villagers have evacuated.

About 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines each year. The archipelago also lies in the "Pacific Ring of Fire," a region along most of the Pacific Ocean rim where many volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur, making the Southeast Asian nation one of the world's most disaster-prone.

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest recorded tropical cyclones in the world, left more than 7,300 people dead or missing, flattened entire villages, swept ships inland and displaced more than 5 million in the central Philippines.

## LeBron and Bronny James make history as the NBA's first father-son duo to play together

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James gave his 20-year-old son a pep talk before they rose from the Lakers bench. Amid rising cheers, they walked together to the scorer's table — and then they stepped straight into basketball history.

LeBron and Bronny became the first father and son to play in the NBA together Tuesday night during the Los Angeles Lakers' season opener, fulfilling a dream set out a few years ago by LeBron, the top scorer in league history.

"That moment, us being at the scorer's table together and checking in together, it's a moment I'm never going to forget," LeBron said. "No matter how old I get, no matter how my memory may fade as I get older or whatever, I will never forget that moment."

Father and son checked into the game against Minnesota simultaneously with four minutes left in the second quarter, prompting a big ovation from a home crowd aware of the enormity of the milestone. The 39-year-old LeBron had already started the game and played 13 minutes before he teamed up with his 20-year-old son for about 2 1/2 minutes of action.

LeBron James is one of the greatest players in NBA history, a four-time champion and 20-time All-Star, while LeBron James Jr. was a second-round pick by the Lakers last summer. They are the first father and son to play in the world's top basketball league at the same time, let alone on the same team.

"Y'all ready? You see the intensity, right? Just play carefree, though," father told son on the bench before they checked in, an exchange captured by the TNT cameras and microphones. "Don't worry about mistakes. Just go out and play hard."

Their time on court together was fast and furious, just as LeBron promised.

LeBron, who finished the night with 16 points, missed two perimeter shots before making a dunk. Bronny had an early offensive rebound and missed a tip-in, and his first NBA jump shot moments later was a 3-pointer that came up just short. He checked out one possession later with 1:19 left in the second quarter, getting another ovation.

Bronny didn't play again in the Lakers' 110-103 victory over the Timberwolves.

"(I) tried not to focus on everything that's going on around me, and tried to focus on going in as a rookie and not trying to mess up," Bronny said. "But yeah, I totally did feel the energy, and I appreciate Laker Nation for showing the support for me and my dad."

After the final whistle on the Lakers' first opening-night victory in LeBron's seven seasons with the team, father and son also headed to the locker room together — but not before stopping in the tunnel to hug

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Savannah James, LeBron's wife and Bronny's mother. The entire family was in attendance to watch history — on little sister Zhuri's 10th birthday, no less.

Ken Griffey Sr. and Ken Griffey Jr. also were courtside at the Lakers' downtown arena to witness the same history they made in Major League Baseball. The two sluggers played 51 games together for the Seattle Mariners in 1990 and 1991 as baseball's first father-son duo.

The Jameses and the Griffeyes met during pregame warmups for some photos and a warm chat between two remarkable family lines.

LeBron first spoke about his dream to play alongside Bronny a few years ago, while his oldest son was still in high school. The dream became real after Bronny entered the draft as a teenager following one collegiate season, and the Lakers grabbed him with the 55th overall pick.

"I talked about it years and years ago, and for this moment to come, it's pretty cool," LeBron said. "I don't know if it's going to actually hit the both of us for a little minute, but when we really get to sit back and take it in, it's pretty crazy. ... But in the moment, we still had a job to do when we checked in. We wasn't trying to make it a circus. We wasn't trying to make it about us. We wanted to make it about the team."

LeBron and Bronny joined a small club of father-son professional athletes who played together. The Griffeyes made history 34 years ago, and they even homered in the same game on Sept. 14, 1990.

Baseball Hall of Famer Tim Lincecum and his namesake son also accomplished the feat with the Baltimore Orioles in 2001.

In hockey, Gordie Howe played alongside his two sons, Mark and Marty, with the WHA's Houston Aeros and Team Canada before one NHL season together on the Hartford Whalers in 1979-80, when Gordie was 51.

While the other family pairings on this list happened late in the fathers' careers, LeBron shows no signs of slowing down or regressing as he begins his NBA record-tying 22nd season.

LeBron averaged more than 25 points per game last year for his 20th consecutive season, and he remains the most important player on the Lakers alongside Anthony Davis as they attempt to recapture the form that won a championship in 2020 and got them to the Western Conference finals in 2023.

Bronny survived cardiac arrest and open heart surgery in the summer of 2023, and he went on to play a truncated freshman season at the University of Southern California. He declared for the draft anyway, and the Lakers eagerly used the fourth-to-last pick in the draft on the 6-foot-2 guard.

LeBron spent the summer in Europe with the gold medal-winning U.S. team at the Paris Olympics, while Bronny played for the Lakers in summer league. They started practicing together with the Lakers before training camp.

The duo first played together in the preseason, logging four minutes during a game against Phoenix just outside Palm Springs earlier this month.

"It's been a treat," LeBron said at Tuesday's morning shootaround. "In preseason, the practices, just every day ... bringing him up to speed of what this professional life is all about, and how to prepare every day as a professional."

The Lakers were fully aware of the history they would make with this pairing, and coach JJ Redick spoke with the Jameses recently about a plan to make it happen early in the regular season.

The presence of the Griffeyes likely made it an inevitability for opening night, even though Redick said the Lakers still wanted it "to happen naturally, in the flow of the game."

The Lakers have declined to speculate on how long Bronny will stay on their NBA roster. Los Angeles already has three other small guards on its roster, and Bronny likely needs regular playing time to raise his game to a consistent NBA standard.

Those factors add up to indicate Bronny is likely to join the affiliate South Bay Lakers of the G League at some point soon. LeBron and Redick have both spoken positively about the South Bay team, saying that player development is a key part of the Lakers organization.

Miami forward Kevin Love, who knew all the James children — Bronny, Bryce and Zhuri — from his time as LeBron's teammate in Cleveland, said it was "an unbelievable moment" to see father and son playing together.

"I grew up a Mariners fan, so I got to see Griffey and then Griffey Sr. But this is different, because LeBron is still a top-five player in the league," Love said. "This game, man. It's why we have that (\$76 billion) TV deal. The storylines and the things that happen like this, it's an unbelievable story. This is really cool to see."

## **Blinken urges Israel to seek enduring deal, as officials say a limited cease-fire has been discussed**

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that Israel needs to pursue an "enduring strategic success" in Gaza after its tactical victories against Hamas, urging it to seek a deal that would end the war and bring back dozens of hostages.

He spoke before traveling from Israel to Saudi Arabia on his 11th visit to the region since the war began. Air raid sirens sounded in Tel Aviv shortly before his departure as Israel intercepted two projectiles fired from Lebanon — the latest in Israel's war with Hezbollah — and a puff of smoke could be seen in the sky from Blinken's hotel.

"Israel has achieved most of the strategic objectives when it comes to Gaza," Blinken told reporters before boarding his plane. "Now is the time to turn those successes into an enduring strategic success."

"There really are two things left to do: Get the hostages home and bring the war to an end with an understanding of what will follow," he said.

Meanwhile, officials with the U.S., Israel and Egypt confirmed that a proposal for a limited cease-fire and hostage release has been discussed in recent days.

No sign of a breakthrough after killing of Hamas leader

The United States sees a new opportunity to revive cease-fire efforts after the killing of top Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar by Israeli forces in Gaza last week. But there's no indication that the warring parties have modified their demands since talks stalled over the summer.

There was also no immediate sign of a breakthrough after Blinken met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top Israeli officials on Tuesday.

Israel blamed the failure of talks on Sinwar's hard-line stance, but Hamas says its demands for a lasting cease-fire, full Israeli withdrawal and the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners have not changed. Hamas blamed the failure of the talks on Israel's demand for a lasting military presence in parts of Gaza.

Talk of a more limited cease-fire and hostage release

Egypt has suggested the possibility of a short pause in fighting in which Hamas would release a handful of hostages and humanitarian aid deliveries would be increased, especially in northern Gaza, an Egyptian official told The Associated Press.

The official, who was not authorized to brief media and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Egypt and fellow mediator Qatar had discussed the idea with the United States but it was not yet a firm proposal.

A senior State Department official confirmed that a proposal for a limited hostage release has been discussed in recent days but that no determination had been made, even after Blinken's meetings with Israeli officials and families of the hostages on Tuesday.

An Israeli official said Israel's Security Cabinet had discussed an Egyptian initiative centered on a 12-day cease-fire and the release of six hostages. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks.

There was no immediate comment from Hamas, which has rejected such ideas in the past, saying it is intent on ending the war. It is still holding around 100 hostages captured in its Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war, around a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel is warned on aid during offensive in northern Gaza

Israel has dramatically reduced the amount of humanitarian aid allowed into Gaza as it wages another major operation in the territory's hard-hit north.

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Blinken reiterated a warning that hindering humanitarian aid could force the U.S. to scale back the crucial military support it has provided to Israel since the war began. "There's progress made, which is good, but more progress needs to be made," he told reporters, without elaborating.

The U.N. humanitarian office says Israel has severely restricted aid operations since the start of its offensive in Jabaliya, a densely populated urban refugee camp in northern Gaza.

It said one critical mission, to rescue around 40 people trapped in the rubble in Jabaliya, had been repeatedly denied since Friday. Col. Elad Goren, a senior official with the Israeli military body that oversees civilian affairs in Gaza, said he was not aware of the request.

Speaking to reporters, Goren acknowledged disruptions in aid to the north in the first half of October but said they were related to the Jewish holidays and troop movements. He said people who were not evacuating Jabaliya had enough assistance from previous months to get by.

The U.N. estimates that 60,000 people have fled to Gaza City since the start of the operation in Jabaliya, the latest in a series of mass displacements.

Northern Gaza, including Gaza City, was the first target of Israel's ground operation and has been encircled by Israeli forces since late last year. Most of the population heeded Israeli warnings to flee to southern Gaza early in the war, but an estimated 400,000 people have stayed.

The north has been more heavily destroyed than other areas of Gaza, with entire neighborhoods obliterated. Israel has prevented Palestinians who fled the north from returning to their homes, a key demand from Hamas in the cease-fire talks.

US urges Israel to distance itself from 'Generals' Plan' for Gaza

The renewed offensive in the north has raised fears among Palestinians that Israel intends to implement a plan proposed by former generals in which civilians would be ordered to leave the north and anyone remaining would be starved out or killed.

Far-right ministers in Netanyahu's Cabinet say Israel should remain in Gaza and re-establish Jewish settlements there.

Blinken said the U.S. officials "fully reject" any Israeli reoccupation of Gaza and that it was not the policy of the Israeli government.

The State Department official said Blinken questioned Netanyahu and members of his government about the so-called Generals' Plan. The Israelis denied having such a plan and said the perception of it was damaging, the official said. The official said the Americans pressed the Israelis to publicly distance themselves from it.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted another 250 when they stormed into southern Israel a year ago.

Israel's offensive has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who don't distinguish combatants from civilians but say more than half the dead are women and children. It has displaced around 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, forcing hundreds of thousands into squalid tent camps.

## **A Supreme Court reshaped by Trump has a low profile in this presidential campaign**

By MARK SHERMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservatives already have a supermajority on the Supreme Court as a result of Donald Trump's presidency. If Trump wins a second term, the right side of the court could retain control for several more decades.

Justices Clarence Thomas, 76, and Samuel Alito, 74, are the two oldest members of the court. Either, or both, could consider stepping down knowing that Trump, a Republican, would nominate replacements who might be three decades younger.

"With President Trump and a Republican Senate, we could have a generation of conservative justices on the bench in the Supreme Court," South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, the top Republican on the Senate

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Judiciary Committee, recently wrote on X.

That's exactly what worries Christina Harvey, executive director of the progressive group Stand Up America. "The real key here is Trump prevention. If Trump wins again, he could solidify right-wing control of the Supreme Court for decades," Harvey said.

Yet the nation's highest court has a lower profile than it did in the past two presidential campaigns. That's despite an early summer ruling on presidential immunity that insured that Trump would not have to stand trial before the Nov. 5 election on charges of interference in the 2020 election and other consequential decisions on abortion, guns, affirmative action and the environment.

Both Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden used the prospect of Supreme Court nominations, which require Senate confirmation, to reassure key constituencies on their way to the White House.

In 2016, Trump put out lists of potential Supreme Court nominees that helped secure the enthusiastic backing of social conservatives. Four years later, Biden went to South Carolina, with its large share of Black Democratic primary voters, and pledged to name the first Black woman to the Supreme Court.

Biden followed through on his promise when he chose Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson in 2022.

Trump's three nominees, Justices Amy Coney Barrett, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, cemented the conservative majority that in 2022 overturned *Roe v. Wade*, among other major decisions.

That ruling, colloquially known as *Dobbs*, has led to abortion bans or severe restrictions in many Republican-led states. But it also has fueled voter anger that produced unexpected Democratic electoral success two years ago and put abortion access on the ballot in 10 states this year.

Vice President Kamala Harris, her party's White House nominee, has made reproductive rights a central theme of her campaign.

The court? Less so.

While Harris also has embraced court changes put forward by Biden, including 18-year terms for justices instead of lifetime tenure and a binding ethics code, she doesn't talk much about those proposals at her campaign events.

Delivering a message on abortion is simple and direct, said Alex Badas, a political science professor at the University of Houston who has studied the court and campaigns. "The court is kind of esoteric," Badas said.

In addition, Badas said, "Trump has a conservative court. He doesn't need to bolster that as an issue. And Harris doesn't want to overcommit because once she becomes president, it's very unlikely she's going to be able to get the appointments needed to make the court a more moderate court, let alone a liberal court."

The oldest liberal justice is Sonia Sotomayor, who turned 70 in June. Even if she were to retire, giving Harris a vacancy to fill, it would do nothing to alter the ideological balance.

The Supreme Court rarely takes center stage in presidential campaigns, which tend to focus on fundamental issues of war and peace, the economy and security.

But in 2016, the sudden death of Justice Antonin Scalia delivered a jolt to presidential politics, especially once the Republican-led Senate refused to consider President Barack Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland to the high court, which was otherwise split between four Democratic liberal appointees and four Republican conservatives. Garland is now Biden's attorney general.

"2016 was exceptional because not only did you have a vacancy, but there was actually a vacancy that could crucially move the court in one direction or another," said Christopher Schmidt, co-director at the Supreme Court institute at the Chicago-Kent College of Law.

The circumstances were somewhat similar to 1968, when Republican Richard Nixon's "law-and-order" campaign targeted the liberal Warren Court and the nation knew the next president would appoint Earl Warren's successor as chief justice, Schmidt said.

Biden's pledge that led to Jackson taking her place on the court also had a historical analogue, Republican Ronald Reagan's campaign promise to appoint the first woman. Eight months after Reagan took office, Sandra Day O'Connor took her judicial oath.

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## Today in History: October 24, the United Nations officially launches

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Oct. 24, the 298th day of 2024. There are 68 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 24, 1945, the United Nations formally came into existence as the Charter of the United Nations, ratified by 29 nations, took effect. The date is now observed as United Nations Day.

Also on this date:

In 1537, Jane Seymour, the third wife of England's King Henry VIII, died 12 days after giving birth to Prince Edward, later King Edward VI.

In 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph message was sent by Chief Justice Stephen J. Field of California from San Francisco to President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C.

In 1929, a massive sell-off at the opening bell of the New York Stock Exchange led to chaos as stock-brokers couldn't keep up with trade requests. Though the market recovered some loses by the end of the day, "Black Thursday" marked the beginning of the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

In 1931, the George Washington Bridge, connecting New York City with New Jersey, was dedicated. It was the world's longest suspension bridge at that time.

In 1952, Republican presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower vowed to go to Korea as he promised to end the ongoing conflict there. (Eisenhower would indeed visit Korea in December, after winning the election but prior to his inauguration.)

In 2002, authorities apprehended John Allen Muhammad and teenager Lee Boyd Malvo near Myersville, Maryland, in the Washington-area sniper attacks. (Malvo was later sentenced to life in prison. Muhammad was sentenced to death and executed in 2009.)

In 2003, a British Airways flight from New York to London marked the final commercial flight of the supersonic Concorde jet.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy roared across Jamaica and headed toward Cuba on its way to the eastern United States.

In 2021, heavily protected crews in Washington state worked to destroy the first nest of so-called murder hornets discovered in the United States.

Today's Birthdays: Rock musician Bill Wyman is 88. Actor F. Murray Abraham is 85. Actor Kevin Kline is 77. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., is 70. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, is 68. Actor B.D. Wong is 64. Singer Monica Arnold is 44. Fashion designer Zac Posen is 44. Singer-rapper Drake is 38. Actor Ashton Sanders is 29. NBA All-Star Jaylen Brown is 28. Actor Hudson Yang is 21.