

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 1 of 85**

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Tina's Baskets - for Easter](#)
- [7- Brown County Commission Agenda](#)
- [8- Groton School Board Agendas](#)
- [9- We the People Column: The Rule of Law: 'Leave to Live by No Man's Leave](#)
- [11- City Officials from Herreid, Mobridge, Elected to District Offices for SD Municipal League](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: State loan brings help to school preparing for Air Force base growth, but unknowns remain](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Federal judge dismisses Standing Rock's latest lawsuit over Dakota Access Pipeline](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Lawmakers say GOP divide led to cooperation among Democrats and some Republicans on key issues](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Trump asks U.S. Supreme Court to restore blocked deportation plan](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Tribes, long shut out from their own health data, fight for access and sovereignty](#)
- [20- Weather Pages](#)
- [25- Daily Devotional](#)
- [26- Subscription Form](#)
- [27- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [28- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [29- News from the Associated Press](#)

## **Saturday, March 29**

### **Sunday, March 30**

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 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**

**CLEANING IS JUST PUTTING  
STUFF IN LESS OBVIOUS PLACES**



**AND THEN WONDERING  
WHERE YOU PUT THEM**

## **Monday, March 31**

Senior Menu: Pork cutlet, creamy noodles, California Blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.

School Lunch: Chicken breast, mashed potatoes.

First Allowable Day of Girls Golf

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

## **Tuesday, April 1**

Senior Menu: Hamburger gravy on rice, corn, peaches, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg Omelets

School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.

NSU Indoor Track Meet, 3 p.m.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1:30 p.m.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 2 of 85

# 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.**

## **Quake Strikes Myanmar**

At least 694 people are dead and over 1,600 injured after a powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar (also known as Burma) Friday. The quake hit the country's second-most populous city, Mandalay, and was felt more than 600 miles away in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, where at least 10 people were killed, 26 injured, and nearly 50 missing. The United States Geological Survey estimates deaths could surpass 10,000.

The earthquake caused widespread destruction, including collapsed bridges, downed power lines, damage to historic structures such as the former Royal Palace in Mandalay, and the collapse of a high-rise tower under construction in Bangkok. The disaster comes as Myanmar, among Southeast Asia's poorest nations, has been ravaged by an ongoing civil war since a 2021 coup, with the ruling junta severely limiting international aid access in areas under its control.

The quake, roughly six miles deep, occurred due to the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates—large slabs of rock that make up the Earth's crust—rubbing sideways against each other (a "strike-slip") along the Sagaing fault line.

## **Utah becomes first state to ban fluoride in public drinking water.**

Gov. Spencer Cox (R) signed legislation Thursday preventing people or government entities from adding fluoride to water systems in the state, effective May 7. Fluoride is a mineral that helps inhibit or reverse cavities and tooth decay and can be naturally found in water, soil, and rocks. As of 2022, roughly 44% of Utah's population received fluoridated water, according to the CDC —among the lowest in the US.

## **State Department formally notifies Congress it is dissolving USAID.**

The State Department officially informed Congress of its plan to shutter the US Agency for International Development and transfer some of its functions to the department by July 1. The move, expected to face legal challenges, comes after the Trump administration laid off thousands of USAID employees and revoked funding for over 80% of the agency's programs. The administration has argued USAID mismanaged taxpayer funds and supported programs not aligned with US interests.

## **Nearly 500 cases of measles reported across 20 states, per CDC.**

As of Friday, the measles outbreak in Texas had infected 400 people, while four other states are also experiencing outbreaks. The outbreaks—defined as three or more cases—include New Mexico, Kansas, Ohio, and Oklahoma. In total, the US has 483 confirmed measles cases, with 157 cases in children under the age of 5 and 204 in those between the ages of 5 and 19.

## **CoreWeave begins trading on Nasdaq after raising \$1.5B in IPO.**

The Nvidia-backed cloud computing firm provides graphics processing unit infrastructure to artificial intelligence developers. Its initial public offering is the largest tech IPO since 2021 after selling 37.5 million shares priced at \$40 each. CoreWeave initially planned to sell 49 million shares for between \$47 and \$55 each. Its shares began trading at \$39 each Friday and closed at \$40.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 3 of 85

## **Trump pardons Nikola founder Trevor Milton in securities fraud case.**

Milton was convicted in October 2022 on securities and wire fraud charges for falsely claiming to investors about the success of Nikola's electric and hydrogen-powered trucks. He was sentenced to four years in prison (but had been free on a \$100M bail while appealing the case). President Donald Trump's pardon exempts Milton from serving prison time and paying restitution to Nikola shareholders, though he may still face civil lawsuits.

## **Humankind(ness)**

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Richard P. in Kansas City, Missouri.

"As a teenager in the 1970s, I struggled with substance abuse. A bad LSD experience put me in the hospital with broken bones and a shattered spirit. My father never gave up on me. 'You could use some success,' he said to me one day. 'How about we rebuild the engine in your car?'"

"It was a 1973 Chevy Vega GT that burned a quart of oil with every tank of gas. Dad had been a Navy airplane mechanic during the Korean War, and spent his career as a mechanical engineer for John Deere. After my bones had healed, we took the Vega apart in Dad's garage, then put the pieces back together again. I drove the car to college a few weeks later, and thanks to the lessons learned, I was able to keep it running all the way through graduation."

"Twenty-plus years later, I was gainfully employed, married, with two children. Mom and Dad often came to visit. One morning, as I was leaving for work, Dad said to me, 'You're doing good, Richard. Keep doing what you're doing.' His affirmation nearly surpassed the gift of kindness he'd made decades earlier. Actions may speak louder than words, but the power of words should not be underestimated. Here's a photo of Dad and me in 1978, shortly after the Vega was reassembled."



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 4 of 85

## Tina's Baskets - for Easter 605-397-7285

Cow basket - \$20



Includes - green drink cup, light up football, play dough, dinosaur bubble, bubbles, and 4 filled eggs

Teenager or adult Easter basket - \$25



Includes- cross word, sudoku book, word find, col-  
or pencils, three color books, pack of pens, Rease's  
pieces candy, solid chocolate bunny, neapolitan  
flavored Lindt candy, and Dunkin chocolate brownie  
batter crème filled eggs



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 5 of 85

Rainbow basket - \$25



Includes- two color books 7 filled eggs, pink drink cup crayons, Reese's candy , egg chalk, playdough, bubbles fan bubbles and a rabbit bubble



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 6 of 85

Blue basket - \$20



Pink basket - \$20



Blue bunny includes bubble machine, bluey and his friend bingo, small Pail for the sand , bubbles, 6 filled eggs



Includes a pink bear with hugs in it , bubble machine, bubbles, side chalk bunny book, 6 eggs filled Reeses pieces candy

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 7 of 85**

**BROWN COUNTY  
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA  
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

**April 1, 2025, 8:45 A.M.**

**COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Chris Hemen, Weed & Pest Supervisor
  - a. Award Chemical Bids
  - b. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Weed & Pest Grants:
    - i. WP-26-3 for Chemical, Seasonal Labor, Radio Ads, Booth in Brown County
    - ii. WP-C26-4 for Yellow Toadflax Biological Control
    - iii. WP-C26-5 for Yellow Toadflax Mapping & Spot Spraying Project
5. Second Reading/Possible Adoption on following Ordinances:
  - a. Ord. #290 – Rezone for Brown County Planning & Zoning
  - b. Ord. #291 – Rezone for North Western Energy
6. Gene Loeschke, Equalization Director
  - a. Annual Conference
7. Jon Lemke, Chief Deputy Sheriff & Keith Baker, Deputy Sheriff
  - a. Request for use of Opioid Funds
8. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Quote from Huff Construction to Revise Public Defender Office
9. Discuss Burn Ban
10. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of March 25, 2025
  - b. Claims
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Lease Agreements
  - e. Claim Assignment
  - f. Abatement/Refund
  - g. Set Hearing Date & Authorize Publication for Liquor License Transfers
11. Other Business
12. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
13. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

**Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.**

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

**You can also dial in using your phone.** United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

**Access Code:** 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission.

Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board) - Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

**Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>**



## **GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6**

### **Special School Board Meeting**

**April 2, 2025 – 4:30 PM – GHS Conference Room**

#### **AGENDA:**

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed.

#### **POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3**

#### **OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Executive Session pursuant to SDCL1-25-2(4) Negotiations.

#### **ADJOURN**

---

## **GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6**

### **Special School Board Meeting**

**April 3, 2025 – 4:30 PM – GHS Conference Room**

#### **AGENDA:**

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed.

#### **POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3**

#### **OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Executive Session pursuant to SDCL1-25-2(4) Negotiations.

#### **ADJOURN**

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 9 of 85

## We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

### The Rule of Law: 'Leave to Live by No Man's Leave

In the spring of 1952, President Harry Truman faced a nationwide strike that he feared would undermine the production of steel and thus the prosecution of the Korean War and American efforts through the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe in the aftermath of World War II. In response, he issued an executive order to keep the steel industry open and operating. In June, the Supreme Court, in *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, rejected the constitutionality of the presidential seizure of the steel mills, which purported to be an exercise of presidential power that rested, at least in part, on the Commander in Chief Clause and the president's authority over foreign affairs. The Court, in a 6-3 opinion written by Justice Hugo Black, held that the president lacked both constitutional and statutory authority to take possession of the property.

The Court's ruling in the Steel Seizure Case, a landmark decision by any measure, and a rare judicial rebuke to the executive, was free of acrimony between the branches. To be sure, President Truman was miffed at the Court, which included several friends--poker buddies--who ruled against him despite his belief that he had acted lawfully. Moreover, the cocktail parties that Truman and the Justices routinely attended, were put on hold, until the frosty relations thawed, but when Justice Black hosted a reception, Truman sidled up to his old friend from their days in the Senate during the New Deal and broke the ice. "Hugo," said the president, "I don't much care for your jurisprudence, but by golly, I like your bourbon."

The Court did not perceive in Truman's executive order any dictatorial aims. On the contrary, as Justice Felix Frankfurter wrote of his friend in a concurring opinion: "It is absurd to see a dictator in a representative product of the sturdy democratic traditions of the Mississippi Valley." But Frankfurter, like his colleagues, was concerned about the concentration of power in the executive. "The accretion of dangerous power does not come in a day. It does come, however slowly, from the generative force of unchecked disregard of the restrictions that fence in even the most disinterested assertion of authority."

Frankfurter's concern about the "unchecked disregard" of restrictions --threats to the rule of law-- reflected the views of his brethren, including those of Justice Robert H. Jackson, whose concurrence remains perhaps the most influential of the Justices' discourses on presidential power. Perhaps the finest writer among those who have enjoyed a seat on the nation's High Bench, Jackson wrote of the essence of free government, which rests on the rule of law.

Borrowing from Kipling's poem, "The Old Issue," Jackson wrote, "The essence of our free government, is 'leave to live by no man's leave, underneath the law'--to be governed by those impersonal forces which we call law. Our government is fashioned to fulfill this concept so far as humanly possible." "The leave to live by no man's leave" rests on the assurance that the executive, "except for recommendation and veto," has no legislative power. "With all its defects, delays and inconveniences, men have discovered no technique for long preserving free government except that the Executive be under the law, and that the law be made by parliamentary deliberations." Truman's usurpation of legislative power to regulate private property breached the historic practice of parliamentary control of the lawmaking power, and it was the Court's duty to rein him in.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 10 of 85**

History confirms Justice Black's observation that the struggle for a written constitution was "to make certain that men in power would be governed by law," and that the people would be subject, "not to the arbitrary fiat of the man or men in power," but by "the law of the land." To dismiss adherence to the rule of law is to strike at the heart of our democratic system.

The demise of the rule of law would be life-altering and result in incalculable losses. No citizen--liberal or conservative--would be spared the effects of its evisceration. The magisterial First Amendment freedoms --speech, press and religion-- stout protections for the right of Americans to live freely, would be vulnerable. So, too, the Second Amendment, as well as the great procedural guarantees that stand between arrest and arbitrary imprisonment.

For lovers of liberty, preservation of the rule of law is imperative.

*David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.*



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 11 of 85

## City Officials from Herreid, Mobridge, Elected to District Offices for SD Municipal League

AKASKA, S.D. – A group of approximately 70 municipal officials representing 11 cities gathered at the South Dakota Municipal League's annual District 7 Meeting, held in Akaska on March 20, 2025.

Carolynn Anderson, SDML President and Finance Officer of Wall, discussed the direction and future of the Municipal League with the group. Sara Rankin, South Dakota Municipal League Executive Director, spoke about the outcome of the 2025 Legislative Session and the effect new laws will have on South Dakota municipalities.

Others in attendance were representatives of various state agencies and representatives of groups affiliated with the Municipal League.

Anderson also conducted the election of District 7 officers for the upcoming year. Gary Weismantel, Herreid Mayor, was re-elected Chair and Gene Cox, Mobridge Mayor, was re-elected Vice Chair. As the district chair, Weismantel will act as a contact for and represent their district as a member of the SDML Board of Directors. Duties began immediately.

In other business, those attending voted to hold the 2026 District 7 Meeting in Herreid.



**Gene Cox, Mobridge Mayor, and Gary Weismantel, Herreid Mayor, were re-elected Vice Chair and Chair respectively of the South Dakota Municipal League's District 7. Area municipal officials elected the pair to represent their district at the annual meeting held March 20, 2025, in Akaska. (Courtesy photo)**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### State loan brings help to school preparing for Air Force base growth, but unknowns remain

BY: SETH TUPPER - MARCH 28, 2025 5:48 PM

BOX ELDER — A new state law brought a degree of certainty Friday to a situation filled with unknowns for the Douglas School District.

The law, signed by South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden, authorizes a \$15 million, zero-interest loan to the district from the state's housing infrastructure fund. The money will help pay for the construction of a third elementary school.

The extra school is needed because the federal government is developing B-21 stealth bombers, and some of them will be stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base, which neighbors the school district's Box Elder campus.

The construction and extra personnel needed to accommodate the new planes are expected to grow the base and the surrounding area by thousands of people. But the school district doesn't know when the planes will arrive.

"We know they're coming probably in the next three to four years," said Superintendent Kevin Case, "but we don't have an exact timeline."

The district needs a building large enough for 640 students, Case said, which will cost an estimated \$62 million. The \$15 million loan will help pay for that, and the district anticipates contributing \$5 million or more of its own money. The rest will hopefully come from federal funds that South Dakota's congressional delegates are working to obtain, Case said.

Douglas is uniquely financially hindered by the presence of the vast base, which is not subjected to property taxes. The district gets payments from the federal government to compensate for the lost tax revenue, but Case said it's not enough to fund a major building project.

Rapid City-area lawmakers have worked for years to win state grant funding for the district. Some other lawmakers opposed the idea, saying it would set a bad precedent and encourage other districts to seek state funding for local projects.

The alternative proposal legislators adopted this year will tap into the state's Housing Infrastructure Financing Program. The Legislature created it two years ago with state dollars and federal pandemic relief money, to help spark housing development projects across the state.

Half of the \$200 million fund was made available as grants, and all of that money has been awarded. The other half was made available as loans, but demand has been low. More than \$80 million was still available as recently as December.

Sen. Helene Duhamel, R-Rapid City, sponsored legislation earlier this year that went through several amendments before it finally reached Gov. Rhoden's desk in the form of a loan from the housing fund. The legislation gives the state Housing Development Authority permission to make the loan, with a repayment period of 20 years.

The district can use the money for any expenses related to the new school's construction. Under regular program rules, a loan from the fund can only be used for things like roads, sidewalks, or water and sewer lines to support housing developments.

Rhoden signed the bill Friday in the Vandenberg Elementary School gym at Box Elder.

"We've talked about this issue for a couple of years now, as legislators well know," Rhoden said. "And this, I believe, is the right solution to move forward."

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

## **Federal judge dismisses Standing Rock's latest lawsuit over Dakota Access Pipeline**

**BY: MARY STEURER - MARCH 28, 2025 7:03 PM**

A federal judge dismissed the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers seeking to shutter the Dakota Access Pipeline, finding that the tribe must wait until the Army Corps finishes a key environmental study to bring another legal challenge against the agency.

"No matter its frustration with Defendants' sluggish pace, it is not yet entitled to a second bite at the apple," U.S. District Judge James Boasberg wrote in a Friday order.

Standing Rock filed the lawsuit in October, arguing that Corps is violating federal law by allowing the pipeline to operate without an easement. The tribe also claimed that the Corps failed to properly study the environmental impacts of the Dakota Access Pipeline or require its developer to prepare adequate spill response plans, among other alleged violations.

The suit is a successor to a lawsuit the tribe filed against the same agency in 2016.

In that case, Boasberg in 2020 found the Army Corps had violated federal law by not conducting a full environmental impact study before granting an easement allowing the pipeline to cross underneath the Missouri River. He pulled the easement and ordered the Dakota Access Pipeline to be drained of oil pending the Army Corps' completion of the study.

An appellate court in 2021 reversed Boasberg's decision to shut down the pipeline, but did not reinstate the easement.

Boasberg wrote in a 2021 order following that decision that he could not shutter the pipeline because the tribe hadn't sufficiently demonstrated that it posed an immediate threat of irreparable harm.

He noted in his Friday memo that "remarkably little" has changed in the four years since.

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends," Boasberg wrote at the beginning of the order, quoting Shakespeare's "Henry V".

The Army Corps still has not finished the environmental impact study. It published a draft version of its report in late 2023. Once the study is complete, the Army Corps will use it to decide whether to grant the easement again.

One of the main arguments the tribe made in its 2024 lawsuit is that the Army Corps' yearslong inaction on the Dakota Access Pipeline is a violation of federal law.

Boasberg wrote previously that, given the pipeline is operating on Army Corps land without proper authorization, the agency in the interim could have done something to enforce its property rights.

"The Corps has conspicuously declined to adopt a conclusive position regarding the pipeline's continued operation, despite repeated prodding from this Court and the Court of Appeals to do so," he wrote in his 2021 order.

But the Army Corps for now is not legally required to do anything but finish the environmental impact study, Boasberg stated in the Friday memo.

He said that other arguments Standing Rock raised in its complaint seek to relitigate issues that were already decided in the 2016 case, and that the legal landscape is not likely to change until the study is completed.

Boasberg noted that Standing Rock can file another lawsuit against the Corps once the study is published. The Army Corps of Engineers in legal filings also argued the tribe cannot sue the Corps over the easement when it had not yet made a final decision on the permit.

The tribe indicated last fall that it had new evidence to present related to the pipeline's safety. The pipeline company has indicated previously it does not consider that information credible.



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 14 of 85**

North Dakota, other states and pipeline owner Dakota Access intervened in the lawsuit on the side of the Corps. The intervenors called on the court to dismiss the case, arguing that the pipeline is important to the country's economy, and that shutting it down would violate states' rights and make road and rail transit less safe.

"The Dakota Access Pipeline has been operating safely for almost eight years now and is a critical piece of infrastructure for North Dakota and our nation's energy security," North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong said in a statement regarding Boasberg's decision.

A spokesperson for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Army Corps of Engineers declined to comment.

"The Corps has failed to act and failed to protect the tribe," Standing Rock Chairwoman Janet Alkire said in an October press conference announcing the lawsuit.

The pipeline, which spans more than 1,000 miles, carries crude oil from northwest North Dakota to Illinois. Its pathway includes unceded land recognized as the Sioux Nation's in 19th century treaties signed by the U.S. government.

*Mary Steurer is a reporter based in Bismarck for the North Dakota Monitor. A native of St. Louis, Steurer previously worked as the local government reporter for the Casper Star-Tribune newspaper in Wyoming.*

## **Lawmakers say GOP divide led to cooperation among Democrats and some Republicans on key issues**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MARCH 28, 2025 6:38 PM**

VERMILLION — Six South Dakota lawmakers — three Democrats and three Republicans — celebrated bipartisan accomplishments Thursday at an annual democracy conference, including their efforts to stop what one legislator called an influx of "bad bills" from reaching the governor's desk.

Fourteen incumbent Republican lawmakers lost in the 2024 primaries, with many challengers capitalizing on opposition to Summit Carbon Solutions' proposed multibillion-dollar pipeline project. That produced a large class of freshman Republican legislators, and last year's Republican leadership group lost support, resulting in a new leadership team when the Legislature convened in January.

Sen. Jamie Smith, D-Sioux Falls, said those changes produced bills that pitted Republicans against each other, leading Democrats and some Republicans to work together against legislation they both opposed. Republicans outnumber Democrats in the Legislature 96-9.

"Unfortunately this year, a lot of times it was killing bad bills that we were the most successful," Smith said.

Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem, said he ran for a caucus leadership position ahead of the session but "lost by a few." He said some Republicans who failed to gain a leadership post worked with Democrats on some issues.

"I wasn't in leadership this year, but we still lead within our group," Peterson said. "Collectively we could get 36 to 42 votes between the Democrats and Republicans, and we did our job."

Peterson and Smith were among the lawmakers who participated in a legislative panel discussion at the annual conference hosted by the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota.

As evidence of bipartisan efforts between Democrats and some Republicans, the lawmakers highlighted the amending of legislation dubbed the "locking up librarians" bill, by removing a proposed criminal penalty for distributing harmful or obscene material to minors and instead requiring an appeals process for challenging materials in school and public libraries. The amendment passed the Senate 18-16 before the bill passed the chamber 32-2. The House accepted the amendments in a 36-34 vote, and Gov. Larry Rhoden signed the bill this month.

There was also bipartisan cooperation against a failed attempt to stop funding the state's controversial Future Fund, which is an economic development fund controlled by the executive branch, and several failed bills intended to provide property tax relief to South Dakotans.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 15 of 85

Sioux Falls Democratic Rep. Erik Muckey said he most clearly saw the shift within the Republican Party in the Future Fund debate, where he said some Republicans reacted to a lack of oversight for the fund by supporting its elimination without "actually digging into" how it works.

"We're trying to take down an agency, effectively," Muckey said, "but we don't actually know what the agency does, the process to get there or what the consequences of a bill is that we didn't even all probably read, frankly."

Rep. Chris Kassin, R-Vermillion, said the push for property tax relief included a determination by some freshmen lawmakers to pass property tax cuts without considering costs. That's primarily because some lawmakers, he said, were quick to "slam something through" and slow to research and understand a bill's consequences.

The Legislature ultimately passed Rhoden's legislation including a temporary cap on countywide assessment increases, with plans to dig into the property tax system further with a summer task force.

Other notable efforts that some Republicans and Democrats worked together on failed, such as funding the replacement of the state penitentiary.

The Legislature lost leadership with deep institutional knowledge because of the primary defeats, said Sen. Sydney Davis, R-Burbank, leading to less understanding among lawmakers of the process and why bills failed in past sessions.

Davis said some bills saw several layers of amendments, which hinders how lawmakers and the public vet bills in the committee process.

"That's a drain on the process and the system," she said.

One of the new legislative leaders, House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, told South Dakota Searchlight by phone that he saw factions of Republicans working with Democrats during the session. He described the comments made during the panel as part of an attempt to frame the session as "fraught and chaotic."

The bills highlighted by lawmakers during the panel weren't bad, he said, but were emblematic of the divide within the Republican Party. The Future Fund and property tax discussions, he said, showed the divide is centered on government involvement in economic development and government spending.

"What some people call bad, others call conservative," Odenbach said.

Odenbach said the next session will be different as freshman lawmakers have a year under their belts and a better understanding of the legislative process. The divide, he said, will remain.

"The South Dakota Republican Party is changing," Odenbach said. "It's going back to its roots and we're going to redefine what it means to be a conservative. It'll take a few twists and turns until we get there."

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.*

## Trump asks U.S. Supreme Court to restore blocked deportation plan

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MARCH 28, 2025 2:25 PM

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration submitted an emergency appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday in an effort to resume the rapid deportations of Venezuelans accused of gang ties under a wartime law that a lower court blocked.

Acting U.S. Solicitor General Sarah Harris argued in a brief to the Supreme Court that a federal judge's temporary restraining order this month, and an appeals court ruling Wednesday upholding it, wrongly denied President Donald Trump the authority to make decisions about national security operations, including

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 16 of 85**

the removal of Venezuelan nationals the administration says are subject to the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.

"The district court's orders have rebuffed the President's judgments as to how to protect the Nation against foreign terrorist organizations and risk debilitating effects for delicate foreign negotiations," Harris wrote in her request to the court.

The Alien Enemies Act had only been invoked three times, during the War of 1812, World War I and World War II.

The Trump administration has tried to use it in a novel way, when the nation is not officially at war. The administration designated the Tren de Aragua – a gang that originated in Venezuela – as a foreign terrorist group, and argued that any Venezuelan nationals aged 14 and older with suspected ties to the gang are subject to the proclamation.

U.S. District Judge James E. Boasberg placed a temporary restraining order on the Trump administration's use of the law this month, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the order this week. The administration asked the Supreme Court to lift the order.

"As long as the orders remain in force, the United States is unable to rely on the Proclamation to remove dangerous affiliates with a foreign terrorist organization—even if the United States receives indications that particular (Tren de Aragua) members are about to take destabilizing or infiltrating actions," Harris said Friday.

## **Extending restraining order**

Boasberg's temporary restraining order placed on the use of the Alien Enemies Act is set to expire Saturday. The American Civil Liberties Union, which brought the suit, requested that order be extended for an additional two weeks.

The ACLU also plans to request Boasberg issue a preliminary injunction, which would block the administration from deportations under the act until the lawsuit is complete. A hearing is set for April 8.

Boasberg has rejected the Trump administration's move to lift his restraining order, on the grounds that those subject to the Alien Enemies Act should have due process to challenge those accusations.

At the D.C. Circuit this week, Department of Justice attorneys for the Trump administration argued that those subject to the proclamation do not need to be notified they are being removed under the Alien Enemies Act. The Trump administration also argued that those who fall under the Alien Enemies Act can bring a challenge of their detention under a habeas corpus claim.

## **Defied verbal order**

The White House quietly implemented the act on March 15 and a verbal restraining order given by Boasberg that day to block it went into effect hours later.

In that order, Boasberg barred the Trump administration from applying the act but three deportation planes landed in El Salvador after the order was issued. The Trump administration has argued that his verbal order was not enforceable.

Boasberg also ordered that anyone subject to the Alien Enemies Act be returned to the U.S., but federal immigration agents took more than 250 men aboard the three flights to a notorious prison in El Salvador.

Boasberg has vowed to determine if the Trump administration violated his restraining order in sending the deportation planes to El Salvador, but Attorney General Pam Bondi invoked the "state secrets privilege" to refuse to answer detailed questions about the flights.

Friday's emergency request is one of several immigration-related appeals the Trump administration has made to the high court, such as the request to lift several nationwide injunctions placed on the president's executive order that ends the constitutional right of birthright citizenship.

*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.*

## Tribes, long shut out from their own health data, fight for access and sovereignty

**A new agreement in Washington state could set an example for other agencies and tribes**

**BY: NADA HASSANEIN, STATELINE - MARCH 28, 2025 9:23 AM**

When Stephanie Russo Carroll, a citizen of the Native Village of Kluti-Kaah in Alaska, set out to earn her doctorate in tribal health 15 years ago, she focused her research on tribal cultural and health programs within six tribes.

She needed vital statistics data, such as birth and death rates, for each of them. But getting that data from the state, which houses vital statistics, was difficult — and in some cases, the data she needed was missing.

“Health outcomes data were unobtainable,” Carroll recalled. In one case, her team had to try using breast-feeding rates as a proxy to estimate birth rates. But even getting those for all six tribes was impossible.

For the next two decades, Carroll would continue to push for U.S. tribes — which are sovereign nations — to own and maintain control over their data, including health statistics.

The concept, known as data sovereignty, is important amid the harrowing health disparities seen in tribal people, rooted in forced assimilation dating back more than a century. Often, data gathered by and about tribes has been shared with state and federal agencies; but those same agencies haven’t always shared their tribal-related statistics in return.

The reasons vary, from systemic issues within the health care system to mistaken assumptions by some federal officials about what data be securely sent to tribes without risking privacy violations.

The lack of tribe-specific data has hindered tribes from fully taking care of their members and clouded their work on public health responses to disease outbreaks such as syphilis and COVID-19, on maternal and infant health outcomes, and on chronic issues such as diabetes, heart disease and substance use.

Data sovereignty is especially relevant now, as the Trump administration scrubs federal health websites of data that recognizes and tracks metrics among the country’s various racial and ethnic groups, including what little data there is on tribal members.

States govern their own health data systems. But the same isn’t true for the nation’s 574 federally recognized tribes.

Now an associate professor of public health at the University of Arizona, Carroll co-founded the U.S. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network and directs the Collaboratory for Indigenous Data Governance. Both are groups that work to research and strengthen Indigenous data governance, accuracy and data-driven policy.

“If you don’t know who has been sick or hospitalized,” Carroll said, “how can you make sure you have the right care systems for your community?”

### **Withholding tribes’ data**

As part of its slashing of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, the Trump administration removed numerous racial, ethnic, adolescent and maternal health datasets from the websites of several federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While some of the data has been reinstated, the swift deletions raised alarms in tribal communities.

Abigail Echo-Hawk, a member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma and director of the Urban Indian Health Institute, said the youth behavioral risk surveys were reinstated, but were missing key race and ethnicity search features that tribes use to track mental health conditions in American Indian and Alaska Native teens.

“Now, we can’t search, disaggregate by Native youth,” she said. “That information is about our children, and it is the legal right of both now the tribal epidemiology centers and the tribes to have access to that previously gathered information.”

Despite their public health authority, tribes and tribal epidemiology centers, which support tribes with health data tracking, say federal and state health officials have long withheld or denied requests to direct



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 18 of 85**

access of health data related to their tribes, including coronavirus data during the pandemic.

Such data is tied to treaty rights obligations and shouldn't be lumped together with diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives currently under attack by the Trump administration, Echo-Hawk said.

"Our treaty rights are tied to having information around tribal people. So, if you're going to uphold our treaty rights, you need to say: 'This number of Native people are experiencing this issue,' or 'This number of Native people exist,'" she said.

It wasn't until 2021 that the CDC conducted its first comprehensive life expectancy profile of American Indians and Alaska Natives; it showed that in 2019, their life expectancy was seven years lower than that of white people.

"All of the data is a story. It's a grandmother, it's a son, it's a story of a community's well-being," Echo-Hawk said.

When tribes receive federal grants — whether for transportation, housing or education initiatives — there are grant reporting requirements.

Under those rules, tribes send raw data to federal agencies, but they often don't get that data back, said social demographer Desi Small-Rodriguez, an assistant professor of sociology and American Indian studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, who co-founded the data sovereignty network with Carroll.

"It's a one-way data highway coming from tribal governments — leaving tribal governments and going into the feds — and it's not coming back," said Small-Rodriguez. She also directs the Data Warriors Lab, working with tribes — including her own Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana — to develop legal mechanisms to ensure data ownership.

She said the federal government should provide funding, as part of its treaty obligations, to pay for expensive data support such as secure storage systems, high-performance computers and analytics staff.

"As part of our treaty rights, we have a right to health care and education. We have a right to clean water and air — and data form the basis for all of that," she said.

## State data agreements

In January, the Tulalip Tribes in northwest Washington state secured a data-sharing agreement with the state department of health. It gives the tribes access to the state's disease reporting system, allowing them to extract some data directly. Tulalip plans to eventually secure access to more datasets.

It's the first agreement of its kind in the state, said Summer Hammons, legislative policy analyst in the Treaty Rights and Governmental Affairs Department of the Tulalip Tribes, which has at least 5,000 members. Hammons grew up on the reservation.

She hopes it will help the tribe direct resources and funds where they're needed — whether it's more cancer screenings or vaccinations against diseases such as measles, as other states grapple with outbreaks of the virus.

"It allows us to collaborate and lead on outbreak investigations related to tribal members," Hammons said. "It's a clear outline that tribes own their data in partnership with the state, because the state's the one that's collecting it. But we want to tell our story, and we want to be able to work with DOH [department of health] to be mindful of our stories and to also get better access to the statistics."

A few other states — Alaska, Arizona, Oregon and South Dakota — also have limited-scope agreements with tribes.

Gary Ferguson, Unangax (Aleut), is the director of integrative medicine at Tulalip Health Clinic. He said he hopes the data will help the tribe track health care interventions over time.

"We don't know what's working. We don't know what's not working," he said. "We want to celebrate our wins."

## Tracking disease

In recent years, the nation has seen alarming surges in congenital syphilis, a preventable infection passed through pregnancy to newborns. Nearly 40% can be stillborn or die as a newborn. Babies can also suffer

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 19 of 85

lifelong blindness or deafness. Tribal babies suffer the highest rate.

Officials at the Great Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center, which tracks tribal public health across four states, were denied syphilis data from local public health departments for years until the group leaned on the CDC for assistance.

It wasn't until then that, finally, last year, one state — South Dakota — agreed to share American Indian and Alaska Native syphilis cases as soon as they're reported, said Sarah Shewbrooks, the group's lead tribal epidemiologist.

Shewbrooks hopes the access in South Dakota will pave the way for more agreements in the other Great Plains states.

## 'We needed this yesterday'

During COVID-19, American Indian and Alaska Native people were more likely to be infected and compared with white people, had double the risk of in-hospital death and three times the rate of severe infection, research shows. Yet even then, data weren't telling the whole story.

Echo-Hawk's organization published a report card in 2021 that scored each state's collection of Natives' COVID-19 cases. In total, the nation averaged a D+. This year, she published a follow-up for epidemiologists on addressing the misclassification of Native people, who often are listed as "white" or "Hispanic" in health settings and death certificates. Many states also inconsistently or don't report tribal affiliation on death certificates, which can make tribe-specific death rates elusive.

A report in 2021 from the nonpartisan U.S. Government Accountability Office found that some officials from the CDC and the Indian Health Services agency didn't recognize that they were required by law to share data with tribal epidemiology centers, the centers told investigators.

In the GAO report, investigators detailed logistical barriers, including federal agencies' reluctance to share COVID-19 data because of concerns around privacy and security in data transmission.

"This is one of the best examples of what structural racism looks like," said Shewbrooks. "Because when you look at the infrastructure for public health systems and public health data, tribes and [tribal epidemiology centers] were never included in that infrastructure.

"COVID really put it up there as: No, we needed this yesterday."

Shewbrooks said that as part of her work she'd go to funeral directors, who may fill out death certificates, throughout the region to educate them on proper classification of American Indian people. "I even had one say to me once, 'I just always code them by how they look. I never ask what their race is.'"

"A lot of them didn't know that this is data that gets really used," she said. "Vital records data is just super important, foundational work in a lot of epidemiological work."

There is no national standard for tribal health data, explained Cheryl Ellenwood, who is a citizen of the Nez Perce Nation and also Diné (Navajo).

Ellenwood, an assistant professor in Washington State University's School of Politics, Philosophy and Public Affairs, experienced firsthand the data disconnect when both her parents died of COVID-19.

Four years ago this month, her mother, Annie Benally Ellenwood, an enrolled Navajo tribal member from New Mexico, died at age 71 in a hospital in Idaho. Annie Ellenwood's death, however, wouldn't show up in primary statistics of COVID-19 deaths in Navajo people — her tribe isn't listed on her death certificate.

"I was very hurt by this, because my mother died because of COVID-19, and I wanted her death to count and mean something," Ellenwood said.

"It still feels very life and death, like we are fighting to demonstrate the impact of so many things on our people," she said.

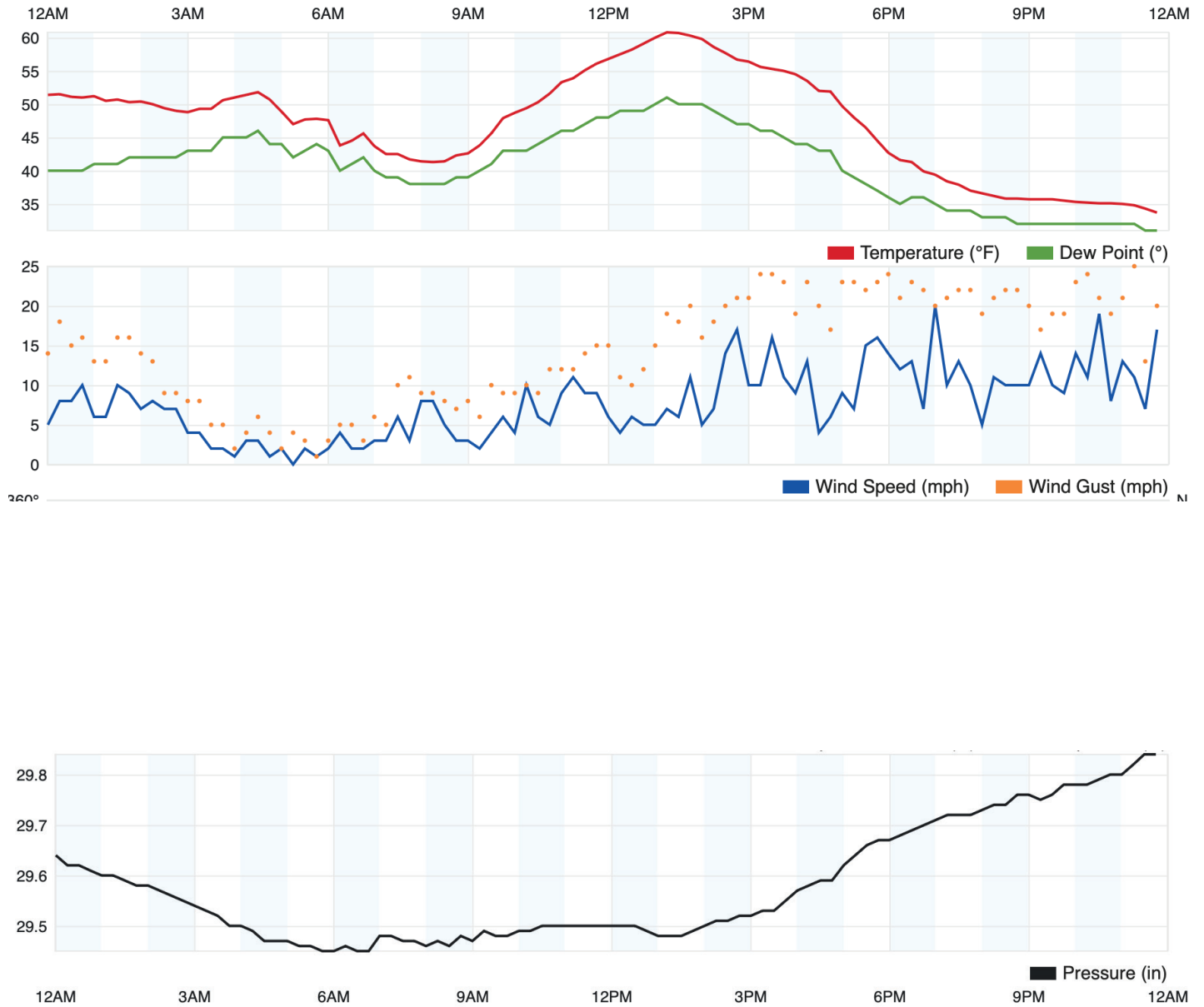
*Stateline reporter Nada Hassanein can be reached at [nhassanein@stateline.org](mailto:nhassanein@stateline.org).*

*Nada Hassanein is a health care reporter for Stateline with a focus on inequities.*

# Groton Daily Independent






Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 20 of 85

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 21 of 85

Winter Weather Advisory				
Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
40 %	80 % → 30 %			
High: 36 °F	Low: 26 °F	High: 40 °F	Low: 17 °F	High: 41 °F
Breezy. Cloudy then Chance Wintry Mix	Wintry Mix then Chance Snow	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny



## Winter Weather Today through Sunday Morning

March 29, 2025  
4:37 AM

### Key Messages



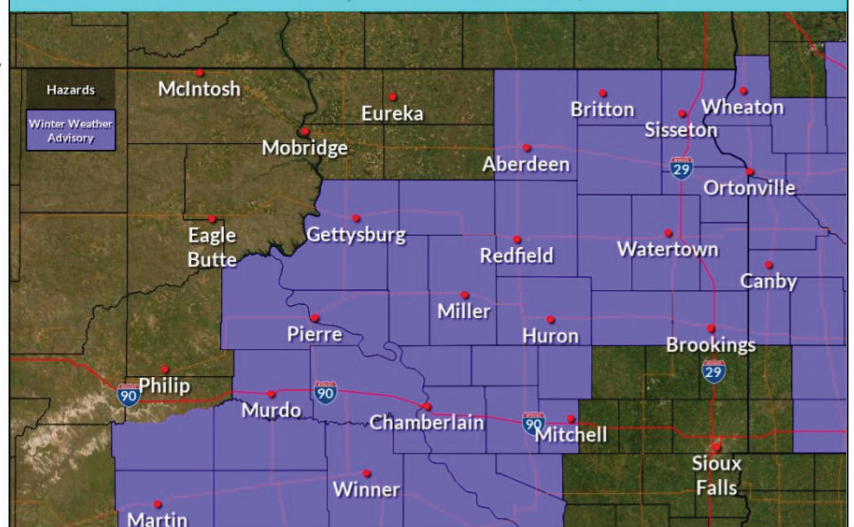
A complex storm system will bring rain, changing to a wintry mix, and finally all snow today through Sunday morning.



Snow accumulations generally **between a trace to 3 inches**, but **between 3 to 6 inches** possible over and along the eastern slopes of the Sisseton Hills, an portions of south central South Dakota.

Ice accumulation between 0.01-0.05" possible over central and northeastern SD.

### Winter Weather Advisory for Mixed Precipitation



National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A complex storm system will bring rain, changing to a wintry mix, and finally snow today through Sunday morning. Snowfall will range from a trace to three inches, but higher amounts are possible over central South Dakota and along the eastern side of the Sisseton Hills.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 22 of 85



## Precipitation Type Timing And Changeover

March 29, 2025  
4:43 AM

Change from rain to snow expected, with the potential for freezing rain or a wintry mix in between.

- Precipitation will begin as rain before transitioning to snow from west to east this afternoon and tonight.
- There is potential for areas of freezing rain, sleet, and/or wintry mix during the transitional phase.
  - Greatest chances (80-100%) for wintry mix/freezing rain exists from US Highway 12 down to and including Interstate 90.
- The most likely time of the change from rain to snow is highlighted in the pink box in the table to the right.

Weather Forecast													
	3/29 Sat						3/30 Sun						
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	5%	10%	20%	50%	75%	50%	25%	15%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Britton	5%	10%	20%	50%	70%	55%	45%	25%	15%	15%	15%	10%	10%
Chamberlain	35%	65%	90%	95%	95%	95%	80%	30%	25%	25%	25%	10%	10%
Clark	15%	30%	50%	90%	90%	65%	70%	30%	15%	15%	15%	10%	10%
Eagle Butte	10%	15%	15%	35%	55%	30%	15%	10%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Eureka	5%	5%	15%	25%	35%	25%	15%	10%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Gettysburg	10%	20%	20%	50%	75%	45%	20%	10%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
McIntosh	0%	5%	5%	10%	20%	20%	15%	10%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Milbank	5%	15%	40%	85%	90%	90%	80%	55%	35%	35%	35%	15%	15%
Miller	15%	35%	65%	90%	95%	60%	30%	15%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Mobridge	0%	5%	10%	25%	25%	20%	15%	10%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Murdo	30%	55%	80%	90%	80%	40%	15%	10%	15%	15%	15%	5%	10%
Pierre	20%	40%	60%	85%	80%	40%	15%	10%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Redfield	15%	25%	45%	85%	90%	75%	40%	15%	15%	15%	15%	5%	5%
Sisseton	5%	10%	30%	70%	80%	85%	70%	45%	20%	15%	15%	10%	10%
Watertown	10%	30%	55%	85%	95%	90%	75%	35%	15%	15%	15%	10%	10%
Webster	5%	10%	35%	75%	80%	80%	65%	30%	15%	15%	15%	10%	10%
Wheaton	5%	10%	25%	65%	85%	90%	70%	45%	35%	35%	35%	10%	10%

Created: 3 am CDT Sat 3/29/2025. Shows most impactful weather for the period ending at the time shown. Weather symbols display where Probability of Precipitation ≥ 01%

- Rain + - Fz Rain + - Wintry Mix + - Snow +

Created: 3 am CDT Sat 3/29/2025 |



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

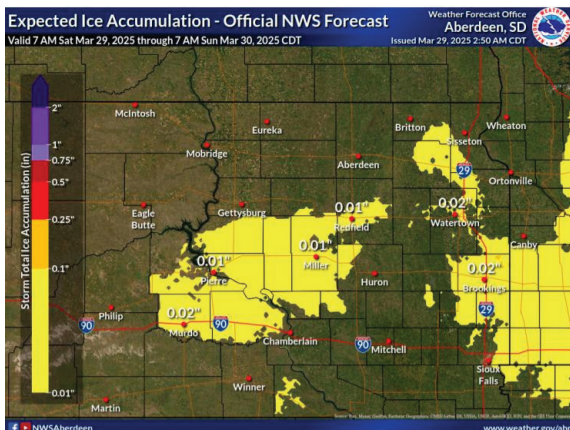
Precipitation will begin as rain before transitioning to snow from west to east this afternoon and tonight. South Central South Dakota will change over to snow first. During the transitional phase, there is a potential for areas of freezing rain, sleet, or wintry mix.

## Expected Snowfall and Ice Amounts

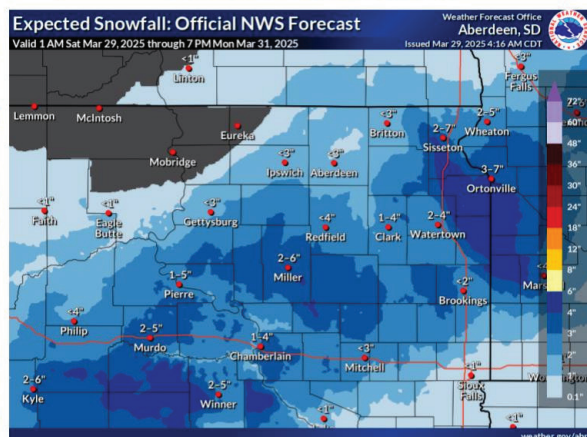
March 29, 2025  
4:48 AM

Change from rain to snow expected, with the potential for freezing rain or a wintry mix in between.

### Expected Ice Accumulation



### Expected Snowfall Amounts



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Generally, a trace to 3 inches of snow is expected over the area, with 3 to 6 inches possible along and east of the Sisseton Hills and south-central South Dakota. However, a slower or faster changeover from rain will significantly impact snowfall and ice accumulations.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 23 of 85

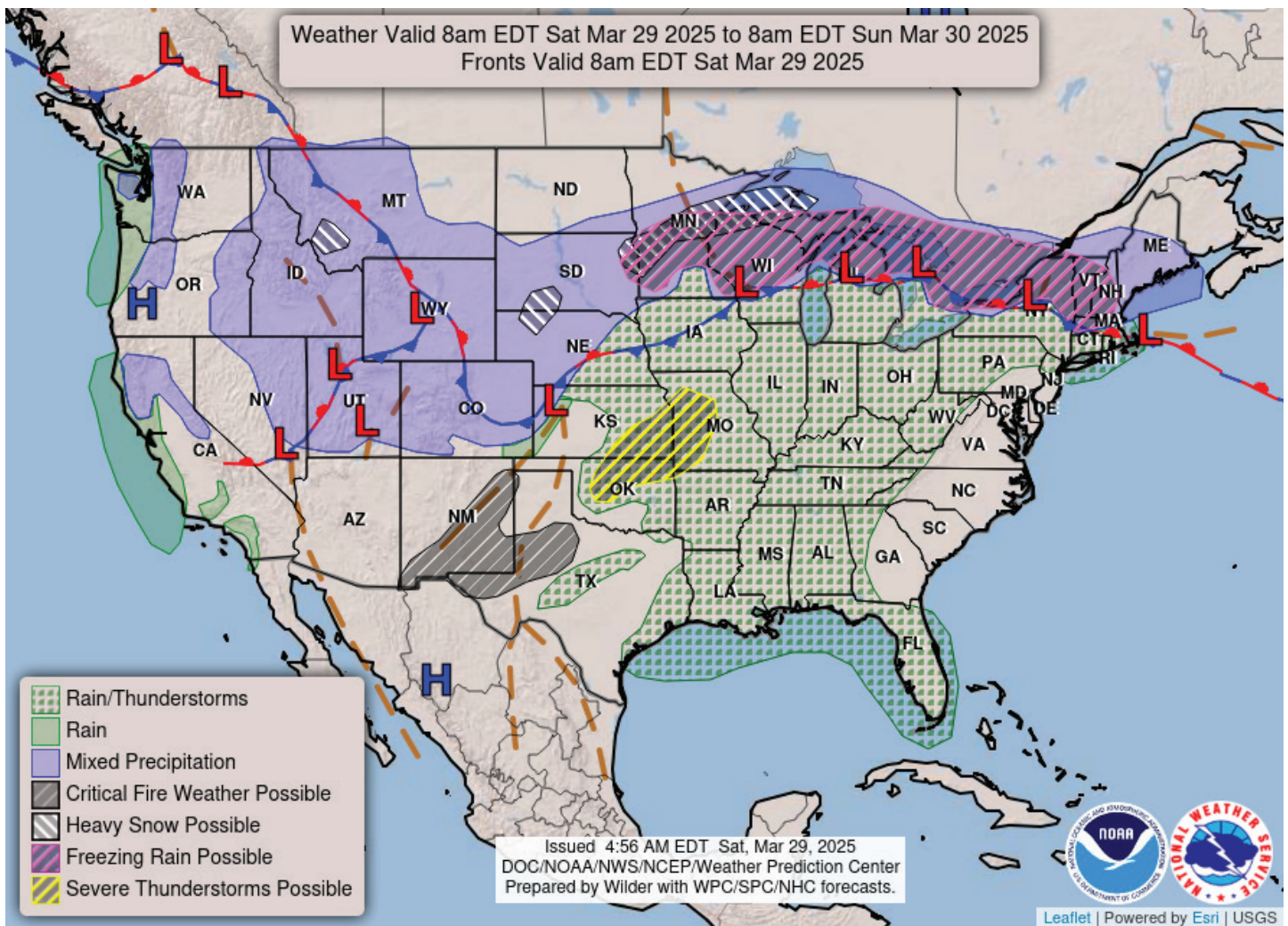
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 62 °F at 1:07 PM**  
**Low Temp: 34 °F at 11:26 PM**  
**Wind: 25 mph at 11:10 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 12 hours, 42 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 81 in 2021  
Record Low: -14 in 2023  
Average High: 49  
Average Low: 25  
Average Precip in March.: 0.81  
Precip to date in March.: 0.04  
Average Precip to date: 1.98  
Precip Year to Date: 0.49  
Sunset Tonight: 7:58:20 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:13:45 am



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 24 of 85**

## **Today in Weather History**

March 29th, 1982: An early season Tornado briefly touched down at Swett, South Dakota (11 miles west of Martin). The tornado overturned and heavily damaged a mobile home. One person was slightly injured, and another barely escaped injury, as he left the trailer just seconds before the storm struck.

March 29th, 1998: A supercell thunderstorm produced 13 tornadoes across southern Minnesota. The strongest tornado was an F4. Two people died during this tornado event.

1886 - Atlanta, GA, was drenched with a record 7.36 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1920 - Clear Spring, MD, received 31 inches of snow in 24 hours to establish a state record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1921 - The temperature in Washington D.C. dropped from 82 degrees to 26 degrees thus ending an early spring. (David Ludlum)

1935 - A severe duststorm blanketed Amarillo, TX, for 84 hours. During one six hour period the visibility was near zero. (28th-31st) (The Weather Channel)

1945 - Providence, RI, hit 90 degrees to establish a March record for the New England area. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms spawned tornadoes in Mississippi, and produced high winds and heavy rain in Louisiana. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 92 mph at Houma LA, and caused a million dollars damage in Terrebonne Parish. Avondale LA was deluged with 4.52 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms in the Lower Mississippi Valley spawned a tornado which injured two persons at Bunkie LA, and produced high winds which down a large tree onto a trailer at Bastrop LA claiming the life of one child and injuring another. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced torrential rains in northeastern Texas and southwestern Arkansas. Longview TX reported 14.16 inches of rain. More than eleven inches of rain at Henderson TX caused a dam to give way, and people left stranded in trees had to be rescued by boat. Total damage in northeastern Texas was estimated at 10 to 16 million dollars. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather in southeastern Texas and southern Louisiana. Thunderstorms spawned seven tornadoes, including one which injured seven persons at Gray LA. Thunderstorms also produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 70 mph at Port O'Conner TX, and produced up to six inches of rain in Beauregard Parish LA. (Storm Data)

2007 - Eighteen year old Corey Williams is killed by a lightning bolt in Carbondale, IL, at the Community High School's first home track meet of the season.

2011 - A record 766 inches of snowfall at Boreal Ski Resort and nearly 59 feet at Squaw Valley in California's Sierra Nevadas are just two areas where snowfall records have been broke.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 25 of 85



## UNSEEN BUT NOT USELESS

While leaving a restaurant recently, I paused and expressed my delight to the hostess for the delicious meal I had just eaten. Smiling, she said, "I'll mention that to our chef. I'm certain that he will be happy to hear that."

Walking to my car, I thought about all of the people, who would dine in the restaurant that evening, enjoy their meals and never think of the many different individuals who contributed to their dinner. In fact, it would be practically impossible to list everyone who contributed to the meal: farmers, chemists, mechanical engineers, oil rig operators, carpenters...and the list goes on and on. We will never know nor will ever see or meet most of those who bring good things to our lives.

Paul said, "...be strong and steady, and always enthusiastic about the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." What an encouraging reminder to all who serve God. Also, what we do for the Lord is to be done wholeheartedly, with complete dedication, with enthusiasm and excitement.

It is easy to become discouraged or apathetic if we are not recognized, receive no awards or see many results for what we do. It is a struggle to find time to study a Sunday school lesson, be present for choir rehearsal after a long day at work or attend endless meetings. But, if we do what we do for the Lord, it is not useless and will bring joy into our lives.

Prayer: Father, remind us frequently and challenge us constantly that we are Your servants in Your Kingdom doing Your work and it will always be useful. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless. 1 Corinthians 15:58

*We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him*

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 26 of 85

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- ☐ Black & White .....\$48.99/year
- ☐ Colored .....\$79.88/year
- ☐ Colored .....\$42.60/6 months
- ☐ E-Weekly\* .....\$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent [www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com) Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- ☐ 1 Month .....\$15.98
- ☐ 3 Months.....\$26.63
- ☐ 6 Months.....\$31.95
- ☐ 9 Months.....\$42.60
- ☐ 12 Months.....\$53.25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul    Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 27 of 85



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.28.25

2 9 31 60 63 23

MegaPlier: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$29,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.26.25

16 19 30 37 47 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$27,470,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 39 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.28.25

10 15 23 31 40 18

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 54 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.26.25

3 14 24 30 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$80,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 54 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.26.25

26 32 41 51 66 22

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 23 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.26.25

5 20 29 39 53 6

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$515,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 23 Mins 12 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 28 of 85**

## **Upcoming Groton Events**

03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm  
03/29/2025 Men's Singles Bowling Tournament at the Jungle 10am, 1pm & 4pm  
04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm  
04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center  
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp  
04/12/2025 Groton Firemens Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
05/12/2025 High School Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove  
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm  
06/07/2025 Day of Play  
06/13/2025 SDSU 4 Person Scramble at Olive Grove  
06/21/2025 Groton Triathlon  
06/23/2025 Ladies 2 Person Scramble at Olive Grove  
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm  
07/11-13/25 2025 VFW 12U Class B State Baseball Tournament  
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm  
07/16/2025 Men's Pro Am Golf at Olive Grove  
07/25/2025 Ferney Open Scramble Golf at Olive Grove  
08/01/2025 Wine on Nine Fundraiser at Olive Grove  
08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm  
08/14/2025 Family Fun Fest, Downtown Main Street 5:30-7:30pm (2nd Thursday)  
08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm  
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove  
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest 10am-3pm City Park  
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm  
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

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

### **Kristi Noem refused to say who financed some of her travel.**

#### **It was taxpayers who were on the hook**

By JOSHUA GOODMAN, JIM MUSTIAN and SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — As then-Gov. Kristi Noem crisscrossed the country — stumping for President Donald Trump and boosting her political profile beyond her home state — she refused to reveal what her extensive travel was costing taxpayers.

In the weeks since Noem became Trump's Homeland Security secretary, that mystery has been solved: South Dakota repeatedly picked up the tab for expenses related to her jet-setting campaigning.

An Associated Press analysis of recently released travel records found more than \$150,000 in expenses tied to Noem's political and personal activity and not South Dakota business. That included numerous trips to Palm Beach, Florida, where Trump resided before retaking office.

Most of those costs covered the state-provided security that accompanied Noem, irrespective of the reason for her travel. Over her six years as governor, AP's analysis shows, South Dakota covered more than \$640,000 in travel-related costs incurred by the governor's office.

The expenditures include \$7,555 in airfare for a six-day trip to Paris, where she gave a speech at a right-wing gathering, costs associated with a bear hunt in Canada with her niece and a book tour that included a stop in New York. An additional \$2,200 stemmed from a controversial trip last year to Houston for dental work she showcased on Instagram.

Expenses spark uproar

The expenses, released last month following a lawsuit by The Dakota Scout, have incensed Republicans in the deep-red state, with several GOP lawmakers accusing Noem of tapping state funds to fuel her own political ascendancy.

The uproar comes as the Trump administration seeks to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse in government and as Noem has taken over DHS, the third-largest federal agency, with a budget and workforce many times the size of South Dakota's.

The spending "offends a lot of people," said Dennis Daugaard, a former Republican South Dakota governor, who added that costs generated by Noem's ambition for higher office could've been paid with campaign funds.

Taffy Howard, a GOP state senator who clashed with Noem over her refusal to disclose her travel expenses, expressed shock at the price tag. "It seems like an incredible amount of money," Howard told AP.

A spokesman for Noem, Tim Murtaugh, declined to answer detailed questions about the expenses but did not dispute that some of the travel lacked an apparent connection to state business. There's no indication the former governor broke any laws having the state foot the bill for security expenses — even on trips that critics said benefited her more than South Dakota taxpayers.

"Unfortunately, bad guys tend to make threats against high-profile public officials," Murtaugh said. "When it was a political or personal trip, she paid for her own travel out of her political or personal funds."

Josie Harms, a spokesperson for Noem's gubernatorial successor, said security requirements were "a matter of state business no matter where the governor may be."

"The scope of that security is not up to the governor," Harms added.

During her years in office, Noem frequently said that releasing the travel expenses would jeopardize her safety.

Lax disclosure requirements

South Dakota has relatively lax disclosure requirements for such travel expenses. Governors from both parties have used state funds to finance the travel expenses of their security details and staffers.

Critics called on Washington's Jay Inslee, a Democrat, to reimburse the state for similar costs resulting from his unsuccessful 2019 presidential run. And Ron DeSantis, Florida's GOP governor, also came under

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 30 of 85**

fire for racking up hefty travel tabs for his security detail during his bid for higher office.

Murtaugh, a spokesman for Noem in her personal capacity, questioned why Democratic governors were not being scrutinized for their travel on behalf of former Vice President Kamala Harris, their party's 2024 presidential nominee.

"They maintained aggressive political schedules on behalf of Kamala Harris but somehow escape media attention for costs associated with that, while Kristi Noem is being held to a different standard?" Murtaugh wrote in an email.

The more than 3,000 pages of records released to the Scout by Noem's successor included hotel receipts, restaurant bills and credit card statements.

Some expenses have no link to state business

The AP obtained the same records, as well as dozens of additional documents that show state officials acknowledged that "campaigning for Trump is not an official duty" of the governor in denying one of several requests to release her travel expenses.

The receipts are heavily redacted, so it's not always clear who incurred the expense. Only 30 items totaling \$2,056.72 were charged on the governor's state-issued Mastercard, according to her attorney.

Some expenses seemingly had no link to state business, such as \$21 hotel-room movie purchases. It's also unclear who attended meals that included unnamed "federal officials."

The state auditor questioned some of the charges, including the governor's office's use of a luxury airline travel agency for a flight to Paris and a \$2,000 change fee.

The state also ran up more than \$3,300 in late fees and interest. The record doesn't indicate how much was paid in overtime for staff and security accompanying Noem on her political excursions.

"Spending for security detail, as well as where and when they are deemed necessary, falls under the discretion of the governor," Jenna Latham, a supervisor in the state auditor's office, wrote to AP in an email.

Most of the expenses were incurred as Noem became a rising star in Trump's "Make America Great Again" universe and a contender to be his 2024 running mate. Her fortunes appeared to have suffered a blow after she revealed in a memoir that she shot and killed her farm dog, Cricket, after it scared away some game during a pheasant hunt.

This is not the first time Noem's travel has come under the microscope. A state government accountability board in 2022 had requested an investigation into her use of the state plane to attend political events, but a prosecutor found no grounds for charges.

State known for frugality

The records raise questions about the necessity of the travel and the secrecy surrounding the expenses.

Noem's office refused to release records related to a 2020 speaking engagement at AmpFest, a gathering of Trump supporters near Miami, telling a public-records requester the trip was "not for the purpose of the governor's official duties" and no receipts existed.

But the newly released records include several transactions in South Florida on those days, including a rental car and a stay at the posh Trump National Doral Miami. Days later, South Dakota picked up the tab for gasoline and hotel rooms for Noem's security so she could speak at a Republican fundraiser in New Hampshire.

"Noem's travel doesn't pass the smell test," said Viki Harrison, program director for Common Cause, a nonpartisan group that seeks to limit big money in politics. "There should be a huge firewall between campaigning and official business."

Noem's predecessors traveled less frequently in a low-tax state that values frugality, both on the farm and from elected officials. Dugaard, whose official statue features him pinching a penny, said he reimbursed staff for purchases like ice cream.

Former Gov. Mike Rounds, now South Dakota's junior U.S. senator, said he tried to keep partisan activity at "arm's length" from state resources and was careful about what he put on the government's dime.

Such thriftiness was required, he said, because his state is "so tight on everything to begin with, just in terms of having enough money to pay the bills."



## Noem ends her first visit to Latin America in Mexico to discuss crime and migration

MEXICO CITY (AP) — U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem landed in Mexico on Friday to cap off a tour to three Latin American nations to discuss immigration, crime and deportation.

Noem's first visit to the region comes as it gains increasing importance to the Trump administration, which is attempting to scale up deportation efforts and warn against migration north. As Noem visited El Salvador and Colombia, Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited Guyana to meet with a number of Caribbean leaders.

After being greeted at the airport by Mexico's foreign minister, Noem met with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and other top Mexican officials. The two leaders were photographed sitting next to each other in a meeting room along with other aids and together in front of American and Mexican flags.

Sheinbaum's government has been working to offset tariffs lodged by the Trump administration, which economic forecasters say could thrust the Mexican economy into a recession.

In exchange for delaying sanctions in past months, the Mexican government sent 10,000 troops to the U.S.-Mexico border and reported sharp crackdowns on drug labs. It also sent 29 top cartel figures long sought by the American government to the U.S. to face justice.

After the meeting on Friday, Noem wrote on a post on the social media platform on X that the moves were "a positive step."

"But there is still much work to be done to stop the flow of drugs and illegal immigrants into our country," she added.

Sheinbaum, meanwhile, called the meeting "fruitful" and said Mexico and the U.S. "maintain a good relationship within a framework of respect for each other's sovereignty."

Despite 25% tariffs on auto parts announced by U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this week, Sheinbaum said ahead of the meeting that the focus of her conversation with Noem would largely be about security and migration, adding that she would emphasize Mexico's sovereignty in the meeting.

"More than informing, we're going to share with her what is being done and also the coordination and collaboration that has been established with the United States," Sheinbaum said in her morning press briefing. "It is going to be a cordial meeting on coordination."

While other leaders have taken a more confrontational approach with Trump and imposed reciprocal tariffs, Sheinbaum has walked a fine line with the Republican U.S. president, and the government has taken a collaborative approach to offset the economic blow. On Wednesday, Sheinbaum said Mexico would seek "preferential treatment" to Trump's auto tariffs.

Sheinbaum's managing of the relationship with Trump has been met by soaring approval in Mexico.

## Drake hires South Dakota State's Eric Henderson to replace Ben McCollum, who left for Iowa

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Eric Henderson, who led South Dakota State to two NCAA Tournament appearances in six seasons, has been hired as Drake's head coach, the school announced Friday.

The 46-year-old Henderson replaces Ben McCollum, who left for Iowa on Monday after leading the Bulldogs to the Missouri Valley Conference regular-season and tournament championships and a first-round win over Missouri in the NCAA Tournament.

"My family and I are elated to join Drake Nation," Henderson said. "Early on in this process it became evident that values and vision aligned with the incredible path President (Marty) Martin and (athletic director) Brian Hardin have already established. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity they have given me and my family to walk that path with them. The excitement for Drake basketball is at an all-time high, and I'm looking forward to building relationships and representing such a committed university and fan base."

Henderson is a native of Coggon, Iowa, about 140 miles northeast of Drake's campus in Des Moines. He played at Wayne State in Nebraska under current Creighton coach Greg McDermott and worked as a

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 32 of 85**

coach at the high school and college levels before he was hired as a South Dakota State assistant in 2014.

He was hired as the Jackrabbits' coach in 2019, after current Iowa State coach T.J. Otzelberger left for UNLV, and was 129-60 overall and 76-20 in Summit League play. Henderson's squads never finished worse than third in the Summit League and won at least a share of the regular-season title four times. His 2022 and 2024 teams lost first-round games in the NCAA Tournament.

"Eric quickly established himself in a talented pool of candidates as the best person to lead our men's basketball program," Hardin said. "He elevated South Dakota State to not only the premier program in the Summit League but also one of the best programs at our level in the country."

## **Ukrainians expect Russia to launch a fresh offensive to strengthen its negotiating position**

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces are preparing to launch a fresh military offensive in the coming weeks to maximize the pressure on Ukraine and strengthen the Kremlin's negotiating position in ceasefire talks, Ukrainian government and military analysts said.

The move could give Russian President Vladimir Putin every reason to delay discussions about pausing the fighting in favor of seeking more land, the Ukrainian officials said, renewing their country's repeated arguments that Russia has no intention of engaging in meaningful dialogue to end the war.

With the spring fighting season drawing near, the Kremlin is eyeing a multi-pronged push across the 1,000-kilometer (621-mile) front line, according to the analysts and military commanders.

Citing intelligence reports, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia is getting ready for new offensives in the northeast Sumy, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia regions.

"They're dragging out the talks and trying to get the U.S. stuck in endless and pointless discussions about fake 'conditions' just to buy time and then try to grab more land," Zelenskyy said Thursday in a visit to Paris. "Putin wants to negotiate over territory from a stronger position."

Two G7 diplomatic officials in Kyiv agreed with that assessment. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the press.

Russia has effectively rejected a U.S. proposal for an immediate and full 30-day halt in the fighting, and the feasibility of a partial ceasefire on the Black Sea was thrown into doubt after Kremlin negotiators imposed far-reaching conditions.

Ukraine's emergency service said four people died and 21 were injured Friday evening after Russian drones struck Dnipro in the country's east. At least five more people were injured when a Russian ballistic missile struck Kryvyi Rih, President Zelenskyy's hometown, according to the head of the local military administration.

Battlefield success is clearly in Putin's mind.

"On the entire front line, the strategic initiative is completely in the hands of the Russian armed forces," Putin said Thursday at a forum in the Arctic port of Murmansk. "Our troops, our guys are moving forward and liberating one territory after another, one settlement after another, every day."

Kremlin forces keep pressing forward

Ukrainian military commanders said Russia recently stepped up attacks to improve its tactical positions ahead of the expected broader offensive.

"They need time until May, that's all," said Ukrainian military analyst Pavlo Narozhnyi, who works with soldiers and learns about intelligence from them.

In the north, Russian and North Korean soldiers have nearly deprived Kyiv of an essential bargaining chip by retaking most of Russia's Kursk region, where Ukrainian soldiers staged a daring incursion last year. Battles have also escalated along the eastern front in Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia.

A concern among some commanders is whether Russia might divert battle-hardened forces from Kursk to other parts of the east.

"It will be hard. The forces from Kursk will come on a high from their wins there," said a Ukrainian bat-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 33 of 85**

talion commander in the Donetsk region, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe his concerns.

"They are preparing offensive actions on the front that should last from six to nine months, almost all of 2025," said Ukrainian military analyst Oleksii Hetman, who has connections to the military's general staff.

Fighting intensifies on parts of the front line

Russia entered negotiations with a clear advantage in the war. Now, after recapturing 80% of its territory in the Kursk region ahead of talks, its forces have intensified their fighting across other parts of the front line.

"The number of clashes on the front line is not decreasing," Hetman said. "If they wanted to stop the war, their actions certainly don't show it."

Russia ramped up reconnaissance missions to find and destroy firing positions, drone systems and other capabilities that could impede a future onslaught, two Ukrainian commanders said.

"These can be all signs that an attack is being prepared in the near future," Hetman said.

Fighting also intensified in the eastern city of Pokrovsk, one of Ukraine's main defensive strongholds and a key logistics hub in the Donetsk region. Its capture would bring Russia closer to its stated aim of capturing the entire region.

"The Russians were significantly exhausted over the past two months. During 10 days of March, they took a sort of pause," military spokesman Maj. Viktor Trehubov said of the situation in Pokrovsk. In mid-March, the attack resumed. "This means the Russians have simply recovered."

Russia increases reconnaissance missions

A Ukrainian soldier with the call sign "Italian" said Russia was conducting intensive reconnaissance in his area of responsibility in the Pokrovsk region. Radio intercepts and intelligence show a buildup of forces in the area around Selidove, a city in the Pokrovsk region, and the creation of ammunition reserves, he said.

The buildup includes large armored vehicles, and the many new call signs overheard in radio transmissions suggest that fresh forces are coming in, he said.

Further south, a military blog run by Mikhail Zvinchuk, a former officer of the Russian Defense Ministry's press section, noted last week that Russian troops recently unleashed a new offensive west of Orikhiv in the Zaporizhzhia region.

The offensive will allow Russian forces to move toward the city of Zaporizhzhia and "force the enemy to redeploy its troops from other sectors, leaving Robotyne and Mala Tokmachka badly protected," the blog known as Rybar said, adding that the new offensive "could be the first step toward the liberation of the Zaporizhzhia region."

On Friday, Vladyslav Voloshyn, a spokesman for the Southern Defense Forces of Ukraine, said the situation in the region is fraught after Russia amassed more forces to conduct assaults with small groups of infantry.

"The tactic of using these small groups brings results to Russia" in other parts of the front line, he said.

Russian analysts project optimism that a future offensive will succeed.

"Both sides are actively preparing for the spring-summer campaign," Sergey Poletaev, a Moscow-based military analyst, wrote in a recent commentary. "There's a growing sense that the Ukrainian forces may be struggling to prepare for it adequately. Despite being worn down from combat, the Russian army has a real chance of achieving decisive success in the next six months to a year. This could lead to the collapse of Ukrainian defenses."

Little progress reported at negotiating table

Meanwhile at the negotiating table, Russian demands have curtailed the results of much-anticipated negotiations brokered by the U.S.

Earlier this month, after Russia effectively turned down the U.S. proposal for a complete, monthlong halt in the fighting, Moscow tentatively agreed to a partial ceasefire on Black Sea shipping routes.

But that agreement was quickly cast into doubt by Russia's insistence on far-reaching conditions that its state bank be reconnected to the SWIFT international payment system, something Kyiv and the EU rejected outright.

Along the front line, the reported ups and downs of the talks fuel frustration and worry.



"No one believes in them," said the Ukrainian soldier known as Italian, who spoke on the condition that he be identified only by his call sign in keeping with military protocol. "But there is still hope that the conflict will move in another direction. Everyone is waiting for some changes in the combat zone because it is not good for us now. We really don't want to admit that."

## Myanmar's earthquake death toll jumps to more than 1,000 as more bodies recovered from the rubble

By DAVID RISING and JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The death toll from a powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake in Myanmar jumped to more than 1,000 on Saturday as more bodies were pulled from the rubble of the scores of buildings that collapsed when it struck near the country's second-largest city.

The country's military-led government said in a statement that 1,002 people have now been found dead and another 2,376 injured, with 30 others missing. The statement suggested the numbers could still rise, saying "detailed figures are still being collected."

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is in the throes of a prolonged and bloody civil war, which is already responsible for a massive humanitarian crisis. It makes movement around the country both difficult and dangerous, complicating relief efforts and raising fears that the death toll could still rise precipitously.

The earthquake struck midday Friday with an epicenter not far from Mandalay, followed by several aftershocks including one measuring a strong 6.4 magnitude. It sent buildings in many areas toppling to the ground, buckled roads, caused bridges to collapse and burst a dam.

In the capital Naypyidaw, crews worked Saturday to repair damaged roads, while electricity, phone and internet services remained down for most of the city. The earthquake brought down many buildings, including multiple units that housed government civil servants, but that section of the city was blocked off by authorities on Saturday.

More damage in Thailand

In neighboring Thailand, the quake rocked the greater Bangkok area, home to some 17 million people, and other parts of the country.

Bangkok city authorities said so far six people have been found dead, 26 injured and 47 are still missing, most from a construction site near the capital's popular Chatuchak market.

On Saturday, more heavy equipment was brought in to move the tons of rubble, but hope was fading among friends and family members of the missing that they would be found alive.

"I was praying that that they had survived but when I got here and saw the ruin — where could they be? In which corner? Are they still alive? I am still praying that all six are alive," said 45-year-old Naruemol Thonglek, sobbing as she awaited news about her partner, who is from Myanmar, and five friends who worked at the site.

"I cannot accept this. When I see this I can't accept this. A close friend of mine is in there, too," she said.

Waenphet Panta said she hadn't heard from her daughter Kanlayanee since a phone call about an hour before the quake. A friend told her Kanlayanee had been working high on the building on Friday.

"I am praying my daughter is safe, that she has survived and that she's at the hospital," she said, Kanlayanee's father sitting beside her.

Thai authorities said that the quake and aftershocks were felt in most of the country's provinces. Many places in the north reported damage to residential buildings, hospitals and temples, including in Chiang Mai, but the only casualties were reported in Bangkok

Myanmar sits on a major fault line

Earthquakes are rare in Bangkok, but relatively common in Myanmar. The country sits on the Sagaing Fault, a major north-south fault that separates the India plate and the Sunda plate.

Brian Baptie, a seismologist with the British Geological Survey, said it appears a 200-kilometer (125-mile) section of the fault ruptured for just over a minute, with a slip of up to 5 meters (16.4 feet) in places, causing intense ground shaking in an area where most of the population lives in buildings constructed of

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 35 of 85

timber and unreinforced brick masonry.

"When you have a large earthquake in an area where there are over a million people, many of them living in vulnerable buildings, the consequences can often be disastrous," he said in a statement.

"From initial reports, that seems likely to be the case here."

A natural disaster on top of a civil war

Myanmar's government said blood was in high demand in the hardest-hit areas. In a country where prior governments sometimes have been slow to accept foreign aid, Min Aung Hlaing said Myanmar was ready to accept outside assistance.

Myanmar's military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, and is now involved in a bloody civil war with long-established militias and newly formed pro-democracy ones.

Military forces continued their attacks even after the quake, with three airstrikes in northern Kayin state, also called Karenni state, and southern Shan — both of which border Mandalay state, said Dave Eubank, a former U.S. Special Forces soldier who founded the Free Burma Rangers, a humanitarian aid organization that has provided assistance to both combatants and civilians in Myanmar since the 1990s.

Eubank told The Associated Press that in the area he was operating in, most villages have already been destroyed by the military so the earthquake had little impact.

"People are in the jungle and I was out in the jungle when the earthquake hit — it was powerful, but the trees just moved, that was it for us, so we haven't had a direct impact other than that the Burma army keeps attacking, even after the quake," he said.

In northern Shan, an airstrike on a rebel-controlled village just minutes after the earthquake killed seven militia members and damaged five buildings, including a school, Mai Rukow, editor of a Shan-based online media Shwe Phee Myay News Agency, told the AP.

Government forces have lost control of much of Myanmar, and many places are incredibly dangerous or simply impossible for aid groups to reach. More than 3 million people have been displaced by the fighting and nearly 20 million are in need, according to the United Nations.

"Although a full picture of the damage is still emerging, most of us have never seen such destruction," said Haider Yaqub, Myanmar country director for the NGO Plan International, from Yangon.

"Without a doubt, the humanitarian needs will be significant."

Rescue groups head to Myanmar

China and Russia are the largest suppliers of weapons to Myanmar's military, and were among the first to step in with humanitarian aid.

China said it has sent more than 135 rescue personnel and experts along with supplies like medical kits and generators, and pledged some \$13.8 million in emergency humanitarian aid. Russia's Emergencies Ministry said it had flown in 120 rescuers and supplies.

India also sent a search and rescue team and a medical team and Malaysia said it would send 50 people on Sunday.

South Korea said it would provide \$2 million worth of humanitarian aid through international organizations, and the U.N. allocated \$5 million to start relief efforts.

President Donald Trump said Friday that the U.S. was going to help with the response, but some experts were concerned about this effort given his administration's deep cuts in foreign assistance.

## Vance accuses Denmark of underinvesting in Greenland as Trump presses for US takeover of the island

By PHILIP CROWTHER, KIRSTEN GRIESHABER and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

NUUK, Greenland (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance said Friday that Denmark has "underinvested" in Greenland's security and demanded that Denmark change its approach as President Donald Trump pushes to take over the Danish territory.

The pointed remarks came as Vance visited U.S. troops on Pituffik Space Base on the mineral-rich, strategically critical island alongside his wife and other senior U.S. officials for a trip that was ultimately scaled

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 36 of 85**

back after an uproar among Greenlanders and Danes who were not consulted about the original itinerary. "Our message to Denmark is very simple: You have not done a good job by the people of Greenland," Vance said. "You have underinvested in the people of Greenland, and you have underinvested in the security architecture of this incredible, beautiful landmass filled with incredible people. That has to change."

Vance said the U.S. has "no option" but to take a significant position to ensure the security of Greenland as he encouraged a push in Greenland for independence from Denmark.

"I think that they ultimately will partner with the United States," Vance said. "We could make them much more secure. We could do a lot more protection. And I think they'd fare a lot better economically as well."

The reaction by members of Greenland's parliament and residents has rendered that unlikely, with anger erupting over the Trump administration's attempts to annex the vast Arctic island. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen pushed back on Vance's claim that Denmark isn't doing enough for defense in the Arctic, calling her country "a good and strong ally."

Soon after arriving, Vance briefly addressed U.S. troops stationed at the base as he and his wife sat down to lunch with them, saying that the Trump administration is very interested in "Arctic security." He and his entourage, including national security adviser Mike Waltz, Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, later received briefings from military officials.

It was minus-3 degrees F (minus-19 degrees C) when the delegation landed at the remote base 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) north of the Arctic Circle. "It's cold as s--- here. Nobody told me," Vance said, prompting laughs.

The revised trip to the semi-autonomous Danish territory comes as relations between the U.S. and the Nordic country, a traditional U.S. ally and NATO member, have soured. Trump had repeatedly suggested that the United States should in some form control the island.

During his remarks at the end of the brief visit, Vance underscored that he did not think military force was ever going to be necessary as he pressed the idea of a dramatically enhanced American position on the island.

"Because we think the people of Greenland are rational and good, we think we're going to have to cut a deal, Donald Trump style, to ensure the security of this territory but also the United States of America," Vance said while adding that the people of Greenland had the right to determine their own future.

In Washington, Trump on Friday said the U.S. "needs Greenland for international security."

Trump, speaking to reporters soon after Vance's arrival, alluded to the rising Chinese and Russian interest in the Arctic, where sea lanes have opened up because of climate change.

"Greenland's very important for the peace of the world," Trump said. "And I think Denmark understands, and I think the European Union understands it. And if they don't, we're going to have to explain it to them."

After Vance's speech, Frederiksen said Denmark was increasing its defense capabilities in the region, including new Arctic ships and long-range drones.

With Greenland part of NATO, she also emphasized the collective responsibility of the alliance to defend the Arctic in response to the Russian threat. After Denmark stood "side by side with Americans" in its war against terror, she said it was "not a fair way" for Vance to refer to Denmark.

Denmark's ambassador to the U.S., Jesper Møller Sørensen, thanked Vance "for taking a closer look at Arctic security" and said both countries agree more could be done.

"Greenland & Denmark share a desire to strengthen our already incredibly close ties with our friend & ally," he wrote on social media.

Ahead of Vance's arrival, four of the five parties elected to Greenland's parliament earlier this month signed an agreement to form a new, broad-based coalition government. The parties banded together in the face of Trump's designs on the territory.

"It is a time when we as a population are under pressure," the prime minister-designate, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, said before the accord was signed to applause and cheers in the capital, Nuuk.

He added that "we must stick together. Together we are strongest," Greenland broadcaster KNR reported.

In a post on Instagram, Frederiksen congratulated Nielsen and his incoming government, and said, "I look forward to close cooperation in an unnecessarily conflict-filled time."



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 37 of 85**

Frederiksen said Tuesday that the U.S. visit, which was originally set for three days, created "unacceptable pressure." She has said Denmark wants to work with the U.S. on defense and security, but Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders.

Initially, Vance's wife, Usha Vance, had announced a solo trip to the Avannaata Qimussersu dogsled race in Sisimiut. The vice president subsequently said he would join her on that trip, only to change that itinerary again — after protests from Greenland and Denmark — to a one-day visit to the military post only.

Inhabitants of Nuuk, which is about 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) south of Pituffik, voiced concern about Vance's visit and the U.S. interest in their island.

Cora Høy, 22, said Vance was "welcome if he wants to see it but of course Greenland is not for sale." She added that "it's not normal around here" with all the attention Greenland is getting. "I feel now every day is about (Trump) and I just want to get away from it."

"It's all a bit crazy. Of course the population here is a bit shook up," said 30-year-old Inuk Kristensen. "My opinion is the same as everyone's: Of course you don't do things this way. You don't just come here and say that you want to buy the place."

As the nautical gateway to the Arctic and North Atlantic approaches to North America, Greenland has broader strategic value as both China and Russia seek access to its waterways and natural resources.

"We need to ensure that America is leading in the Arctic, because we know that if America doesn't, other nations will fill the gap where we fall behind," Vance said.

## **What is Eid al-Fitr and how do Muslims celebrate the Islamic holiday?**

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Muslims around the world are bidding farewell to the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and will soon start celebrating the holiday of Eid al-Fitr. Eid is typically greeted with joy and excitement and is marked with congregational prayers and festivities that usually include family visits, gatherings, outings and new clothes.

For some Muslims, this year's Eid comes amid significant changes in their communities.

In Gaza, this will be the second Eid al-Fitr to fall during the Israel-Hamas war. Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas in Gaza by launching a surprise wave of strikes that killed hundreds of people. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to free half of the remaining hostages as a precondition for extending the ceasefire. Earlier this month, Israel halted deliveries of food, fuel, medicine and other supplies to Gaza.

The resumption of war changed the fortunes of Palestinians in Gaza who had started observing Ramadan under a fragile ceasefire. Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The war was sparked by the Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel in which Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Syrians will celebrate their first Eid al-Fitr since the end of more than half a century of the Assad family's iron-fisted rule. The country's first Ramadan since the ouster of Bashar Assad, who was the president, saw many Syrians relieved, but has also witnessed a bloody and worrisome bout of violence amid a complex transition.

In the United States, several supporters of Palestinian causes with ties to American universities have been detained in the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants.

What is Eid al-Fitr?

It's an Islamic holiday marking the end of Ramadan, the month when devout Muslims fast daily from dawn to sunset. Ramadan is a time for increased worship, charity, and good deeds. It also typically sees festive gatherings to break the fast.

Eid al-Fitr means the feast, or festival, of breaking the fast.

When is Eid al Fitr?

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 38 of 85**

Islam follows a lunar calendar and so Ramadan and Eid cycle through the seasons. This year, the first day of Eid al-Fitr is expected to be on or around March 30; the exact date may vary among countries and Muslim communities.

What are some common Eid greetings?

Eid Mubarak, or Blessed Eid, and Happy Eid.

What are some of the traditions and customs associated with Eid al-Fitr?

In Indonesia, many people embark on an exodus to their hometowns to celebrate the holiday with loved ones in a homecoming tradition known locally as "mudik."

In recent Eid celebrations, Indonesians have packed airports or crammed into trains, ferries, buses and onto motorcycles as they poured out of major cities amid severe traffic congestion to return to their villages to celebrate the holiday with families.

Before the holiday, popular markets teem with shoppers buying clothes, shoes, cookies and sweets.

In Malaysia, Muslims also have a homecoming tradition for Eid. The first day usually begins with a morning prayer in the mosque, seeking forgiveness from family and friends, and visiting loved ones' graves.

There's an "open house" spirit that sees friends and families trading visits to celebrate Eid and enjoy traditional delicacies such as ketupat, rice cooked in a palm leaf pouch, and rendang, a meat dish stewed in spices and braised in coconut milk.

Older Muslims give money in green packets to children and guests who visit their homes.

In Egypt, families partake in Eid prayers amid a festive atmosphere. Many visit relatives, friends or neighbors and some travel to vacation spots. Children, usually wearing new Eid outfits, receive traditional cash gifts known as "eidiya."

Making or buying Eid cookies dusted with powdered sugar is another fixture of marking the holiday in the country.

In the United States, where Muslims make up an ethnically and racially diverse minority, many come together for Eid prayers and for festivals featuring fun activities for children and families. These often include such things as face painting and balloon twisting.

## **New US strikes against Houthi rebels kill at least 1 in Yemen**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Suspected U.S. airstrikes pounded Yemen overnight into Saturday, reportedly killing at least one person as the American military acknowledged earlier bombing a major military site in the heart of Sanaa controlled by the Houthi rebels.

The full extent of the damage and possible casualties wasn't immediately clear. The attacks followed a night of airstrikes early Friday that appeared particularly intense compared to other days in the campaign that began March 15.

An Associated Press review has found the new American operation under President Donald Trump appears more extensive than those under former President Joe Biden, as the U.S. moves from solely targeting launch sites to firing at ranking personnel as well as dropping bombs in cities.

Meanwhile, satellite photos analyzed by the AP show a mysterious airstrip just off Yemen in a key maritime chokepoint now appears ready to accept flights and B-2 bombers within striking distance of the country Saturday.

New strikes come as US releases video of one bombing

The strikes into Saturday targeted multiple areas in Yemen under the control of the Iranian-backed Houthis, including the capital, Sanaa, and in the governorates of al-Jawf and Saada, rebel-controlled media reported. The strikes in Saada killed one person and wounded four others, the Houthi-run SABA news agency said.

SABA identified the person killed as a civilian. Houthi fighters and their allies often aren't in uniform. However, analysts believe the rebels may be undercounting the fatalities given the strikes have been targeting military and intelligence sites run by the rebels. Many of the strikes haven't been fully acknowledged by the Houthis — or the U.S. military — while the rebels also tightly control access on the ground.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 39 of 85**

One strike early Friday, however, has been confirmed by the U.S. military's Central Command, which oversees its Mideast operations. It posted a black-and-white video early Saturday showing an airstrike targeting a site in Yemen. While it didn't identify the location, an AP analysis of the footage's details corresponds to a known strike Friday in Sanaa. The footage shows the bomb striking the military's general command headquarters held by the Houthis, something the rebels have not reported.

The Houthi-controlled Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministry in Sanaa separately said U.S. strikes Friday destroyed "broadcasting stations, communication towers and the messaging network" in Amran and Saada governorates. The strikes in Amran around the Jebel Aswad, or "Black Mountain," had appeared particularly intense.

US campaign follows Houthi shipping threats

The new campaign of airstrikes, which the Houthis now say have killed at least 58 people, started after the rebels threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid entering the Gaza Strip. The rebels in the past have had a loose definition of what constitutes an Israeli ship, meaning other vessels could be targeted as well.

The Houthis had targeted over 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two vessels and killing four sailors during their campaign targeting ships from November 2023 until January of this year. They also launched attacks targeting American warships, though none have been hit so far.

The attacks greatly raised the Houthis' profile as they faced economic problems and launched a crack-down targeting any dissent and aid workers at home amid Yemen's decadelong stalemated war that has torn apart the Arab world's poorest nation.

The Houthis have begun threatening both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two American allies in the region, over the U.S. strikes. That's even as the nations, which have sought a separate peace with the Houthis, have stayed out of the new U.S. airstrike campaign.

An AP analysis of satellite photos from Saturday shows the American military has moved at least four long-range stealth B-2 bombers to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean — a base far outside of the range of the rebels that avoids using allies' Mideast bases. Three had been earlier seen there this week.

That means a fourth of all the nuclear-capable B-2s that America has in its arsenal are now deployed to the base. The Biden administration used the B-2 with conventional bombs against Houthi targets last year.

The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman has launched attacks from the Red Sea and the American military plans to bring the carrier USS Carl Vinson from Asia as well.

Meanwhile, France said its sole aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, was in Djibouti, an East African nation on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. The French have shot down Houthi drones in the past, but they are not part of the American campaign there.

Mysterious airstrip in Bab el-Mandeb appears ready

Satellite images Friday from Planet Labs PBC show an airstrip now appears ready on Mayun Island, a volcanic outcropping in the center of the Bab el-Mandeb. The images showed the airstrip had been painted with the designation markings "09" and "27" to the airstrip's east and west respectively.

A Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis had acknowledged having "equipment" on Mayun, also known as Perim. However, air and sea traffic to Mayun has linked the construction to the UAE, which backs a secessionist force in Yemen known as the Southern Transitional Council.

World powers have recognized the island's strategic location for hundreds of years, especially with the opening of the Suez Canal linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas.

The work on Mayun follows the completion of a similar airstrip likely constructed by the UAE on Abd al-Kuri Island, which rises out of the Indian Ocean near the mouth of the Gulf of Aden.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 40 of 85

## Top-seeded Auburn rallies in 2nd half, beats Michigan 78-65 in Sweet 16 of March Madness

By PAUL NEWBERRY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — With Auburn's season on the brink, Tahaad Pettiford and Denver Jones suddenly became unstoppable.

On to the Elite Eight for the top overall seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Pettitford and Jones scored 20 points apiece to lead a second-half barrage that rallied the Tigers to a 78-65 victory over Michigan in the Sweet 16 on Friday night.

The Tigers (31-5) wiped out a nine-point deficit, outscoring No. 5 seed Michigan 39-17 over the final 1 1/2 minutes to advance to the Elite Eight for only the third time in school history. They also became the fourth Southeastern Conference team to reach a regional final, with the SEC joining the Atlantic Coast Conference (2016) and Big East (2009) as the only leagues to do that.

"Just the kids' will to win," Auburn coach Bruce Pearl said. "Denver got heated up. Tahaad got heated up. We went to them, and they delivered."

Auburn will face Michigan State in the South Region final on Sunday, with a trip to the Final Four on the line. The Spartans held off Mississippi 73-70 in the first game of the night in Atlanta.

Johni Broome scored 22 points to go along with 16 rebounds, but it was Pettiford, a freshman, and Jones, a senior, who took control when Auburn needed them most.

The Wolverines (27-10) built their biggest lead, 49-38, and seemed headed for their most improbable performance yet in a remarkable comeback season under first-year coach Dusty May.

But Pettiford sparked the comeback with a step-back jumper from beyond the 3-point stripe, Jones knocked down two straight from long range before scoring on a drive to the hoop, and Pettiford finished off Michigan with two stunning shots: a trey after briefly losing the ball but getting it back, followed by a three-point play when he knocked one down before landing flat on his back after being fouled.

"I saw one go in, and I just saw the basket get bigger and bigger," Jones said. "So I just kept shooting."

Danny Wolf led No. Michigan with 20 points, but no one else on the Wolverines managed more than 10.

Still, the Wolverines had plenty of reasons to be proud after bouncing back from an 8-24 debacle a year ago that set a school record for losses in a season and led to the firing of former Fab Five star Juwan Howard.

"They left a legacy," May said. "They established an identity. They should be very, very proud of their body of work."

The first half was played at a frantic but sloppy pace, with both teams plagued by turnovers and struggling to hit shots.

One sequence epitomized the opening 20 minutes. Tre Donaldson threw the ball away with a lazy pass, but Auburn gave it right back when Chad Baker-Mazara's unnecessary behind-the-back effort was picked off by Roddy Gayle Jr. The Wolverines took off the other way, only to have Donaldson turn it over again with an errant lob that sailed way out of bounds. In just nine seconds, the teams combined for three turnovers.

Auburn led 30-29 at halftime despite hitting just 12 of 37 shots (32.4%) from the field, including a 3-of-16 showing from beyond the 3-point arc, to go along with 10 turnovers. The Tigers gave themselves plenty of second and third chances, and even a fourth on one possession. They finished with 48-33 edge on the boards, including 19 rebounds at the offensive end.

Broome and the rest of Auburn's frontcourt held up just fine against Michigan's two 7-footers, Wolf and Vladislav Goldin.

"We took the game personal," Broome said. "That's a great front line, but we wanted to challenge ourselves to make it tough on them."

Home, sweet home

It felt a bit like an Auburn home game with the Tigers playing only 110 miles from their campus just across the state line in eastern Alabama.

The crowd, largely clad in orange and blue, broke into a "Let's go Auburn!" chant shortly after the tipoff

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 41 of 85

at State Farm Arena. They really erupted when the Tigers rallied in the second half.

"It obviously helped to elevate their play," Pearl said. "If you're the overall No. 1 seed, you should be able to play close enough to home so the fans can see it."

It definitely felt like a road game to the Wolverines, who were cheered on by a much smaller contingent.

"Obviously in the second half, they hit a few shots and the crowd erupted," Wolf said. "That was a huge momentum swing."

## Takeaways

Auburn: The Tigers lost in their first trip to the Elite Eight in 1986. They reached their lone Final Four in 2019, when a setback to eventual champion Virginia ended their season. ... Pearl did not like one line in particular on the stat sheet — 15 turnovers. "If Michigan can turn us over 15 times, Michigan State could turn us over 25 times," the coach said. "That's a concern."

Michigan: Goldin was held to 10 points on 2-of-9 shooting. He also led the Wolverines with nine rebounds. ... Nimari Burnett scored 10 points as well. ... Michigan shot just 35.6% from the field (21 of 59), including 5 of 17 from outside the stripe. ... The Wolverines had only six assists, compared to 15 for Auburn.

## They fled Syria years ago. Now, they spend their first Ramadan back amid nostalgia, relief and loss

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

DARAYA, Syria (AP) — When Mariam Aabour learned of the ouster of Syrian leader Bashar Assad, she shed tears of joy. But as the time came to return to her homeland from Lebanon — where she fled years earlier — Aabour felt torn.

She was happy about the homecoming, but sad to leave behind a son and a stepson who remained in Lebanon to work and pay off family debts. Months before her return, Aabour's father died in Syria without her seeing him. Her Syrian home has been destroyed and there's no money to rebuild, she said.

Thus it's been bittersweet experiencing her first Ramadan — the Muslim holy month — since her return. "We've all lost dear ones," she said. "Even after our return, we still cry over the tragedies that we've lived through."

As they spend their first Ramadan in years in their homeland, many Syrians who've recently trickled back in from abroad have been celebrating the end of the Assad family's rule in December after a fast-paced rebel offensive. They are relishing some new freedoms and savoring some old traces of the lives they once knew.

They enjoy family reunions but many also face challenges as they adjust to a country ravaged by a prolonged civil war and now grappling with a complex transition. As they do, they grieve personal and communal losses: Killed and missing loved ones, their absence amplified during Ramadan. Destroyed or damaged homes. And family gatherings shattered by the exodus of millions.

A time for daily fasting and heightened worship, Ramadan also often sees joyous get-togethers with relatives over food and juices.

Aabour — one of the more than 370,000 Syrians the United Nations' refugee agency, UNHCR, says have returned to the country since Assad's ouster — delights in hearing the call to prayer from mosques signaling the end of the daily fast. In her Lebanon neighborhood, she said, there were no nearby mosques and she relied on phones to know when to break the fast.

The hardest part, she added, is sitting for the fast-breaking meal known as "iftar" without some loved ones, including her father and a son, who she said was killed before the family fled Syria.

She bitterly recalled how her child, who she said was about 10 when killed, liked a rice and peas dish for iftar and would energetically help her, carrying dishes from the kitchen.

"I used to tell him, 'You're too young,' but he would say, 'No, I want to help you,'" she said, sitting on the floor in her in-laws' house which her family now shares with relatives.

Faraj al-Mashash, her husband, said he's not currently working, accumulating more debt and caring for

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 42 of 85**

an ill father.

The family borrowed money to fix his father's home in Daraya. It was damaged and looted, but still standing.

Many Daraya homes aren't.

Part of Rural Damascus and known for its grapes and its furniture workshops, Daraya was one of the centers of the uprising against Assad. The conflict devolved into armed insurgency and civil war after Assad crushed what started as largely peaceful protests; this Ramadan, Syrians marked the 14th anniversary of the civil war's start.

Daraya suffered killings and saw massive damage during fighting. It endured years of government besiegement and aerial campaigns before a deal was struck between the government and rebels in 2016 that resulted in the evacuation of fighters and civilians and control ceded to the government.

Today, in parts of Daraya, children and others walk past walls with gaping holes in crumbling buildings. In some areas, a clothesline or bright-colored water tank provides glimpses of lives unfolding among ruins or charred walls.

Despite it all, al-Mashash said, it's home.

"Isn't Daraya destroyed? But I feel like I am in heaven."

Still, "there's sadness," he added. "A place is only beautiful with its people in it. Buildings can be rebuilt, but when a person is gone, they don't come back."

In Lebanon, al-Mashash struggled financially and was homesick for Daraya, for the familiar faces that used to greet him on its streets. Shortly after Assad's ouster, he returned.

This Ramadan, he's re-lived some traditions, inviting people for iftar and getting invited, and praying at a mosque where he has cherished memories.

Some of those who had left Daraya, and now returned to Syria, say their homes have been obliterated or are in no condition for them to stay there. Some of them are living elsewhere in an apartment complex that had previously housed Assad-era military officers and is now sheltering some families, mostly ones who've returned from internal displacement.

The majority of those who've returned to Syria since Assad's removal came from countries in the region, including Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, said Celine Schmitt, UNHCR's spokesperson in Syria.

A main security fear for returnees is unexploded mines, Schmitt said, adding UNHCR provides "mine awareness sessions" in its community centers. It also offers legal awareness for those needing IDs, birth certificates or property documents and has provided free transportation for some who came from Jordan and Turkey, she said.

The needs of returnees, so far a fraction of those who've left, are varied and big – from work and basic services to house repairs or construction. Many, Schmitt said, hope for financial help to start a small business or rebuild, adding that more funding is needed.

"We're calling on all of our donors," she said. "There's an opportunity now to solve one of the biggest displacement crises in the world, because people want to go back."

Many of those who haven't returned cite economic challenges and "the huge challenges they see in Syria" as some of the reasons, she said.

In January, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said living conditions in the country must improve for the return of Syrians to be sustainable.

Umayya Moussa, also from Daraya, said she fled Syria to Lebanon in 2013, returning recently as a mother of four, two of whom had never seen Syria before.

Moussa, 38, recalls, at one point, fleeing an area while pregnant and terrified, carrying her daughter and clutching her husband's hand. The horrors have haunted her.

"I'd remember so many events that would leave me unable to sleep," she said. "Whenever I closed my eyes, I would scream and cry and have nightmares."

In Lebanon, she lived for a while in a camp, where she shared the kitchen and bathroom with others. "We were humiliated ..., but it was still better than the fear we've lived through."



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 43 of 85**

She'd yearned for the usual Ramadan family gatherings.

For the first iftar this year, she broke her fast with her family, including brothers who, she said, as fighters against the Assad government, had previously moved to then rebel-controlled Idlib province.

Missing from the Ramadan meal was her father who died while Moussa was away.

Like Moussa, Saeed Kamel is intimately familiar with the pain of a joy incomplete. This Ramadan, he visited the grave of his mother who had died when he was in Lebanon.

"I told her that we've returned but we didn't find her," he said, wiping away tears.

And it wasn't just her. Kamel had been hopeful that with Assad gone, they would find a missing brother in his prisons; they didn't.

Kamel had vowed never to return to a Syria ruled by Assad, saying he felt like a stranger in his country. His home, he said, was damaged and looted.

But despite any difficulties, he held out hope. At least, he said, "the next generation will live with dignity, God willing."

Kamel fondly recalled how – before their worlds changed – his family would exchange visits with others for most of Ramadan and neighbors would send each other iftar dishes.

"Ramadan is not nice without the family gatherings," he said. "Now, one can barely manage."

He can't feel the same Ramadan spirit as before.

"The good thing," he said, "is that Ramadan came while we're liberated."

## **Military review of fitness standards will find array of tests, but higher requirements for combat**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The defense secretary's decision to review military standards on combat and physical fitness and appearance opens a Pandora's box of widely differing rules among the services. And it will raise a crucial question: Should there be a cookie-cutter approach, or should service differences, evolving social norms and recruiting realities play a role in policy decisions?

Pete Hegseth has been very public about his opposition to women in combat jobs and his belief that standards were lowered to accommodate women, and he warned there would be reviews to address the issues. He is a staunch proponent of making all standards the same, regardless of gender, and military officials are braced for changes as reviews continue.

In a memo March 12, Hegseth said the undersecretary for personnel must gather information on military standards "pertaining to physical fitness, body composition, and grooming, which includes but is not limited to beards."

"We must remain vigilant in maintaining the standards that enable the men and women of our military to protect the American people and our homeland as the world's most lethal and effective fighting force," he wrote.

The effort is seen as a broadside against women serving on the frontlines — which they have been doing successfully for years. Hegseth's memo calls for a review of how standards have changed and the impact of those shifts since Jan. 1, 2015 — the year the Defense Department opened all combat jobs to women.

And it raises questions about whether he wants to make all fitness tests the same for the services and make them all gender- and age-neutral or whether he will set minimum standards and allow the services to require more stringent requirements as desired.

Eliminating the current policy of scoring annual fitness tests based on age and gender could hurt retention and recruitment if troops are suddenly told to meet a new, dramatically harder requirement. Such changes are generally phased in over time.

Here's a look at the current standards.

Physical fitness tests

The military has long had what is largely a two-part system for physical fitness standards:

— Routine annual fitness tests with different requirements based on gender and age.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 44 of 85**

— More grueling standards for specific combat, special operations, infantry, armor, parajumpers and other jobs that are the same for everyone in that occupation, and are not adjusted for age or gender.

Right now, the fitness tests are a hodgepodge.

Each service has basic tests that all service members must pass once or twice a year. For every service, the tests vary. Scoring is adjusted for gender and age. For example: A 20-year-old man must complete a run in a faster time than a woman or a 30-year-old man in order to receive the maximum score.

Fitness tests used to be simpler: a run, push-ups and sit-ups. They evolved over time and now can include options. For example, Air Force service members can do either a 1 1/2-mile run or a sprint. Other services will at times allow biking or rowing as a cardio substitute for the run; planks are now more widely used than sit-ups.

The Army and Marines have more extensive fitness tests..

The Army, in a major overhaul several years ago, expanded its fitness test to six events, including a dead lift, run, planks, push-ups, standing power throw and a combination sprint/drag/carry. The events were meant to mimic real-world military circumstances. An early plan to make that test gender and age neutral was scrapped after studies showed problems.

The Marine Corps has two tests a year. In the first half, Marines take a physical fitness test that includes a three-mile run, pull-ups and planks. In the second half of the year, they take a combat fitness test that includes an 880-meter run in combat boots, an ammo-can lift and an exercise that mimics troops' maneuver under fire.

The maneuver portion includes an obstacle course with a low crawl, high crawl and sprint, as well as dragging a person and using the fireman's carry.

Job-specific courses and standards

Specific military jobs like special operations, infantry, armor and parajumping require different, higher-level physical — and often mental and psychological — tests, requirements and qualification courses.

Those standards require everyone to meet the same gender- and age-neutral requirements. For example, an Army soldier who wants to be a Green Beret or a sailor who wants to be a SEAL must pass those grueling months-long qualification courses.

Also, after the Pentagon allowed women to be in all combat jobs, the Army set specific fitness standards for each military occupation that are the same regardless of sex or age. Recruits who want to serve in an infantry or armor job must pass a specific physical assessment that has higher, more significant demands, in order to sign a contract for that specialty.

Other standards

Over the years, a wide array of standards and requirements have been adjusted for reasons ranging from religious tolerance to recruiting and evolving societal trends.

In large part, they are driven by recruiting struggles and the need to woo those from a changing universe of American young people, including those with less academic schooling or people from states where marijuana is legal.

The Navy, for example, began in 2022 to enlist more recruits who score very low on the Armed Services Qualification Test. That was to help meet recruiting goals. A year later it began to bring in people who didn't graduate from high school or get a GED. Both were shifts that the other services have largely avoided. The Navy argued that it needed those lower-scoring recruits to fill jobs that involve intense manual labor.

Hegseth has said little about that type of standard and has focused on physical rather than mental fitness.

In addition, several services have changed policies on hair and beards. They now allow different buns and ponytails for women, and beards in certain circumstances for either medical or religious reasons. And most of the services have relaxed policies on marijuana in recent years.

Similarly, they have all loosened restrictions on the size and placement of tattoos, opening the door to full-sleeve tattoos. Most now allow small ones on the neck or finger.

## Private groups work to identify and report student protesters for possible deportation

By ADAM GELLER AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When a protester was caught on video in January at a New York rally against Israel, only her eyes were visible between a mask and headscarf. But days later, photos of her entire face, along with her name and employer, were circulated online.

"Months of them hiding their faces went down the drain!" a fledgling technology company boasted in a social media post, claiming its facial-recognition tool had identified the woman despite the coverings.

She was anything but a lone target. The same software was also used to review images taken during months of pro-Palestinian marches at U.S. colleges. A right-wing Jewish group said some people identified with the tool were on a list of names it submitted to President Donald Trump's administration, urging that they be deported in accordance with his call for the expulsion of foreign students who participated in "pro-jihadist" protests.

Other pro-Israel groups have enlisted help from supporters on campuses, urging them to report foreign students who participated in protests against the war in Gaza to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency.

The push to identify masked protesters using facial recognition and turn them in is blurring the line between public law enforcement and private groups. And the efforts have stirred anxiety among foreign students worried that activism could jeopardize their legal status.

"It's a very concerning practice. We don't know who these individuals are or what they're doing with this information," said Abed Ayoub, national executive director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. "Essentially the administration is outsourcing surveillance."

It's unclear whether names from outside groups have reached top government officials. But concern about the pursuit of activists has risen since the March 8 arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia University graduate student of Palestinian descent who helped lead demonstrations against Israel's conduct of the war.

Immigration officers also detained a Tufts University student from Turkey outside Boston this week, and Trump and other officials have said that more arrests of international students are coming.

"Now they're using tools of the state to actually go after people," said a Columbia graduate student from South Asia who has been active in protests and spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns about losing her visa. "We suddenly feel like we're being forced to think about our survival."

Uncertainty about the consequences

Ayoub said he is concerned, in part, that groups bent on exposing pro-Palestinian activists will make mistakes and single out students who did nothing wrong.

Some groups pushing for deportations say their focus is on students whose actions go beyond marching in protests, to those taking over campus buildings and inciting violence against Jewish students.

"If you're here, right, on a student visa causing civil unrest ... assaulting people on the streets, chanting for people's death, why the heck did you come to this country?" said Eliyahu Hawila, a software engineer who built the tool designed to identify masked protesters and outed the woman at the January rally.

He has forwarded protesters' names to groups pressing for them to be deported, disciplined, fired or otherwise punished.

"If we want to argue that this is freedom of speech and they can say it, fine, they can say it," Hawila said. "But that doesn't mean that you will escape the consequences of society after you say it."

Pro-Israel groups that circulated the protester's photo claim that she was soon fired by her employer. An employee who answered the phone at the company confirmed that the woman had not worked there since early this year. In a brief phone conversation, the protester, who has not been charged with any wrongdoing, declined to comment on the advice of an attorney.

Calls to report students to the government

The unearthing and spreading of personal information to harass opponents has become commonplace in the uproar over the war in Gaza. The practice, known as doxing, has been used to expose both activists



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 46 of 85**

in the U.S. and Israeli soldiers who recorded video of themselves on the battlefield.

But the use of facial-recognition technology by private groups enters territory previously reserved largely for law enforcement, said attorney Sejal Zota, who represents a group of California activists in a lawsuit against facial recognition company ClearviewAI.

"We're focused on government use of facial recognition because that's who we think of as traditionally tracking and monitoring dissent," Zota said. But "there are now all of these groups who are sort of complicit in that effort."

The calls to report protesters to immigration authorities have raised the stakes.

"Please tell everyone you know who is at a university to file complaints about foreign students and faculty who support Hamas," Elizabeth Rand, president of a group called Mothers Against Campus Antisemitism, said in a Jan. 21 post to more than 60,000 followers on Facebook. It included a link to an ICE tip line.

Rand's post was one of several publicized by New York University's chapter of the American Association of University Professors. Rand did not respond to messages seeking comment. NYU has dismissed criticism that she had any influence with its administrators.

In early February, messages from a different group were posted in an online chat group frequented by Israelis living in New York.

"Do you know students at Columbia or any other university who are here on a study visa and participated in demonstrations against Israel?" one message said in Hebrew. "If so, now is our time!"

An accompanying message in English by the group End Jew Hatred included a link to the ICE hotline. The group did not respond to requests for comment.

Facial recognition looms over protests

Weeks before Khalil's arrest, a spokesman for right-wing Jewish group Betar said the activist topped a list of foreign students and faculty from nine universities it submitted to officials, including then-incoming Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who made the decision to revoke Khalil's visa.

Rubio was asked this week how the names of students targeted for visa revocation were reaching his desk and whether colleges or outside groups were providing information. He declined to answer.

"We're not going to talk about the process by which we're identifying it because obviously we're looking for more people," he told reporters late Thursday during the return flight from a diplomatic trip to Suriname.

In a one-sentence statement, the Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE, said the immigration agency is not "working with" Betar, nor has it received any hotline tips from the group. But DHS declined to answer specific questions from The Associated Press about how it was treating reports from outside groups or the usage of facial recognition.

Betar spokesman Daniel Levy said that some people on its list were identified using the facial-recognition tool called NesherAI created by Hawila's company, Stellar Technologies, which was launched from his Brooklyn apartment. The software takes its name from the Hebrew word for "eagle."

Demonstrating the software for a reporter recently, Hawila paused repeatedly to tweak computer code to account for what he said was the just-completed ingestion of thousands of additional photos scraped from social media accounts.

After some delay, the software matched a screenshot of a fully masked protester — seen on video confronting Hawila at a recent march — with publicity photos of a woman who described herself online as a New York artist. He said he would report her to the police for assault.

Hawila, a native of Lebanon, is no stranger to controversy. He was the subject of news stories in 2021 when, after marrying an ultra-orthodox woman in New York, he was confronted with accusations that he lied about being Jewish. Religious authorities have since confirmed that his mother was Jewish and certified his faith, he said.

Hawila said he no longer works directly with Betar but continues to share protesters' names with it and other pro-Israel groups and said he has discussed licensing his software to some of them. He showed an email exchange with one group that appeared to confirm such contact.

"Technology, when used in good ways, makes the world a better place," he said.

Trump promised to crack down during campaign

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 47 of 85**

As a candidate, Trump campaigned on a promise to crack down on campus antisemitism and threatened to deport activists with student visas that he called violent radicals.

Soon after the election, Betar claimed on social media that it was working to identify and report international student protesters to the incoming administration.

"Entire university departments have been corrupted by jihadis," Levy said in a recent e-mail exchange with the AP.

Days before his arrest, Khalil said in an interview that he was aware of Betar's call for his deportation and that it and other groups were trying to use him as a "scapegoat."

Students protesting Israel's conduct in Gaza have been unsure what to make of Betar, which the Anti-Defamation League recently added to its list of extremist groups. The ADL has also voiced support for revoking the visas of foreign student activists.

At the University of Pittsburgh, leaders of Students for Justice in Palestine said they spoke with police in November after an online message from Betar that said it would be visiting the school to "give you beepers" — an apparent reference to Israel's detonation of thousands of electronic pagers last fall to kill and wound members of Lebanon's Hezbollah militia.

Ross Glick, who was Betar's executive director at the time, said that the message was "a tongue-in-cheek dark joke," not a threat.

Both sides said police eventually decided no action was warranted. Months later, Betar said that Pitt students were among those on its deportation list.

Students dependent on visas fear being targeted

The efforts to target protesters have fueled anxiety among international students involved in campus activism.

"They've abducted someone on our campus, and that is a key source of our fear," said the Columbia student from South Asia.

She recounted cancelling spring break plans to travel to Canada, where her husband lives, for fear she would not be allowed to reenter the U.S. She has also shut down her social media accounts to avoid drawing attention to pro-Palestinian posts.

And, because her apartment is off campus, she said she offered accommodation to other international students who live in university housing and are wary of visits by immigration officers.

Leaders of Students for Justice in Palestine chapters at George Washington University and Pittsburgh said some international students have asked to have their email addresses and names removed from membership lists to avoid scrutiny.

A Columbia graduate student from the United Kingdom said that when he joined a pro-Palestinian encampment last year, he never considered whether it might affect his immigration status.

Now he's rethinking an incident in October, when someone scattered fliers in a campus lounge celebrating the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel that sparked the war. A classmate who supports Israel accused him and others in the room of being responsible for the fliers and snapped their photos, according to the student, who said he had nothing to do with the material distributed.

"My main worry ... is that he shared those photos and identified us and shared it with a larger group of people," the student said.

Other students have been dismayed by an atmosphere that encourages students to inform on their classmates.

"It really bothered me because this cultivates this environment of reporting on each other. It kind of gives memories of dictatorship and autocratic regimes," said Sahar Bostock, who was among a group of Israeli students at Columbia who wrote an open letter criticizing efforts to report pro-Palestinian protesters.

"I had to say, 'Do you think this is right?'"

## New wave of smaller, cheaper nuclear reactors sends US states racing to attract the industry

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — With the promise of newer, cheaper nuclear power on the horizon, U.S. states are vying to position themselves to build and supply the industry's next generation as policymakers consider expanding subsidies and paving over regulatory obstacles.

Advanced reactor designs from competing firms are filling up the federal government's regulatory pipeline as the industry touts them as a reliable, climate-friendly way to meet electricity demands from tech giants desperate to power their fast-growing artificial intelligence platforms.

The reactors could be operational as early as 2030, giving states a short runway to roll out the red carpet, and they face lingering public skepticism about safety and growing competition from renewables like wind and solar. Still, the reactors have high-level federal support, and utilities across the U.S. are working to incorporate the energy source into their portfolios.

Last year, 25 states passed legislation to support advanced nuclear energy and this year lawmakers have introduced over 200 bills supportive of nuclear energy, said Marc Nichol of the Nuclear Energy Institute, a trade association whose members include power plant owners, universities and labor unions.

"We've seen states taking action at ever-increasing levels for the past few years now," Nichol said in an interview.

Smaller, more flexible nuclear reactors

Smaller reactors are, in theory, faster to build and easier to site than conventional reactors. They could be factory-built from standard parts and are touted as flexible enough to plunk down for a single customer, like a data center or an industrial complex.

Advanced reactors, called small modular reactors and microreactors, produce a fraction of the energy produced by the conventional nuclear reactors built around the world for the last 50 years. Where conventional reactors produce 800 to 1,000 megawatts, or enough to power about half a million homes, modular reactors produce 300 megawatts or less and microreactors produce no more than 20 megawatts.

Tech giants Amazon and Google are investing in nuclear reactors to get the power they need, as states compete with Big Tech, and each other, in a race for electricity.

States are embracing nuclear energy

For some state officials, nuclear is a carbon-free source of electricity that helps them meet greenhouse gas-reduction goals. Others see it as an always-on power source to replace an accelerating wave of retiring coal-fired power plants.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee last month proposed more than \$90 million to help subsidize a Tennessee Valley Authority project to install several small reactors, boost research and attract nuclear tech firms.

Long a proponent of the TVA's nuclear project, Lee also launched Tennessee's Nuclear Energy Fund in 2023, designed to attract a supply chain, including a multibillion-dollar uranium enrichment plant billed as the state's biggest-ever industrial investment.

In Utah, where Gov. Spencer Cox announced "Operation Gigawatt" to double the state's electricity generation in a decade, the Republican wants to spend \$20 million to prepare sites for nuclear. State Senate President J. Stuart Adams told colleagues when he opened the chamber's 2025 session that Utah needs to be the "nation's nuclear hub."

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott declared his state is "ready to be No. 1 in advanced nuclear power" as Texas lawmakers consider billions in nuclear power incentives.

Michigan lawmakers are considering millions of dollars in incentives to develop and use the reactors, as well as train a nuclear industry workforce.

One state over, Indiana lawmakers this month passed legislation to let utilities more quickly seek reimbursement for the cost to build a modular reactor, undoing a decades-old prohibition designed to protect ratepayers from bloated, inefficient or, worse, aborted power projects.

In Arizona, lawmakers are considering a utility-backed bill to relax environmental regulations if a utility

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 49 of 85

builds a reactor at the site of a large industrial power user or a retired coal-fired power plant.

Big expectations, uncertain future

Still, the devices face an uncertain future.

No modular reactors are operating in the U.S. and a project to build the first, this one in Idaho, was terminated in 2023, despite getting federal aid.

The U.S. Department of Energy last year, under then-President Joe Biden, estimated the U.S. will need an additional 200 gigawatts of new nuclear capacity to keep pace with future power demands and reach net-zero emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases by 2050 to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

The U.S. currently has just under 100 gigawatts of nuclear power operating. More than 30 advanced nuclear projects are under consideration or planned to be in operation by the early 2030s, Nichol of the NEI said, but those would supply just a fraction of the 200 gigawatt goal.

Work to produce a modular reactor has drawn billions of dollars in federal subsidies, loan guarantees and more recently tax credits signed into law by Biden.

Those have been critical to the nuclear industry, which expects them to survive under President Donald Trump, whose administration it sees as a supporter.

Supply challenges and competition from renewables

The U.S. remains without a long-term solution for storing radioactive waste, safety regulators are under pressure from Congress to approve designs and there are serious questions about industry claims that the smaller reactors are efficient, safe and reliable, said Edwin Lyman, director of nuclear power safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Plus, Lyman said, "the likelihood that those are going to be deployable and instantly 100% reliable right out of the gate is just not consistent with the history of nuclear power development. And so it's a much riskier bet."

Nuclear also has competition from renewable energies.

Brendan Kochunas, an assistant professor of nuclear engineering at the University of Michigan, said advanced reactors may have a short window to succeed, given the regulatory scrutiny they undergo and the advances in energy storage technologies to make wind and solar power more reliable.

Those storage technologies could develop faster, bring down renewables' cost and, ultimately, make more economic sense than nuclear, Kochunas said.

The supply chain for building reactors is another question.

The U.S. lacks high-quality concrete- and steel-fabrication design skills necessary to manufacture a nuclear power plant, Kochunas said.

That introduces the prospect of higher costs and longer timelines, he said. While foreign suppliers could help, there also is the fuel to consider.

Kathryn Huff, a former top Energy Department official who is now an associate professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, said uranium enrichment capacity in the U.S. and among its allies needs to grow in order to support reactor production.

First-of-their-kind reactors need to get up and running close to their target dates, Huff said, "in order for anyone to have faith that a second or third or fourth one should be built."

## Critics see Trump attacks on the 'Black Smithsonian' as an effort to sanitize racism in US history

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Donald Trump's order accusing the Smithsonian Institution of not reflecting American history notes correctly that the country's Founding Fathers declared that "all men are created equal."

But it doesn't mention that the founders enshrined slavery into the U.S. Constitution and declared enslaved persons as three-fifths of a person for the purpose of the Census.

Civil rights advocates, historians and Black political leaders sharply rebuked Trump on Friday for his order,



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 50 of 85**

entitled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History." They argued that his executive order targeting the Smithsonian Institution is his administration's latest move to downplay how race, racism and Black Americans themselves have shaped the nation's story.

"It seems like we're headed in the direction where there's even an attempt to deny that the institution of slavery even existed, or that Jim Crow laws and segregation and racial violence against Black communities, Black families, Black individuals even occurred," said historian Clarissa Myrick-Harris, a professor at Morehouse College, the historically Black campus in Atlanta.

The Thursday executive order cites the National Museum of African American History and Culture by name and argues that the Smithsonian as a whole is engaging in a "concerted and widespread effort to rewrite our Nation's history."

Instead of celebrating an "unparalleled legacy of advancing liberty, individual rights, and human happiness," the order argues that a "corrosive ... divisive, race-centered ideology" has "reconstructed" the nation "as inherently racist, sexist, oppressive, or otherwise irredeemably flawed."

It empowers Vice President JD Vance to review all properties, programs and presentations to prohibit programs that "degrade shared American values" or "divide Americans based on race."

Trump also ordered Interior Secretary Doug Burgum to determine if any monuments since January 2020 "have been removed or changed to perpetuate a false reconstruction of American history" or "inappropriately minimize the value of certain historical events or figures." Trump has long criticized the removal of Confederate monuments, a movement that gained steam after the May 2020 murder of George Floyd.

Critics argued the order is the latest move by the Trump administration to quash recognition of Black Americans' contributions to the nation and to gloss over the legal, political, social and economic obstacles they have faced.

Trump's approach is "a literal attack on Black America itself," Ibram X. Kendi, the race historian and best-selling author, said. "The Black Smithsonian, as it is affectionately called, is indeed one of the heartbeats of Black America," Kendi argued, and "also one of the heartbeats" of the nation at large.

Congressional Black Caucus Chair Yvette Clarke, D-N.Y., suggested that Trump wants to distort the national narrative to racist ends.

"We do not run from or erase our history simply because we don't like it," she said in a statement. "We embrace the history of our country – the good, the bad, and the ugly."

Trump once praised the 'Black Smithsonian'

The African American museum, one of 21 distinct Smithsonian entities, opened along the National Mall in 2016, the last year that President Barack Obama held office as the nation's first Black chief executive. The museum chronicles chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation and its lingering effects, but also highlights the determination, successes and contributions of individual Black Americans and Black institutions throughout U.S. history.

Former NAACP President Ben Jealous, who now leads the Sierra Club, said museums that focus on specific minority or marginalized groups — enslaved persons and their descendants, women, Native Americans — are necessary because historical narratives from previous generations misrepresented those individuals or overlooked them altogether.

"Attempts to tell the general history of the country always omit too much ... and the place that we've come to by having these museums is so we can, in total, do a better job of telling the complete story of this country," he said.

And, indeed, Trump sounded more like Jealous when he visited the African American museum in 2017, at the outset of his first term, and declared it a national gem.

"I'm deeply proud that we now have a museum that honors the millions of African American men and women who built our national heritage, especially when it comes to faith, culture and the unbreakable American spirit," Trump said following a tour that included Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina and then-Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson, both of whom are Black.

"I know President Obama was here for the museum's opening last fall," Trump continued. "I'm honored

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 51 of 85**

to be the second sitting president to visit this great museum.”

Trump’s war on ‘woke’ targets history

Trump won his comeback White House bid with a notable uptick in support from non-white voters, especially among younger Black and Hispanic men.

He ratcheted up attacks during his campaign on what he labeled “woke” culture and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, not just in government but the private sector. He also used racist and sexist tropes to attack Democratic nominee and Vice President Kamala Harris, the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to hold national office, and regularly accused her and other liberals of “hating our country.”

Since his Jan. 20 inauguration, Trump has banned diversity initiatives across the federal government. The administration has launched investigations of colleges — public and private — that it accuses of discriminating against white and Asian students with race-conscious admissions programs intended to address historic inequities in access for Black students.

The Defense Department, at one point, temporarily removed training videos recognizing the Tuskegee Airmen and an online biography of Jackie Robinson. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth fired Joint Chiefs Gen. C.Q. Brown, a champion of racial diversity in the military who spoke about his experiences as a Black man after the murder of George Floyd.

The administration has fired diversity officers across government, curtailed some agencies’ celebrations of Black History Month, and terminated grants and contracts for projects ranging from planting trees in disadvantaged communities to studying achievement gaps in American schools.

Warnings of a chilling effect

Civil rights advocates and historians expressed concern about a chilling effect across other institutions that study Black history.

Kendi noted that many museums and educational centers across the country — such as San Francisco’s Museum of the African Diaspora, The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration in Montgomery, Alabama, and the International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina — exist with little to no federal or other governmental funding sources. Some already are struggling to keep their doors open.

“To me, that’s part of the plan, to starve these institutions that are already starving of resources so that the only institutions that are telling America’s history are actually only telling political propaganda,” Kendi said.

## **Massive quake rocks Myanmar and Thailand.**

### **Hundreds feared dead**

By DAVID RISING and JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A powerful earthquake rocked Myanmar on Friday, causing extensive damage across a wide swath of one of the world’s poorest countries and prompting officials to warn that the initial death toll — above 140 — was likely to grow in the days ahead. In neighboring Thailand, at least six died in Bangkok, where a high-rise under construction collapsed.

The full extent of death, injury and destruction was not immediately clear — particularly in Myanmar, which is embroiled in a civil war, and where information is tightly controlled.

“The death toll and injuries are expected to rise,” the head of Myanmar’s military government, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said as he announced on television that at least 144 people were killed and 730 others were injured in his country.

In Thailand, authorities in Bangkok said six people were killed, 22 were injured and 101 were missing from three construction sites, including the high-rise. They revised the death toll Saturday morning from 10 reported the previous day, saying several critically injured people were mistakenly reported dead. Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt said that more people were believed to be alive in the wreckage as search efforts continued Saturday morning.

The 7.7 magnitude quake struck at midday, with an epicenter near Mandalay, Myanmar’s second-largest

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 52 of 85**

city. Aftershocks followed, one of them measuring a strong 6.4 magnitude.

Myanmar is in an active earthquake belt, though many of the temblors happen in sparsely populated areas, not cities like those affected Friday. The U.S. Geological Survey, an American government science agency, estimated that the death toll could top 1,000.

In Mandalay, the earthquake reportedly brought down multiple buildings, including one of the city's largest monasteries. Photos from the capital city of Naypyidaw showed rescue crews pulling victims from the rubble of multiple buildings used to house civil servants.

Rescue teams head to Myanmar

Myanmar's government said blood was in high demand in the hardest-hit areas. In a country where prior governments sometimes have been slow to accept foreign aid, Min Aung Hlaing said Myanmar was ready to accept assistance.

A 37-member team from the Chinese province of Yunnan reached the city of Yangon early Saturday with earthquake detectors, drones and other supplies, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Russia's emergencies ministry dispatched two planes carrying 120 rescuers and supplies, according to a report from the Russian state news agency Tass. India sent a search and rescue team and a medical team as well as blankets, tarpaulin, hygiene kits, sleeping bags, solar lamps, food packets and kitchen sets, the country's foreign minister posted on X. Malaysia's foreign ministry said the country will send 50 people on Sunday to help identify and provide aid to the worst-hit areas.

The United Nations allocated \$5 million to start relief efforts. President Donald Trump said Friday that the U.S. was going to help with the response, but some experts were concerned about this effort given his administration's deep cuts in foreign assistance.

But amid images of buckled and cracked roads and reports of a collapsed bridge and a burst dam, there were concerns about how rescuers would even reach some areas in a country already enduring a humanitarian crisis.

"We fear it may be weeks before we understand the full extent of destruction caused by this earthquake," said Mohammed Riyas, the International Rescue Committee's Myanmar director.

Bridge and monastery collapse and dam bursts in Myanmar

Myanmar's English-language state newspaper, Global New Light of Myanmar, said five cities and towns had seen building collapses and two bridges had fallen, including one on a key highway between Mandalay and Yangon. A photo on the newspaper's website showed wreckage of a sign that read "EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT," which the caption said was part of the capital's main 1,000-bed hospital.

Elsewhere, video posted online showed robed monks in a Mandalay street, shooting their own video of the multistory Ma Soe Yane monastery before it suddenly fell into the ground. It was not immediately clear whether anyone was harmed. Video also showed damage to the former royal palace.

Christian Aid said its partners and colleagues on the ground reported that a dam burst in the city, causing water levels to rise in the lowland areas.

Residents of Yangon, the nation's largest city, rushed out of their homes when the quake struck. In Naypyitaw, some homes stood partly crumbled, while rescuers heaved away bricks from the piles of debris. An injured man reclined on a wheeled stretcher, while another man fanned him in the heat.

In a country where many people already were struggling, "this disaster will have left people devastated," said Julie Mehigan, who oversees Christian Aid's work in Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

"Even before this heartbreaking earthquake, we know conflict and displacement has left countless people in real need," Mehigan said.

Myanmar's military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, and is now involved in a bloody civil war with long-established militias and newly formed pro-democracy ones.

Government forces have lost control of much of Myanmar, and many places are incredibly dangerous or simply impossible for aid groups to reach. More than 3 million people have been displaced by the fighting and nearly 20 million are in need, according to the United Nations.

Bangkok building collapsed in a cloud of dust

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 53 of 85**

In Thailand, a 33-story building under construction crumpled into a cloud of dust near Bangkok's popular Chatuchak market, and onlookers could be seen screaming and running in a video posted on social media. Vehicles on a nearby freeway came to a stop.

Sirens blared across the Thai capital's downtown as rescuers streamed to the wreckage. Above them, shredded steel and broken concrete blocks, some stacked like pancakes, rose in a towering heap. Injured people were rushed away on gurneys, and hospital beds were also wheeled outside onto a sidewalk.

"It's a great tragedy," Deputy Prime Minister Suriya Juangroongruangkit said after viewing the site.

Earthquakes are rarely felt in the Bangkok metropolitan area, home to more than 17 million people, many of whom live in high-rise apartments.

Voranoot Thirawat, a lawyer working in central Bangkok, said she first realized something was wrong when she saw a light swinging back and forth. Then she heard the building creaking, and she and her colleagues fled down 12 flights of stairs.

"In my lifetime, there was no earthquake like this in Bangkok," she said.

Fraser Morton, a tourist from Scotland, was in one of Bangkok's many malls when the quake struck.

"All of a sudden, the whole building began to move. Immediately, there was screaming and a lot of panic," he said. Some people fled down upward-moving escalators, he said.

Nearby, Paul Vincent, a tourist visiting from England, recalled seeing a high-rise building swaying, water falling from a rooftop pool and people crying in the streets.

The U.S. Geological Survey and Germany's GFZ center for geosciences said the earthquake was a shallow 10 kilometers (6.2 miles), according to preliminary reports. Shallower earthquakes tend to cause more damage.

Injuries reported in China

To the northeast, the earthquake was felt in China's Yunnan and Sichuan provinces and caused damage and injuries in the city of Ruili on the border with Myanmar, according to Chinese media reports.

The shaking in Mangshi, a Chinese city about 100 kilometers (60 miles) northeast of Ruili, was so strong that people couldn't stand, one resident told The Paper, an online media outlet.

## **US Judge temporarily halts deportations to third countries without a chance to challenge**

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

A federal judge temporarily blocked the Trump administration Friday from deporting people who have exhausted legal appeals to countries other than their own without first being allowed to argue that it would jeopardize their safety.

U.S. District Judge Brian E. Murphy ruled that people with final orders of removal must have "a meaningful opportunity" to argue that being sent to a third country presents a level of danger deemed worthy of protection. His order remains in effect until the case advances to the next stage of arguments.

The decision is a setback for an administration that has sent people to countries including Panama, Costa Rica and El Salvador when it is difficult to deport them to their homelands. In some cases a judge may determine that a person's homeland is too dangerous but authorities can send them to a third country.

The Homeland Security Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but administration attorneys argued that a temporary halt would interfere with immigration enforcement.

Murphy, who was appointed by President Joe Biden, sided with advocacy groups including the National Immigration Litigation Alliance, which sued Sunday in Boston on behalf of people who were transferred to third countries or feared they would be soon.

One plaintiff, identified only by initials in court filings, is a Guatemalan man who was sent to Mexico, where he says he was previously raped. A U.S. immigration judge determined that it was unsafe for him to go to Guatemala, but the man did not have a chance to argue against being sent to Mexico. The man is "hiding" in Guatemala.

An immigration judge ruled that another plaintiff could not be returned to Honduras, but she fears she



will be sent to a third country when she appears for a mandatory check-in next week at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices in Dallas.

## **Trump commutes the sentence of Ozy Media co-founder Carlos Watson in financial conspiracy case**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump commuted the sentence of Ozy Media co-founder Carlos Watson on Friday, just hours before Watson was due to report to prison for a nearly 10-year sentence in a financial conspiracy case.

Watson was convicted last year in a closely watched case that showcased the implosion of an ambitious startup company at a time of turmoil in the media industry. He had been ordered to surrender to prison on Friday.

Watson thanked the president in a statement and blasted the judge who sentenced him as “conflicted and unethical.”

“I am profoundly grateful to President Trump for correcting this grave injustice. His decision reflects his unwavering commitment to fairness and justice for those who have been wrongfully targeted,” Watson said.

Trump has aggressively used his presidential power to commute sentences and issue pardons for people who he believes were treated unfairly by the justice system. The president himself was convicted last year in a case involving hush money payments, part of what he has described as a politically motivated witch hunt against him.

Watson’s commutation was among a string of other acts of clemency revealed by the White House on Friday. They included Trevor Milton, the founder of electric vehicle company Nikola, who had been sentenced to four years for fraudulently exaggerating the potential of his technology and was pardoned; and three entrepreneurs who founded and helped run the cryptocurrency exchange BITMEX, which was ordered to pay a \$100 million fine earlier this year after prosecutors said it “willfully flouted U.S. anti-money laundering laws to boost revenue.” They had been sentenced to probation and were also pardoned.

Ozy was founded in 2012 on a premise of providing a fresh, sophisticated-but-not-stuffy take on politics, culture and more — billed as “the new and the next” — while amplifying minority and marginalized voices.

It announced it was shutting down in fall 2021 less than a week after a New York Times column raised questions about the media organization’s claims of millions of viewers and readers while also pointing out a potential case of securities fraud.

Watson was arrested in February 2023 after two of the company’s top executives pleaded guilty to fraud charges.

Prosecutors said Watson deceived investors and lenders by inflating revenue numbers and suggesting deals were final when they were not. At one point, Watson’s co-founder pretended to be a YouTube executive on a phone call with potential investors, according to prosecutors.

After Watson’s sentencing, then-Brooklyn U.S. Attorney Breon Peace said the jury had determined that “Watson was a con man who told lie upon lie upon lie to deceive investors into buying stock in his company.”

Ozy Media “collapsed under the weight of Watson’s dishonest schemes,” Peace said.

But Watson, who is Black, called the case “a modern lynching” and argued that he was the victim of “selective prosecution.”

“I made mistakes. I’m very, very sorry that people are hurt, myself included,” Watson said, but “I don’t think it’s fair.”

U.S. District Judge Eric Komitee, a Trump appointee, said during sentencing that the “quantum of dishonesty in this case is exceptional.”

Watson held degrees from Harvard University and Stanford Law School, worked on Wall Street, had on-air gigs at CNN and MSNBC, and boasted entrepreneurial chops. Ozy Media was his second startup, coming a decade after he sold a test-prep company that he had founded in his 20s.

Mountain View, California-based Ozy produced TV shows, newsletters, podcasts and a music-and-ideas

festival. Watson hosted several of the TV programs, including the Emmy-winning "Black Women OWN the Conversation," which appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Network.

Ozy snagged big advertisers, clients and grants. But beneath the outward signs of success was an over-extended company that struggled — and dissembled — to stay afloat after 2017, according to insiders' testimony.

The company strained to make payroll, ran late on rent and took out pricey cash advances to pay bills, former finance vice president Janeen Poutre told jurors. Meanwhile, Ozy gave prospective investors much bigger revenue numbers than those it reported to accountants, according to testimony and documents.

## **Is Elon Musk skirting election law in the Wisconsin Supreme Court race?**

By JILL COLVIN and SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Billionaire Elon Musk's unprecedented efforts to bolster the conservative candidate in next week's hotly contested Wisconsin Supreme Court race ran into legal hot water Friday amid accusations that he had broken state election law.

Musk announced late Thursday that he planned to hold a Sunday rally in Wisconsin, where he said he would "personally hand over" \$1 million checks to two voters who had already cast their ballots "in appreciation for you taking the time to vote."

Wisconsin state law expressly prohibits giving anything of value in exchange for voting — drawing a slew of complaints, including from Wisconsin's Democratic attorney, who sued Friday afternoon to block Musk from handing out the checks.

Amid the backlash, Musk deleted the post and later posted a revised offer.

"To clarify a previous post, entrance is limited to those who have signed the petition in opposition to activist judges. I will also hand over checks for a million dollars to 2 people to be spokesmen for the petition," he wrote.

Andrew Romeo, a spokesperson for Musk's political action committee, declined to comment on what had prompted the change.

What was the response?

Musk's initial post drew a flurry of accusations just days before Tuesday's election, which will determine the ideological makeup of the highest court in the perennial presidential battleground.

Attorney General Josh Kaul on Friday asked the circuit court to issue an emergency injunction to stop Musk from making the payments, calling them a "blatant attempt to violate" Wisconsin's anti-bribery statute.

They also took issue with Musk's political action committee, America First, offering to pay \$100 to any registered Wisconsin voter who signed a petition voicing opposition to "activist judges" — or forwarded it to someone who did. Earlier this week, the group announced that it had awarded \$1 million to a Green Bay man to serve as a "spokesperson for signing our Petition In Opposition To Activist Judges."

The recipient, Scott Ainsworth, has donated to Republicans and made social media posts supporting President Donald Trump and his agenda.

A bipartisan coalition of government watchdog groups and former officeholders, along with a liberal Madison law firm, asked the Wisconsin attorney general and the Milwaukee County district attorney to investigate the \$1 million payment and \$100 signing payments.

Wisconsin law makes it a felony to offer, give, lend or promise to lend or give anything of value to induce a voter to cast a ballot or not vote.

Numerous legal experts argued Friday that Musk's first post promising payments to voters for voting appeared to be in clear violation of the bribery statute.

"You cannot pay people to vote or not to vote," said Richard Painter, a law professor at the University of Minnesota and former White House ethics chief in the Bush administration. "His running these lotteries based on whether people vote or not, it's illegal. And he's got to cut that out."

Musk's revised X post, Painter said, "at least purports to comply with Wisconsin law."

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 56 of 85**

"I guess that technically complies," he said.

Does Musk deleting his original post make a difference?

Others weren't so sure.

Bryna Godar, staff attorney with the State Democracy Research Initiative at the University of Wisconsin Law School, said Musk changing the terms of his offer "puts the payments and attendance at the rally back into a gray area under Wisconsin law."

"The question is whether the offers are 'in order to induce' people to vote or go to the polls, and there can be arguments made on either side of that question," she said in an email.

She also said it is possible that Musk violated the election bribery law simply by offering the payments, even if no money is ever paid.

"Given that he already made the offer and that it was up while early voting was actively underway, there is a question of whether the initial post already violated state law, even though he has later walked it back," she wrote. "Deleting his post and changing the terms might mitigate the circumstances, but it does not necessarily resolve the legal issue."

Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair Ben Wikler was more blunt.

"Let's be very clear: Elon Musk committed a crime the moment he offered million-dollar checks 'in appreciation for' voting, and deleting evidence of that crime changes nothing," he said in a statement. "Under Wisconsin law, merely the offer of something of value — in this case, the chance to receive one million dollars — is plainly illegal."

A challenge to Musk's payments could end up before the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Has Musk tried this before?

Musk's political action committee used nearly identical tactics to the ones he is using in Wisconsin ahead of the presidential election last year, when he spent hundreds of millions of dollars helping President Donald Trump win a second term.

That included offering to pay \$1 million a day to voters in Wisconsin and six other battleground states who signed a petition supporting the First and Second Amendments.

Philadelphia's district attorney sued in an attempt to stop the payments under Pennsylvania law. But a judge said prosecutors failed to show the effort was an illegal lottery and allowed it to continue through Election Day.

Rick Hasen, a prominent election law expert at the UCLA School of Law, noted that the legal issues raised this week echoed concerns about Musk's tactics ahead of last year's presidential election.

"During the 2024 elections, there was a question whether Elon Musk was breaking federal law in offering various incentives only to registered voters, including what was essentially a lottery open only to registered voters," he wrote. "He's up to similar gimmicks in the upcoming, very expensive Wisconsin Supreme Court race."

What is Musk's involvement in the race?

According to a tally by the Brennan Center for Justice, America PAC and Building for America's Future, two groups that Musk funds, have spent more than \$20 million trying to help elect conservative Waukesha County Judge Brad Schimel, whom Trump endorsed last week.

Schimel is facing Democratic-backed Dane County Circuit Judge Susan Crawford in the race that will determine the ideological makeup of the state's highest court. Liberals currently have a 4-3 majority.

Musk also has given the Wisconsin Republican Party \$3 million, which can be passed along to Schimel's campaign.

That outside cash has made the race the most expensive judicial election in U.S. history, by far. More than \$81 million has been spent to date, obliterating the \$51 million record set just two years ago, when another seat on the same court was up for grabs.

The election will determine control of the court, but has also become a referendum on Trump's first weeks in office — as well as one on Musk himself.

During a telephone town hall for Schimel Thursday night, Trump implored his voters to turn out in the off-year election.

"It's a very important race," he said. "I know you feel it's local, but it's not. It's really much more than local. The whole country is watching."

Musk got involved in the race just days after his electric car company, Tesla, filed a lawsuit against Wisconsin in an effort to open dealerships in the state, which could eventually end up before the justices.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court is also expected to soon rule on a number of prominent national issues, including abortion rights, congressional redistricting and voting rules, which could affect the 2026 midterms and the 2028 presidential election.

Jay Heck, the executive director of Common Cause Wisconsin, a good government group, said that regardless of the outcome, Musk's efforts were "unprecedented" in the state.

"It's obscene and unprecedented. He's already put in close to \$20 million," he said. "This election for a Supreme Court open seat in Wisconsin is going to cost, when it's all said and done, somewhere between \$80 and \$100 million dollars. And this is to influence less than four million eligible voters, of which only 25-30% will turn out because this is a spring, low-turnout election."

## **Lawyer for immigration activist**

### **Jeanette Vizguerra suspects ICE is retaliating against her**

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A lawyer for a prominent immigration activist arrested this month told a judge Friday that authorities appear to be retaliating against Jeanette Vizguerra years after she took refuge in Denver churches to avoid deportation during the first Trump administration.

Vizguerra was arrested in the parking lot of the Denver-area Target store where she worked on March 17.

"We finally got you," agents told Vizguerra, according to her attorney, Laura Lichter.

Lichter told U.S. District Judge Nina Wang that she suspects Vizguerra was being targeted because she was exercising her First Amendment right to speech. Lichter cited unspecified media and social media reports as evidence of retaliation.

Lichter declined to elaborate on what speech she believed Vizguerra was being targeted for, but drew a connection between her detention and the detention of others, including protesters on college campuses, who have been detained by immigration authorities recently.

"I believe that the targeting here of Jeanette is in line with what we are seeing in other types of cases where people are being targeted for showing up at protests, for posting certain messages on social media, for having a particular opinion," Lichter said.

Lawyers had been set to argue over whether U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement could continue holding Vizguerra in detention in suburban Denver. Lawyers say she is being held on an invalid deportation order from 2013.

But Wang delayed those arguments after Vizguerra's lawyers said they would change their legal challenge to also claim that her First Amendment rights were being violated.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy Jafek said the government did not object to the change but did not respond to the retaliation allegation in court.

ICE says Vizguerra entered the U.S. from Mexico illegally in 1997 and is being held pending deportation. In a statement shortly after her arrest, ICE said the mother of four has a final deportation order and "has received legal due process in U.S. immigration court."

As they have done with other arrests recently, agency officials posted a photo on social media of Vizguerra being taken into custody with her hands behind her back and a chain around her waist.

Wang issued an order halting Vizguerra's deportation while the legal challenge plays out. She has noted the case raises "complex issues" about immigration law and she could not find a similar case.

ICE began trying to deport Vizguerra in 2009 during the Obama administration after she was pulled over in suburban Denver and found to have a fraudulent Social Security card with her own name and birth date but someone else's number, according to a 2019 lawsuit she brought against ICE. Vizguerra did not know the number belonged to someone else at the time, the lawsuit said.



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 58 of 85**

While a judge issued an order of removal against her, she also was given the option to leave the country voluntarily, which she ultimately did to try to see her mother before she died in 2012, her lawyers said in the current petition before Wang.

ICE wrongfully reissued a deportation order for her in 2013 and did not provide proper notice to Vizguerra, the petition says.

While Vizguerra has received multiple deportation delays in the past, her last stay expired over a year ago in February 2024, lawyers for the government said in a response to her petition. Until now, they say Vizguerra has never challenged the deportation order with the federal appeals court, which they say is the court that should decide whether it is valid.

## **US Naval Academy ends affirmative action in admissions**

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — The U.S. Naval Academy will no longer consider race, ethnicity or sex as a factor for admission to the service institution, a response to an executive order by President Donald Trump, according to federal court documents made public Friday.

The change in policy was made in February by Vice Adm. Yvette Davids, the academy's superintendent, in response to an executive order issued by President Donald Trump in January, according to a court filing by the U.S. Justice Department in the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The president's order on Jan. 27 said that "every element of the Armed Forces should operate free from any preference based on race or sex." It also directed the secretary of defense to conduct an internal review with respect to all "activities designed to promote a race- or sex-based preferences system," including reviews at the service academies.

"Under revised internal guidance issued by the Superintendent on Feb. 14, 2025, neither race, ethnicity, nor sex can be considered as a factor for admission at any point during the admissions process, including qualification and acceptance," according to the court filing made public Friday.

The decision comes after a federal judge ruled in December that the academy could continue considering race in its admissions process. In that case, the judge found that military cohesion and other national security factors mean the school should not be subjected to the same standards as civilian universities.

During a two-week bench trial in September, attorneys for the academy argued that prioritizing diversity in the military makes it stronger, more effective and more widely respected.

The case against the policy was brought by the group Students for Fair Admissions, which was appealing the judge's decision.

The Justice Department asked in the filing on Friday to suspend the current briefing schedule in the case while the parties consider the change in the academy's policy.

"The parties require a reasonable amount of time to discuss the details of the Academy's new policy and to consider the appropriate next steps for this litigation, including whether this litigation is now moot and, if so, whether the district court judgment should be vacated," the Justice Department wrote.

Edward Blum, president of Students for Fair Admissions, praised the academy's decision.

"Students for Fair Admissions welcomes the announcement that the U.S. Naval Academy will end its unfair and illegal race-based admissions policies. Racial discrimination is wrong and racial classifications have no place at our nation's military academies," Blum said in a statement.

Maryland Rep. Sarah Elfreth, a Democrat who serves on the academy's Board of Visitors, criticized the change, saying "this disastrous decision will have negative implications on our military's recruitment and retention for decades to come."

"A Navy and Marine Corps that reflect the diversity of our country is our strongest Navy and Marine Corps," Elfreth said. "Diversity and inclusion allow our academies to not just reflect how our country looks but are critical to mission readiness and strong national security."

Students for Fair Admissions also brought the lawsuit challenging affirmative action that resulted in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2023.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 59 of 85**

The high court's conservative majority broadly prohibited the consideration of race and ethnicity in college admissions, ending a long-standing practice meant to boost opportunities for historically marginalized groups and sending shock waves through higher education. But it carved out a potential exemption for military academies, suggesting that national security interests could affect the legal analysis.

Students for Fair Admissions later sued the Annapolis-based Naval Academy, challenging the exemption. But Judge Richard Bennett rejected their arguments, saying that the school had "established a compelling national security interest in a diverse officer corps."

Attorneys for the group argued during trial that prioritizing minority candidates is unfair to qualified white applicants and that cohesion should arise from other sources such as training and command structure.

The academy argued in that case that its admissions process considers many factors, including grades, extracurricular activities, life experience and socioeconomic status, according to court testimony. Race often played no role in the process, but sometimes it came under consideration in a "limited fashion," attorneys for the academy wrote in court papers.

## **Tufts University student can't be deported to Turkey without court order, judge says**

BOSTON (AP) — A Tufts University doctoral student who was detained this week can't be deported to Turkey without a court order, a federal judge in Massachusetts said on Friday.

Rumeysa Ozturk, 30, was taken by masked immigration officials as she walked along a street in the Boston suburb of Somerville on Tuesday.

Ozturk was quickly moved to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center in remote Basile, Louisiana, before her attorneys could secure a judge's order blocking the transfer.

On Friday, U.S. District Court Judge Denise Casper gave the government until Tuesday evening to respond to an updated complaint filed by Ozturk's attorneys.

"To allow the Court's resolution of its jurisdiction to decide the petition, Ozturk shall not be removed from the United States until further order of this court," the judge wrote.

Ozturk is among several people with ties to American universities who attended demonstrations or publicly expressed support for Palestinians during the war in Gaza and who have recently had visas revoked or been stopped from entering the U.S.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson has confirmed Ozturk's detention and the termination of her visa, saying investigations found Ozturk engaged in activities in support of Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist group. The department did not provide evidence of that support.

Hamas invaded Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, in an attack that killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and during which about 250 hostages were seized. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 50,000 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and destroyed much of the enclave.

Ozturk was one of four students who wrote an op-ed in The Tufts Daily last year that criticized the university's response to student demands that Tufts "acknowledge the Palestinian genocide," disclose its investments and divest from companies with direct or indirect ties to Israel.

Friends have said Ozturk was not otherwise closely involved in protests against Israel.

President Donald Trump's administration has cited a seldom-invoked statute authorizing the secretary of state to revoke visas of noncitizens who could be considered a threat to foreign policy interests.

## **Appeals court clears way for DOGE to keep operating at USAID**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court on Friday lifted an order blocking Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from further cuts at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Even before the ruling, the Trump administration on Friday took some of the last remaining steps in breaking up USAID.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 60 of 85**

A Musk associate told staffers that by September the Trump administration will have eliminated "substantially all" USAID jobs. The firing emails began reaching staffers' inboxes within minutes of the announcement from Jeremy Lewin, a former member of Musk's DOGE team, who was given senior duties at the agency this month.

The administration's aim is to eliminate the agency's "independent operation" by September, Lewin wrote staffers in the notice, which was obtained by The Associated Press.

In a separate notice, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the administration had formally notified Congress on Friday of its plans to cut most USAID programs and move surviving functions under the State Department.

The court order that had blocked DOGE from further cuts was in response to a lawsuit that was among the first filed against Musk himself. It argued that DOGE's actions were unconstitutional because he was wielding significant power without being elected or Senate approved.

A lower court judge agreed, but the three-judge appeals court panel sided with the Trump administration, at least for now. It found that while DOGE played a part in the dismantling of USAID, the cuts were approved by government officials.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found that social-media posts like Musk's declaration that he "fed USAID into the wood chipper" didn't legally prove he was making the orders.

Rather, the evidence indicates he was acting as an adviser to President Donald Trump, carrying out his policies of rooting out what he calls waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government, the court found.

"While defendants' role and actions related to USAID are not conventional, unconventional does not necessarily equal unconstitutional," U.S. Circuit Judge Marvin Quattlebaum, who was appointed by Trump, wrote. More evidence may be unearthed as the lawsuit keeps playing out but for now the record doesn't support barring DOGE from USAID, he said.

If the plaintiffs say that the dismantling of USAID violates the constitutional separation of powers, those claims should be directed at the administration, the appeals court suggested.

Norm Eisen, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said they disagreed with the ruling but took some solace in the judges leaving open the possibility that the USAID dismantling was unconstitutional on other grounds.

"This fight is far from over -- it's just beginning," Eisen said.

The Trump administration did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Friday's order halted a ruling from U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang in Maryland in a lawsuit filed by former USAID employees. He found DOGE's moves to dismantle the agency were likely unconstitutional.

Chuang had required the Trump administration to restore email and computer access to USAID employees, including those put on administrative leave, though he stopped short of reversing firings or fully resurrecting the agency.

Democratic lawmakers have challenged the Trump administration's legal standing to eliminate the six-decade-old aid and development agency as an independent body, or to cut its congressionally mandated funding, without congressional approval.

The Trump administration and Musk accuse USAID of being wasteful and advancing a liberal agenda. Democratic lawmakers and other USAID supporters say the aid and development work overseas protects U.S. strategic interests and is best run by USAID program managers.

Trump cut off foreign assistance funding through USAID and State with an executive order Jan. 20, the day he took office. The administration and Musk since then have closed USAID headquarters, pulled all but a fraction of USAID staff around the world off the job, and abruptly terminated thousands of aid and development contracts.

As a result of the shutdown, USAID partners have had to cut or trim programs or lay off staff, including some of the ones that normally would be aiding in the response to Friday's Southeast Asia quake, or to famine in Sudan and infectious disease outbreaks in Africa.

The administration initially gave USAID staffers abroad as few as 30 days to return home. Staffers protested, saying that made it impossible for them to sell houses, pull children from school, or return home

to pack if they had been on medical leave.

Lewin's note Friday did not exempt staffers abroad from the firings, but indicated they would be allowed a phased return to the U.S. — where many no longer have homes or jobs — over the summer.

## Utah bans fluoride in public drinking water, a first in the US

By MATTHEW BROWN, HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah has become the first state to ban fluoride in public drinking water, pushing past opposition from dentists and national health organizations who warn the move will lead to medical problems that disproportionately affect low-income communities.

Republican Gov. Spencer Cox signed legislation Thursday barring cities and communities from deciding whether to add the mineral to their water systems.

Florida, Ohio and South Carolina are considering similar measures, while in New Hampshire, North Dakota and Tennessee, lawmakers have rejected them. A bill in Kentucky to make fluoridation optional stalled in the state Senate.

The American Dental Association sharply criticized the Utah law, saying it showed "wanton disregard for the oral health and well-being of their constituents."

Cavities are the most common chronic childhood disease, the ADA noted. Fluoride strengthens teeth and reduces cavities by replacing minerals lost during normal wear and tear, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"As a father and a dentist, it is disheartening to see that a proven, public health policy, which exists for the greater good of an entire community's oral health, has been dismantled based on distorted pseudoscience," the association's president, Denver dentist Brett Kessler, said in a statement.

Is fluoride unhealthy? Some lawmakers say it is

The ban, effective May 7, brings into the mainstream concerns over fluoridation that for decades were considered fringe opinions.

It comes weeks after water fluoridation skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was sworn in as U.S. health secretary. Kennedy said in November that the administration of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump would advise water systems nationwide to remove fluoride.

Cox, who grew up and raised his own children in a community without fluoridated water, compared it recently to being medicated by the government. Utah lawmakers also said the ban was a matter of personal health choice and that putting fluoride in water is too expensive.

Florida's surgeon general last year recommended against community water fluoridation because of what he called its "neuropsychiatric risk." That guidance came after a federal judge ordered the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to regulate fluoride in drinking water because high levels could pose a risk to the intellectual development of children.

Federal officials determined last year "with moderate confidence" that there was a link between higher levels of fluoride exposure and lower IQ in kids. But the National Toxicology Program based its conclusion on studies involving fluoride levels at about twice the recommended limit for drinking water. The amounts of fluoride that can be added to water based on federal guidelines are below levels considered problematic, Kessler said.

It's nearly impossible to get a toxic dose of fluoride in water, the NIH says

The National Institutes of Health says very high doses of fluoride that can cause sickness are typically the result of rare accidents, such as the unintentional swallowing of fluoride used by dentists' offices or supplements inappropriately given to children. The agency says it's "virtually impossible" to get a toxic dose from fluoride that's added to water or toothpaste at standard levels.

However, communities sometimes exceed the recommended levels because fluoride occurs naturally at higher levels in certain water sources. In 2011, officials reported that 2 in 5 U.S. adolescents had at least mild tooth streaking or spottiness because of too much fluoride.

Since 2015, federal health officials have recommended a fluoridation level of 0.7 milligrams per liter of



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 62 of 85**

water. For five decades before that, the recommended upper range was 1.2 milligrams per liter. The World Health Organization has set a safe limit for fluoride in drinking water of 1.5 milligrams per liter.

Fluoride is considered one of the greatest health achievements in 100 years

The addition of low levels of fluoride to drinking water has long been considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the past century: one of the most cost-effective ways to prevent tooth decay on a large scale.

In 1950, federal officials endorsed water fluoridation to prevent tooth decay, and they continued to promote it even after fluoride toothpaste brands hit the market several years later. More than 200 million people in the U.S., or almost two-thirds of the population, receive fluoridated public water.

Fluoride in drinking water can reduce cavities by at least 25% for all age groups, according to the Utah Dental Association. Opponents of the Utah legislation to limit fluoridation warn it will have a disproportionately negative effect on low-income residents who may rely on fluoridated water as their only source of preventative dental care.

It's a matter of personal choice, Utah's bill sponsor says

The sponsor of the Utah legislation, Republican Rep. Stephanie Gricius, acknowledged fluoride has benefits, but said it was an issue of "individual choice" to not have it in the water.

Out of the 484 Utah water systems that reported data in 2024, only 66 fluoridated their water, an Associated Press analysis showed. The largest was that in the state's biggest municipality, Salt Lake City.

Utah in 2022 ranked 44th in the nation for the percentage of residents that receive fluoridated water, according to the CDC data.

## **Drought, wind, and debris from recent hurricanes are stoking fires across the US**

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

In North Carolina, wildfires stoked by unusually dry air and debris from last year's Hurricane Helene are burning out of control. In Florida, there are dozens of blazes, including one that scorched about 42 square miles in Miami-Dade County. And they continue to burn in Oklahoma, where four people have died this month due to wind-driven fires. Those states were just three of eight where large fires were being reported on Friday.

Some 14,800 wildfires have burned 1,105 square miles so far this year — well above the 10-year average, according to data released Friday by the National Interagency Fire Center. Most devastating were the Los Angeles wildfires in January, fueled by dry vegetation and howling winds, that destroyed entire neighborhoods.

Wildfires have happened with such frequency in recent years that many U.S. fire officials say there is no longer a "fire season," which traditionally ran from late spring through the fall. That is because climate change, caused by the burning of fuels like gasoline and coal, has raised average global temperatures, creating drier conditions that allow wildfires, which are mostly caused by humans, to burn longer and more intensely.

While major fires often happen early in the year — in February 2024, Texas experienced the largest wildfire in state history — this year is a bit unusual "because we're seeing it happen in so many places," said Brad Rippey, a U.S. Department of Agriculture meteorologist who monitors drought.

This week, 45% of the country is in drought, when historically it's around 20% at any given time, Rippey said. That dried out lots of fuel just waiting for a spark — from freeze-dried grasses in the southern Plains to downed trees and brush from hurricanes that ravaged parts of the southeast and southern Appalachians in recent years.

The National Interagency Fire Center's significant wildfire outlook notes that several states still have debris from hurricanes Laura, Ida, Debby and Idalia in the past five years, as well as from ice storms and other severe weather.

Add in gusty winds and low humidity, "and you've got a pretty ripe situation for wildfires," Rippey said.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 63 of 85**

In Hurricane Helene-devastated North Carolina, power lines downed by strong winds have been blamed for two of three large fires that have burned for more than a week in an area where the mean relative humidity this month has been the lowest on record, officials said. Impassable areas and lots of toppled trees are making it difficult to reach intense and erratic fires that are spreading rapidly because of high winds and dry weather.

Many roads have either been covered with storm debris or "they have just been completely washed away," said North Carolina Forest Service spokesman Philip Jackson, who said the fire danger could plague the state for years as more debris dries out.

Much of Florida also is in drought, contributing to an earlier-than-normal fire season that included a massive brush fire in Miami-Dade County that at one point hindered travel to and from the Florida Keys.

That fire is 95% contained while dozens of smaller fires continue to burn, according to the Florida Forest Service. Many counties are under red flag warnings, meaning conditions are favorable for fires to occur.

West Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Missouri and South Carolina also report large wildfires.

The greatest wildfire potential is in the southeast and the southern Plains, and will be significant into April in most of Texas and parts of New Mexico and Arizona, as well as several southeastern states, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

La Nina — a periodic cooling of the Pacific Ocean that can shift the jet stream and lead to cooler, drier air — might have affected conditions in the southern U.S., said Tim Brown, director of the Western Regional Climate Center.

But there also has been long-term drying in the southwest as temperatures overall increase with global warming, said Rippey, who has monitored drought for more than 25 years. Warmer temperatures have led to more erratic precipitation that tends to fall more heavily in short periods, leading much of it to run off rather than soak into the ground.

"I do think that contributes to more wildfires," he said.

## **Federal judge blocks Trump from dismantling Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge agreed Friday to block the Trump administration from dismantling the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, an agency that was targeted for mass firings before the court's intervention.

U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson agreed to issue a preliminary injunction that maintains the agency's existence until she rules on the merits of a lawsuit seeking to preserve the agency. The judge said the court "can and must act" to save the agency from being shuttered.

Jackson ruled that, without a court order, President Donald Trump's administration would move quickly to shut down the agency that Congress created in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

"If the defendants are not enjoined, they will eliminate the agency before the Court has the opportunity to decide whether the law permits them to do it, and as the defendants' own witness warned, the harm will be irreparable," Berman Jackson said in her order.

Deepak Gupta, an attorney for the plaintiffs, said in a statement that the ruling "blocks the unprecedented plan to dismantle the CFPB — an agency that Congress created to protect Americans' financial security. This ruling upholds the Constitution's separation of powers and preserves the Bureau's vital work.

"We're heartened by the decision and look forward to continuing to press our case in court," Gupta said.

During a March 10 hearing, Jackson heard testimony about the chaos that erupted inside the agency after government employees were ordered to stop working last month. The bureau's chief operating officer, Adam Martinez, said the agency was in "wind-down mode" after Trump fired its previous director, Rohit Chopra, on Feb. 1.

Trump installed a temporary replacement who ordered the immediate suspension of all agency opera-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 64 of 85**

tions, cancelled \$100 million in contracts and fired 70 employees.

Martinez said the agency's current leaders have adopted a more methodical approach than they initially did last month, when representatives of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency arrived at its Washington headquarters.

CFPB is responsible for protecting consumers from financial fraud and deceptive practices. It processes consumer complaints and examines banks to protect student loan borrowers.

The National Treasury Employees Union, which represents more than 1,000 workers at the bureau, sued on Feb. 9 to block mass firings. Plaintiffs' attorneys argue that the administration doesn't have the constitutional authority to eliminate an agency that Congress created by statute.

"The defendants' unlawful action will have immediate consequences for the Americans that the CFPB was designed by Congress to protect," the lawyers wrote.

Government lawyers have said the plaintiffs are seeking to impermissibly place the CFPB in a "judicially managed receivership," with the court overseeing its day-to-day operations.

Jackson started her 112-page ruling by quoting Trump and his allies' own words about the bureau. Trump's billionaire adviser, Elon Musk, posted "CFPB RIP" on X, his social media platform, and added an emoji of a tombstone. White House budget director Russell Vought said it has been "a woke and weaponized agency against disfavored industries and individuals for a long time." Trump called it "a very important thing to get rid of."

"In sum, the Court cannot look away or the CFPB will be dissolved and dismantled completely in approximately thirty days, well before this lawsuit has come to its conclusion," Jackson wrote.

Among the plaintiffs was 83-year-old Eva Steege, a Lutheran pastor in hospice care who had been working with CFPB to resolve her student loan debt before her death. The agency found she qualified for loan forgiveness and a \$15,000 refund of overpayments, but the stop-work order went into effect before she could have a follow-up meeting and the official she was working with was fired.

"Steege's fear of leaving her surviving family members saddled with her student loan debt came to pass on March 15, when she died," the judge wrote.

## **Wall Street tumbles, and S&P 500 drops 2% on worries about slower economy and higher inflation**

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Another wipeout walloped Wall Street Friday. Worries are building about a potentially toxic mix of worsening inflation and a U.S. economy slowing because of households afraid to spend due to the global trade war.

The S&P 500 dropped 2% for one of its worst days in the last two years. It thudded to its fifth losing week in the last six after wiping out what had been a big gain to start the week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average sank 715 points, or 1.7%, and the Nasdaq composite fell 2.7%.

Lululemon Athletica led the market lower with a drop of 14.2%, even though the seller of athletic apparel reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It warned that its revenue growth may slow this upcoming year, in part because "consumers are spending less due to increased concerns about inflation and the economy," said CEO Calvin McDonald.

Oxford Industries, the company behind the Tommy Bahama and Lilly Pulitzer brands, likewise reported stronger results for the latest quarter than expected but still saw its stock fall 5.7%. CEO Tom Chubb said it saw a "deterioration in consumer sentiment that also weighed on demand" beginning in January, which accelerated into February.

They're discouraging data points when one of the main worries hitting Wall Street is that President Donald Trump's escalating tariffs may cause U.S. households and businesses to freeze their spending. Even if the tariffs end up being less painful than feared, all the uncertainty may filter into changed behaviors that hurt the economy.

A report on Friday showed all types of U.S. consumers are getting more pessimistic about their future

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 65 of 85**

finances. Two out of three expect unemployment to worsen in the year ahead, according to a survey by the University of Michigan. That's the highest reading since 2009, and it raises worries about a job market that's been a linchpin keeping the U.S. economy solid.

A separate report also raised concerns after it showed a widely followed, underlying measure of inflation was a touch worse last month than economists expected. It followed reports on other measures of inflation for February, but this is the one the Federal Reserve pays the most attention to as it decides what to do with interest rates.

The report also showed that an underlying measure of how much income Americans are making, which excludes government social benefits and some other items, "has been treading water for the last three months," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management.

"Households aren't in a good place to absorb a little tariff pain," he said. "The Fed isn't likely to run to the rescue either as inflation moved up more than expected in February."

The Fed could return to cutting interest rates, like it was doing late last year, in order to give the economy and financial markets a boost. But such cuts would also push upward on inflation, which has been sticking above the Fed's 2% target.

The economy and job market have been holding up so far, but if they were to weaken while inflation stays high, it would produce a worst-case scenario called "stagflation." Policy makers in Washington have few good tools to fix it.

Some of Wall Street's sharpest losses on Friday hit companies that need customers feeling confident enough to spend, and not just on yoga wear or beach clothes. Delta Air Lines lost 5%. Casino operator Caesars Entertainment dropped 5%. Domino's Pizza sank 5.1%.

The heaviest weights on the market were Apple, Microsoft and other Big Tech stocks, whose massive sizes give their movements more sway over indexes. They and other stocks that had gotten caught up in the frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology have been among the hardest hit in Wall Street's recent sell-off.

Their prices had shot up so much more quickly than their already fast-growing revenues and profits that critics said they looked too expensive. CoreWeave, whose cloud platform helps customers manage complex AI infrastructure, was flat in its first day of trading on the Nasdaq.

On the flip side, among the relatively few rising stocks on Wall Street were those that can make money almost regardless of what the economy does, such as utilities. American Water Works rose 2.2%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 112.37 points to 5,580.94. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 715.80 to 41,583.90, and the Nasdaq composite lost 481.04 to 17,322.99.

Stock markets worldwide will likely remain shaky as an April 2 deadline approaches for more tariffs. That's what Trump has called "Liberation Day," when he will roll out tariffs tailored to each of the United States' trading partners.

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell sharply in Japan and South Korea as automakers felt more pressure following Trump's announcement that he plans to impose 25% tariffs on auto imports. Hyundai Motor fell 2.6% in Seoul, while Honda Motor fell 2.6%, and Toyota Motor sank 2.8% in Tokyo.

Thailand's SET lost 1% after a powerful earthquake centered in Myanmar rattled the region, causing the prime minister to declare a state of emergency for the capital, Bangkok.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury tumbled to 4.25% from 4.38% late Thursday. It tends to fall when expectations for either U.S. economic growth or inflation are on the wane.

## **Growing demand for patchouli oil is driving the industry in Indonesia, but at what cost?**

By EDNA TARIGAN, DITA ALANGKARA and FADLAN SYAM Associated Press

SIMBORO, Indonesia (AP) — Tucked between the village and the forest, Haruna and his father-in-law worked diligently through the night distilling dried patchouli plants, stoking the boiler with firewood, drops of fragrant patchouli oil trickling into plastic bottles.



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 66 of 85**

A sense of satisfaction washed over them as they watched the container fill with thick, rich brown oil, a sign of high-quality patchouli, the result of their hard work and precision.

Haruna, 42, who like many Indonesians only uses one name, is a patchouli farmer in Simboro, a sub-district of western Sulawesi. He and his father-in-law have been waiting in line for several weeks to finally be able to process their harvest in a modest steam distillation facility an hour's drive from their farm. Demand for the plant's oils has skyrocketed in recent years, and so too has the number of farmers in the region who grow and process it. But the trend has an uglier underbelly as Indonesia's vast rainforest is cleared to make way for patchouli farming. That loss of a vital ecosystem also increases the threat of landslides.

With a deep, earthy, musky scent, patchouli oil is derived from the leaves of the *Pogostemon cablin* plant, a member of the mint family. It's native to Southeast Asia, mostly in Indonesia. The aromatic oil is marketed for its calming effects, helping ease stress and anxiety. It's found in luxury fragrances, cosmetics and other wellness products. Social media trends have driven the most recent surge in interest in patchouli oil.

Patchouli thrives in Indonesia's tropical climate, which supplies over 80% of the global market. Prices for one kilogram of patchouli oil for farmers can be up to 2.4 million rupiah (\$147).

A trend that drives deforestation and landslides

A vast tropical archipelago stretching across the equator, Indonesia is home to the world's third-largest rainforest, with a variety of endangered wildlife and plants, including orangutans, elephants, the endemic bird Maleo, and giant forest flowers.

Patchouli has been a key commodity on Indonesia's tropical island of Sulawesi since the early 2000s, but in just less than two years, it has become part of daily life in Mamuju City. Dried plants hang from homes' porches, while the bushy perennial herbs with their oval, often hairy, leaves can be easily found at the roadsides.

Deeper into the forest and beyond the villages, new lands are being cleared. Thousands of plastic cups shelter young patchouli seedlings, signaling that in a few months, yet more fields will be covered in the fragrant crop.

Local authorities are encouraging the community to get into the patchouli business to support their income. But West Sulawesi's Environment and Forestry Agency has warned that the trend threatens the land and the people around it. As the rainforest gets cleared, slopes get less stable, making them more prone to landslides.

Zulkifli Manggazali, head of West Sulawesi's Environment and Forestry Agency, said that patchouli cannot be planted on slopes with an angle of 45 degrees or more. "Because when patchouli is planted there, there will be erosion, flooding, and landslides," he explained.

It is not known exactly how much land has been deforested for patchouli planting but as the trend grows, it cuts deeper and deeper into the forest. Patchouli distillation also has the potential to increase deforestation, as firewood is used from the surrounding forests to heat water for the steam distillation process.

In several areas where forests have been cleared to make way for patchouli plantations in the island, landslides have begun to take their toll. This January, a family was killed by a landslide in Mamuju. Their house was in a hilly, vulnerable area.

Local authorities at that time said that patchouli planting was not a main factor in the disaster, but it did play a part because patchouli had been planted nearby.

Finding more sustainable economic alternatives

Hardi, who also uses one name, is a 36-year-old patchouli farmer. He has already harvested patchouli twice, and spends most of his days alongside his 60-year-old mother and brother on their one-hectare plantation. His land has turned into a bustling hub where they dry and cut patchouli before sending it off for distillation.

Before patchouli, Hardi cultivated cloves, but the long harvest period and declining market prices prompted him to make a change. He turned to patchouli, plants that are smaller and more like bushes, and chose to plant it on the steep hillside, an arduous location that demands a strenuous uphill walk of over 30 minutes.

The patchouli brings in enough money for him and his family's needs. But it's unsustainable: patchouli

can only grow on the same land twice before farmers need to clear a new patch to farm on. It's another factor leading to deforestation.

Like many farmers, Hardi has no idea exactly where the oil ends up after it leaves his hands. The distillation owner, who buys the oil from him for around 1,400,000 rupiah (\$86) per kilogram (two pounds), remains the sole link between his work and exporters, most of whom are based on Indonesia's main island of Java, before it eventually reaches the global market.

For Manggazali from the environment agency, the cost isn't worth the prices the farmers and the surrounding communities would pay if their patchouli farming leads to landslide. "If a flood comes, everyone around there will be affected," he said.

To avoid a spiraling trend of increased deforestation for patchouli, Manggazali suggests that the island would benefit from getting into a more sustainable industry.

"If patchouli has been planted, it should be replaced with productive trees, such as durian trees," he said. "It also has economic value, but for the longer term."

## **Israel strikes Beirut for the first time since a ceasefire ended the latest Israel-Hezbollah war**

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Israel on Friday launched an attack on Lebanon's capital for the first time since a ceasefire ended the latest Israel-Hezbollah war in November.

Associated Press reporters in Beirut heard a loud boom and witnessed smoke rising from an area in the city's southern suburbs that Israel's military had vowed to strike.

It marked Israel's first strike on Beirut since a ceasefire took hold last November between it and the Hezbollah militant group, though Israel has attacked targets in southern Lebanon almost daily since then.

Israel's army said it hit a Hezbollah drone storage facility in Dahiyeh, which it called a militant stronghold. The strike came after Israel, which accuses Hezbollah of using civilians as human shields, warned residents to evacuate the area.

The area struck is a residential and commercial area and is close to at least two schools.

Israel sends a message to the Lebanese government

Israeli officials said the attack was retaliation for rockets it said were fired from Lebanon into northern Israel. They promised strikes on Beirut would continue unless Lebanon's government worked to ensure such attacks ceased.

"We will not allow firing at our communities, not even a trickle," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. "We will attack everywhere in Lebanon, against any threat to the State of Israel."

Hezbollah denied firing the rockets, and accused Israel of seeking a pretext to continue attacking Lebanon.

Lebanon's government ordered all schools and universities in Beirut's southern suburb of Hadath to close for the day. Residents were seen fleeing the area in cars and on foot ahead of the strike.

Hezbollah began launching rockets, drones and missiles into Israel the day after the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel by its Hamas allies ignited the war in Gaza. Palestinian militants killed about 1,200 in Israel and abducted 251 others during the 2023 attack.

The Israel-Hezbollah conflict exploded into all-out war last September when Israel carried out waves of airstrikes and killed most of the militant group's senior leaders. The fighting killed over 4,000 people in Lebanon and displaced about 60,000 Israelis.

Under the ceasefire, Israeli forces were supposed to withdraw from all Lebanese territory by late January. The deadline was extended to Feb. 18, but Israel has remained in five border locations while carrying out dozens of strikes on what it said were Hezbollah targets in southern and eastern Lebanon. Last week, Israeli airstrikes on several locations in Lebanon killed six people.

France criticizes failure to observe ceasefire

Speaking in Paris, Lebanon's President, Joseph Aoun, said the Beirut area strike was a continuation "of Israel's violations of the agreement" sponsored by France and the U.S.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 68 of 85**

During a joint news conference with Aoun, French President Emmanuel Macron called the attack "unacceptable," and promised to address it with Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump. Macron said that the U.S. can exert pressure on Israel.

A U.S. State Department spokeswoman called on Lebanon's government to act.

"Israel is defending its people and interests by responding to rocket attacks from terrorists in Lebanon," the spokeswoman, Tammy Bruce, said Friday. "We expect the Lebanese Armed Forces to disarm these terrorists to prevent further hostilities."

The U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, said the escalation had created "a critical period for Lebanon and the wider region."

Israeli strikes in other parts of Lebanon on Friday killed three people and wounded 18, including children and women, in the southern village of Kfar Tibnit, said Lebanon's health ministry.

The strikes comes less than two weeks after Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas with surprise strikes that killed hundreds of people in Gaza. Earlier this month, Israel halted deliveries of food, fuel, medicine and humanitarian aid to Gaza's roughly 2 million Palestinians.

Israel has vowed to escalate the war until Hamas returns 59 hostages it still holds — 24 of them believed to be alive. Israel is demanding that the group give up power, disarm and send its leaders into exile.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Israel's offensive in the Strip has killed over 50,000 people and wounded 114,000, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants.

The ministry said Friday that nearly 900 have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire ended in mid-March, including more than 40 over the past 24 hours.

## **Mahmoud Khalil's lawyers appear in New Jersey court over jurisdiction of Columbia activist's case**

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Lawyers for Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia University graduate student facing deportation for his role in pro-Palestinian campus protests, urged a federal judge on Friday to free their client from an immigration detention center in Louisiana, describing his imprisonment there as a "Kafkaesque" ploy to chill free speech.

"The longer we wait, the more chill there is," defense attorney Baher Azmy said. "Everyone knows about this case and is wondering if they're going to get picked off the street for opposing U.S. foreign policy."

The parties appeared Friday morning before a judge in Newark, New Jersey, to debate where Khalil's legal fight to be released from federal custody should play out.

An attorney for the Department of Justice, August Flentje, wants the dispute litigated in Louisiana, where Khalil was taken after his arrest, "for jurisdictional certainty."

U.S. District Judge Michael Farbiarz said he would consider the "tricky" venue issues at play and issue a written decision soon. He declined to hear an argument for bail from Khalil's attorneys, pointing to the need to settle the jurisdictional issue first.

Khalil's wife, Noor Abdallah, an American citizen who is due to give birth next month, sat in the front row of the courtroom, surrounded by supporters. Scores of demonstrators gathered outside the courthouse on Friday morning, chanting, "Free Mahmoud," and hoisting signs featuring his face.

"No matter what happens in court, what's most important is for all of us to keep up the pressure," said Ramzi Kassem, one of Khalil's lawyers, after the hearing. "To let this government know that it cannot suppress speech."

President Donald Trump's administration has, in recent weeks, ramped up efforts to arrest and deport student activists who participated in protests against Israel.

Khalil served as a negotiator for pro-Palestinian Columbia students as they bargained with university officials over an end to their campus tent encampment last spring. The university ultimately called in the

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 69 of 85**

police to dismantle the encampment and a faction of protesters who seized an administration building. Khalil was not among the people arrested in the Columbia protests and he has not been accused of any crime.

But the Trump administration has said it wants to deport Khalil because of his prominent role in the protests, which they say amounted to antisemitic support for Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza. The government cited a seldom-invoked statute authorizing the secretary of state to deport noncitizens whose presence in the country threatens U.S. foreign-policy interests. Khalil was born in Syria but is a legal U.S. resident.

People involved in the student-led protests deny that their criticism of Israel or support of Palestinian territorial claims is antisemitic.

U.S. officials also have accused Khalil of failing to disclose some of his work history on his immigration paperwork, including work at a British embassy and an internship with the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees.

He was arrested March 8 in New York, then transferred overnight to an immigration detention facility in New Jersey. Hours later, he was put on a plane and whisked to a different immigration facility in Jena, Louisiana.

Azmy, one of Khalil's lawyers, said the Trump administration's refusal to move the case back to the metropolitan New York City area rested on a "radical reinterpretation" of Habeas corpus, a legal process that allows individuals to challenge their detention. "They keep passing around the body in an almost Kafkaesque way," he added.

He also invoked the federal government's recent arrest of Rumeysa Ozturk, a Tufts University student who was detained by immigration agents in Massachusetts this week and then immediately sent to Louisiana before her attorneys could secure a judge's order blocking the transfer.

"If you dismiss and we file in Louisiana, before the papers hit, he could be in Texas," said Azmy.

An attorney for the government replied that there were no immediate plans to move Khalil out of Louisiana.

Other university students and faculty across the country have been arrested by immigration officials, had their visas revoked or been prevented from entering the U.S. because they attended demonstrations or publicly expressed support for Palestinians.

Among them are a Gambian student at Cornell University in upstate New York, an Indian scholar at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., a Lebanese doctor at Brown University's medical school in Rhode Island and a Korean student at Columbia who has lived in the country since she was 7.

## **Man suspected of setting fire to Tesla vehicles in Las Vegas arrested, police say**

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A man suspected of setting fire to Tesla vehicles in Las Vegas and painting the word "resist" on the service center's doors has been arrested, police announced Thursday.

Paul Hyon Kim, 36, faces charges in connection with the March 18 attack in both state and federal court in Nevada. Kim was being held in the custody of the federal government.

In state court, Kim is facing charges of arson, possession of an explosive device and firing a weapon into a vehicle, Clark County Sheriff Kevin McMahill said at a news conference.

Kim is also charged with federal unlawful possession of an unregistered firearm and arson, according to a criminal complaint filed Thursday.

Wearing a black T-shirt, black jeans and tennis shoes, Kim appeared briefly Thursday in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas. He told a judge that he completed 12 years of schooling. Kim is scheduled to return to federal court Friday for a detention hearing.

The federal public defender's office in Las Vegas, which has been appointed to represent Kim, declined Thursday to comment. In state court, an attorney for Kim wasn't listed in court records.

Security video played at the police news conference showed the suspect, dressed all in black and cov-



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 70 of 85**

ering his face, paint the word "resist" across the glass doors of a Tesla service center. McMahon said the suspect threw Molotov cocktails — crude bombs filled with gasoline or another flammable liquid — and fired several rounds from a weapon into multiple vehicles. No one was injured.

McMahon said Thursday they were "actively investigating" a motive and whether it is connected to other recent cases of vandalism targeting Tesla property across the country.

There has been an uptick of attacks on property with the Tesla logo across the U.S. since President Donald Trump took office and tapped Tesla CEO Elon Musk for a prominent role overseeing a new Department of Government Efficiency that has slashed government spending.

Some of the most prominent incidents have taken place in left-leaning cities in the Pacific Northwest.

Authorities allege an Oregon man threw several Molotov cocktails at a Tesla store in Salem, then returned another day and shot out windows. In the Portland suburb of Tigard, more than a dozen bullets were fired at a Tesla showroom, damaging vehicles and windows.

Prosecutors in Colorado have also charged a woman in connection with attacks on Tesla dealerships that authorities say also included Molotov cocktails thrown at vehicles and the words "Nazi cars" spray-painted on a building. And federal agents in South Carolina have arrested a man accused of setting fire to Tesla charging stations near Charleston.

In Las Vegas, Spencer Evans, the special agent in charge of the FBI division there, declined Thursday to comment on the similarities of the cases. But he told reporters last week that the Las Vegas case "has some of the hallmarks" of terrorism.

"Was this terrorism? Was it something else? It certainly has some of the hallmarks that we might think — the writing on the wall, potential political agenda, an act of violence," Evans said. "None of those factors are lost on us."

## **Putin suggests putting Ukraine under UN-sponsored external governance**

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed Friday to temporarily put Ukraine under external governance as part of efforts to reach a peaceful settlement, in remarks that reflected the Kremlin leader's determination to achieve his war goals.

In televised remarks broadcast early Friday, Putin reaffirmed his claim that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whose term expired last year, lacks the legitimacy to sign a peace deal. Under Ukraine's constitution it is illegal for the country to hold national elections while it's under martial law.

Putin claimed that any agreement that is signed with the current Ukrainian government could be challenged by its successors and said new elections could be held under external governance.

"Under the auspices of the United Nations, with the United States, even with European countries, and, of course, with our partners and friends, we could discuss the possibility of introduction of temporary governance in Ukraine," Putin said. He added that it would allow the country to "hold democratic elections, to bring to power a viable government that enjoys the trust of the people, and then begin negotiations with them on a peace treaty."

He said such external governance is just "one of the options," without elaborating.

Zelenskyy dismissed Putin's suggestions, describing them as a "reason not to end the war."

"He is afraid of negotiations with Ukraine," said Zelenskyy during a briefing with journalists Friday. "He is afraid of negotiations with me personally, and by excluding Ukraine's (government), he is suggesting that Ukraine is not an independent actor for him."

'They're playing for time'

Putin's remarks came hours after the conclusion of a summit hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron that considered plans to deploy troops to Ukraine to cement an eventual peace deal. Macron said "several" other nations want to be part of the force alongside France and Britain.

Russia has warned it wouldn't accept any troops from NATO members as part of a prospective peace-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 71 of 85**

keeping force.

Macron and other participants of the Paris summit on Thursday accused Russia of only pretending to want a negotiated settlement.

"They are playing games and they're playing for time," said U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Zelenskyy hailed the outcome of the meeting, saying in Friday's statement that "Europe definitely knows how to defend itself, and we are working together to ensure greater security for our country and all European nations."

Drone attacks continue

Russia and Ukraine have agreed to a tentative U.S.-brokered deal to pause strikes on energy infrastructure but both sides have different views on when the deal to halt strikes came into effect. They have accused each other of violations, underscoring the challenges to negotiating a broader peace.

Zelenskyy said in the Friday briefing that it's also unclear how the ceasefire should be monitored.

"Who verifies it? Who is monitoring?" he said, adding that the American side said that it would hold consultations with its own team and other countries regarding their readiness to conduct monitoring.

"I don't know the results of these conversations ... we have told them that it will not work without monitoring."

Russia launched 163 drones at Ukraine late Thursday, according to the Ukrainian air force, which said that 89 of them were downed and 51 more jammed.

The drones damaged multiple residential buildings and injured a 19-year-old in Zaporizhzhia, regional head Ivan Fedorov said. Damage to buildings and infrastructure facilities was also reported by authorities in another five regions.

Ukraine's state-run gas company, Naftogaz, said Friday that its facilities came under Russian fire.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Ukrainian forces struck a gas metering station in Sudzha in the Kursk region with U.S.-made HIMARS rockets, completely destroying the facility. It said another Ukrainian strike on an energy facility in Russia's Bryansk region led to a power cutoff, and added that air defenses downed 19 Ukrainian drones that attempted to strike an oil refinery in Saratov.

The ministry said the strikes show that Kyiv's pledge of adherence to a halt on strikes on energy facilities was just "another ruse by Zelenskyy to prevent the collapse of Ukrainian defenses and to restore military potential with the help of European allies."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a conference call with reporters that Russia will continue sticking to the halt on strikes on energy facilities but reserves the right to opt out of the deal if violations continue.

Ukraine's military rejected Russia's claims of Ukrainian strikes on energy facilities as fake, aimed at "discrediting Ukraine" and its diplomatic efforts.

The General Staff said that its army is "strictly adhering to the agreements," emphasizing that the military only has struck Russia's military targets.

It also accused Russia of striking energy infrastructure in the city of Kherson and Poltava region of Ukraine over the last 24 hours.

"The Russian tactic of dragging out the war remains unchanged," Ukraine's General Staff said.

Russia's battlefield gains

Russian troops have made slow but steady gains in several sectors of the more than 1,000-kilometer (over 620-mile) frontline, and Zelenskyy warned Thursday that Russia was trying to drag out talks in preparation for bigger offensives.

Putin declared in overnight remarks that the Russian troops have "gained steam" and "are holding strategic initiative all along the line of contact."

He noted that Russia is open to a peaceful settlement, but emphasized the need to "remove root causes that led to the current situation."

Zelenskyy described the situation on the battlefield as "complicated" but under control. He also confirmed unofficial reports on social media about the presence of Ukrainian troops in Russia's Bryansk region, which borders Kursk in the north.

In recent weeks, Ukraine has lost a significant amount of ground in the Kursk region, but it is still pres-

ent there, according to officials.

The president said the Ukrainian army had taken steps near the Kursk region to prevent Russians from launching an offensive in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv and southern Zaporizhzhia regions.

## **Trump asks Supreme Court for permission to resume deporting Venezuelan migrants under wartime law**

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Friday asked the Supreme Court for permission to resume deportations of Venezuelan migrants to El Salvador under an 18th century wartime law, while a court fight continues.

The emergency appeal to the high court follows a rejection of the Republican administration's plea to the federal appeals court in Washington. By a 2-1 vote, a panel of appellate judges left in place an order temporarily prohibiting deportations of the migrants under the rarely used Alien Enemies Act.

The Justice Department argued in court papers that federal courts shouldn't interfere with sensitive diplomatic negotiations. It also claimed that migrants should make their case in a federal court in Texas, where they are being detained.

The order temporarily blocking the deportations was issued by U.S. District Judge James E. Boasberg, the chief judge at the federal courthouse in Washington.

President Donald Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act for the first time since World War II to justify the deportation of hundreds of people under a presidential proclamation calling the Tren de Aragua gang an invading force.

"Here, the district court's orders have rebuffed the President's judgments as to how to protect the Nation against foreign terrorist organizations and risk debilitating effects for delicate foreign negotiations," acting Solicitor General Sarah Harris wrote in the court filing.

Attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union filed the lawsuit on behalf of five Venezuelan noncitizens who were being held in Texas, hours after the proclamation was made public.

The court set a Tuesday deadline for a response from the ACLU.

Lee Gelernt, the lead lawyer representing the migrants, said, "We will urge the Supreme Court to preserve the status quo to give the courts time to hear this case, so that more individuals are not sent off to a notorious foreign prison without any process, based on an unprecedented and unlawful use of a wartime authority."

The case has become a flashpoint amid escalating tension between the White House and the federal courts.

Boasberg imposed a temporary halt on deportations and ordered plane loads of Venezuelan immigrants to return to the U.S. That did not happen. The judge has since vowed to determine whether the government defied his order to turn the planes around. The administration has invoked a "state secrets privilege" and refused to give Boasberg any additional information about the deportations.

Trump and his allies have called for impeaching Boasberg. In a rare statement, Chief Justice John Roberts said "impeachment is not an appropriate response to disagreement concerning a judicial decision."

The Alien Enemies Act allows noncitizens to be deported without the opportunity for a hearing before an immigration or federal court judge.

Boasberg ruled that immigrants facing deportation must get an opportunity to challenge their designations as alleged gang members. His ruling said there is "a strong public interest in preventing the mistaken deportation of people based on categories they have no right to challenge."

The temporary halt on deportations that Boasberg imposed is set to expire on Saturday, but the ACLU has asked for an extension until April 12 and plans to seek a more lasting pause on deportations under the Alien Enemies Act, known as a preliminary injunction, while the lawsuit continues.

## **A mayor's lawsuit shut down a newspaper over fake stories. Now he faces corruption allegations**

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

EVERETT, Mass. (AP) — For years, the mayor of a Boston suburb dreaded Wednesdays. That was the day when a local weekly would publish shocking allegations that he was on the take, sexually harassing women or under investigation by the FBI.

Friends trashed Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria on Facebook over what the Everett Leader Herald printed. His father threatened to disown him — over stories the mayor knew were lies.

"They labeled me as a 'Kickback Carlo.' Accusations that I was settling all kinds of sexual harassment lawsuits, that I put a knife to a girl's throat and asked for sexual favors," DeMaria said. "It was awful. It was disgusting."

An unusual libel law win

Almost everything the paper wrote about DeMaria turned out to be fake, enabling him to win a \$1.1 million settlement in December that finally shut down the nearly 140-year-old paper.

Such defamation victories are exceedingly rare under the Supreme Court's "actual malice" standard for public figures. That willing disregard for the truth became abundantly evident when the paper's editor swore in court to tell the truth, and admitted to fabricating story after story in an unrelenting smear campaign.

But DeMaria hardly had time to celebrate. Now preparing for his seventh mayoral campaign, he's been accused of padding his salary with bonus payments — an issue the paper covered four years ago — and this time, the state of Massachusetts is pressing the City Council to take action.

A mayor and city on the way up

Favoring sharp suits and slicked-back hair, DeMaria was schooled in a style of politics based on personal connections with fellow residents in the working-class town of about 49,000 across the Mystic River from Boston. As mayor in 2007, he's been praised for his leadership in improving infrastructure. Out-of-towners can now look beyond the Monsanto and Exxon Mobil facilities as they come to a glitzy casino and soon, possibly, a professional soccer stadium.

Everett voters reelected DeMaria by landslides, and his annual compensation grew to \$232,700, including a car allowance and a "longevity bonus," approaching the \$250,000 salary of Mayor Michelle Wu of Boston, a city nearly 14 times larger.

Then, after a brutal 2021 campaign, he held onto office by just over 200 votes.

Matthew Philbin had bought the Leader Herald in 2017 and hired a Boston-area reporter Joshua Resnek, to turn it into an attack machine, court records show. DeMaria believes Philbin was angry at him after he opposed his boarding house licenses as a councilman and then rejected giving him a city insurance contract after he became mayor.

It was 'Blue Suit' v. 'Kickback Carlo'

Resnek invented a City Hall insider he called the "Blue Suit" and in article after article, made up conversations accusing "Kickback Carlo" of extorting the city clerk in a land deal, shaking down people for contributions and sexually assaulting women.

In an emotional press conference to announce his court victory, DeMaria stood with his wife and expressed vindication.

"The size and scope of this settlement — both in terms of the amount that the defendants have agreed to pay and in their agreement to shut down their newspaper — is a reflection of just how egregious their conduct was, and of the volume of their admissions of their misconduct," DeMaria said.

Neither Philbin, Resnek nor their lawyers responded to repeated requests for comment, but the paper's final edition reported that "the settlement leaves all parties satisfied that an agreeable arrangement was reached, making the necessity of a trial a moot point."

Some residents grumbled about the loss of local news coverage.

"We need all kinds of voices," said Everett homeowner Peggy Serino, a regular at council meetings. "Just because the administration didn't agree with something doesn't mean you shut it down."



# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 74 of 85**

DeMaria's joy proved short-lived

Someone complained to the state Office of the Inspector General about the bonus payments in 2022, after the Leader Herald suggested they were illegal and quoted a mayoral challenger who called them "greedy." DeMaria turned down his 2022 payment of \$40,000, and the council limited his future payments to what other city workers get — about \$1,700 a year.

After a lengthy investigation, the Inspector General concluded in February that DeMaria colluded with his finance officer and budget director to retroactively get \$180,000 from 2016 to 2021, hiding the payments within other line-items. The IG also concluded that DeMaria may have violated state ethics law by participating in the drafting and approval of the ordinance that padded his pay.

The City Council has turned on him since the report came out. It can't fire him, but councilors demanded repayment and launched an audit into nearly a decade's worth of payments to him. They also requested details they could bring to the state ethics commission, which can fine an official up to \$10,000 per violation and refer evidence of any crimes to prosecutors.

DeMaria insists he never "engaged in concealment" and that law enforcement has not contacted him. It's all just small-town politics, he said.

"Those who have falsely accused me over the years are the ones who are guilty of the real wrongdoing," he said. "I will continue to fight to protect my family, but also to undo the harm that has been done to the reputation of Everett and its residents by these unnecessary and unfounded attacks."

'Think about your grandmother'

DeMaria didn't attend a special meeting packed with city employees where his lawyer and his daughter came to defend him. Launching his reelection campaign weeks later, he asked supporters to withhold judgment until all the facts come out.

Not everyone is willing to wait. The City Council approved a no-confidence vote and ended future longevity payments for him.

"This is a sad day for our community," City Councilor Peter Pietrantonio said. "These are serious facts against the mayor and his administration ... To me, it's appalling."

Councilor at Large Guerline Alcy Jabouin asked the many city workers supporting DeMaria to look beyond their allegiances.

"Think about your property taxes. Think about the school that isn't getting enough money. Think about your grandmother, your grandfather that cannot afford to pay for their medication," Jabouin said.

## **The US is on an egg hunt in Europe to ease prices at home**

By VANESSA GERA and KERSTIN SOPKE Associated Press

SCHOENEICHE, Germany (AP) — The U.S. government is on a global egg hunt, seeking exports from countries in Europe and elsewhere to ease a severe shortage that has caused egg prices at grocery stores to hit record highs.

Germany, Italy, Poland and Sweden are among the nations the U.S. Department of Agriculture approached to address the shortage brought on by a bird flu outbreak, according to European industry groups.

But supplying Americans with eggs would be complicated for foreign producers — and not because of political tensions over the myriad import tariffs President Donald Trump has imposed or threatened to impose on his nation's top trading partners.

Even if they were eager to share, European countries don't have many surplus eggs because of their own avian flu outbreaks and the growing domestic demand ahead of Easter.

One of the biggest obstacles, however, is the approach the United States takes to preventing salmonella contamination. U.S. food safety regulations require fresh eggs to be sanitized and refrigerated before they reach shoppers; in the European Union, safety standards call for Grade A eggs to be sold unwashed and without extended chilling.

"These are two systems that could not be more different," said Hans-Peter Goldnick, the president of the German Egg Association.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 75 of 85**

Feathers on eggs at the supermarket

It is common in parts of Europe, for example, for consumers to buy eggs that still have feathers and chicken poop stuck to them.

Farmer David Karlsch described the simple process that gets eggs from hens to customers of the family-owned Saballus poultry farm in Schoeneiche, a town just outside Germany's capital: The eggs are taken from nests, placed into cartons and sold on the premises or from a refrigerated vending machine just outside the property.

"The demand at Easter time is of course very, very high, as many children naturally want to paint eggs," Karlsch said.

Poland, a major egg exporter, fielded a U.S. query about the availability of eggs, according to Katarzyna Gawrońska, director of the National Chamber of Poultry and Feed Producers. The issue of washed vs. unwashed was a crucial factor as European officials considered such requests, she said.

Eggs are not cleaned in most of the 27 EU nations because of concerns that removing the natural protective coating from eggshells makes them more vulnerable to bacteria, Gawrońska said.

Polish veterinary officials are trying to determine if the country and its farmers can meet U.S. requirements, such as whether the exporting nation has a comparable food safety inspection system or a significant bird flu outbreak.

Powdered egg products

Although European Union regulations state that table eggs "shall not be washed or cleaned," member countries have some leeway if they authorized egg baths at packing plants decades ago.

Danish Egg Association CEO Jørgen Nyberg Larsen said national customs are part of it; washed eggs are the norm in Sweden, for example. But Sweden and Norway have informed the U.S. they don't have extra eggs to export, Larsen said.

For now, any increased U.S. egg imports from Europe are more likely to arrive in powdered form or other products that can be shipped frozen or dried, Larsen said.

That's the response Poland's trade association gave U.S. officials. If the U.S. certifies Poland as a source, the organization's members would have a limited number of shell eggs to sell but could supply "very large volumes of egg processing products," Gawrońska said.

Processed eggs usually are pasteurized to prevent foodborne illnesses and then used in food manufacturing or by restaurants, hospitals and nursing homes, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Baked goods, pasta and sauces like mayonnaise are some of the commercial products made with egg powder.

Europe's own production problems

U.S. officials also tried to sound out farmers in northern Italy's Veneto region for emergency egg supplies, according to Coldiretti, the main Italian agricultural lobbying organization.

But Italy only produces enough eggs to cover the national demand so most of the region's producers said they could not help. Bird flu outbreaks since the start of last year also have taken a toll on the Italian poultry industry.

Germany cannot contribute much either. Its domestic poultry industry generates about 73% of the eggs consumed in the country, "and we ourselves essentially have to import eggs from Holland every day to keep everyone satisfied," the German Egg Association's Goldnick said.

"We have around 45 million eggs that we can collect from the chicken coops every day, and in America, there's a shortage of around 50 million eggs a day. That shows how difficult it is," he said.

An improving US market and Easter demand

Other countries the U.S. government contacted include Austria, Norway, Spain and Denmark. The U.S. Department of Agriculture said it secured new egg commitments from South Korea and Turkey in recent months, although it did not specify the amount or type.

Brazil, which traditionally exports less than 1% of its total egg production, increased its February shipments to the U.S. by 93% compared to a year earlier, according to the Brazilian Association of Animal Protein.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 76 of 85**

The detection of Newcastle disease, a viral condition often fatal to chickens, in some parts of Brazil impedes the South American nation's ability to become a significant U.S. egg supplier, market insiders say.

Imports of liquid, frozen and dried eggs may help free up some domestic shell eggs for consumers, but the U.S. made its appeal for foreign eggs amid a significant deficit; last month, the country produced 720 million fewer table eggs than in February 2024, a decline of nearly 10%.

The U.S. also cut its own egg exports to boost supplies at home, the Agriculture Department said.

While the informal trade talks continue, the U.S. market has shown signs of improvement. It's been nearly a month since a major bird flu outbreak impacted egg-laying hens, the department said. It reported the national wholesale price for large eggs dropped to \$3.27 per dozen as of March 21, or less than half its peak of \$8.15 per dozen on Feb. 21.

U.S. consumers are just starting to see those falling wholesale prices translate to lower prices on grocery shelves, the department said. The big demand for eggs that usually accompanies Easter and Passover could cause prices to edge up again next month.

Business is business

Trump hasn't exactly walked on eggshells with the people of Europe since starting his second term. The president's repeated threats to seize Greenland, a Danish territory, infuriated many in Denmark. His posture toward Ukraine and disparaging remarks from top members of his administration have alarmed America's European allies.

The European Union, which is the third-largest trade partner of the U.S., was not exempted from the tariffs Trump ordered on steel, aluminum and automobiles. Bracing for more, it has prepared counter-tariffs on American products.

But many officials in Europe say none of that would rule out exporting eggs.

Goldnick said an egg producer friend recently told him that "if the price is right, then I'll deliver." Any deals made or not would come down to business decisions, he said.

"I have two souls in my chest. On the one hand, I would say, 'No, we can't support this system,' but that's not the right answer," he said, referring to new U.S. tariffs on European goods.

"The right answer is we have to help where we can, Goldnick continued. "It doesn't concern the government. You wouldn't prop them up or anything, but it's just people's demand at Easter, for eggs, and that's just as important to satisfy in America as it is here."

## **US consumers remained cautious about spending last month as inflation ticked higher**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation picked up last month and consumers barely raised their spending, signs that the economy was already cooling even before most tariffs were imposed.

Friday's report from the Commerce Department showed that consumer prices increased 2.5% in February from a year earlier, matching January's annual pace. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose 2.8% compared with a year ago, higher than January's figure of 2.7%.

Economists watch core prices because they are typically a better guide of where inflation is headed. The core index has barely changed in the past year. Inflation remains above the Federal Reserve's 2% target, making it difficult for the central bank to cut its key interest rate anytime soon.

The report also showed that consumer spending rebounded last month after falling by the most in four years in January. Yet much of the additional spending reflected price increases, with inflation-adjusted spending barely rising. The weak figure suggests growth is rapidly slowing in the first three months of this year as consumers and businesses turn cautious amid sharp changes in government policies.

"Inflation too hot and spending too cold," said Stephen Brown, an economist at Capital Economics, a consulting firm, in an email. "The Fed is unlikely to cut interest rates this year."

Brown estimates that economic growth could fall to zero in the first three months of this year, down

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 77 of 85**

from 2.4% in last year's fourth quarter.

Inflation remains a top economic concern for most Americans, even as it has fallen sharply from its 2022 peak. Donald Trump rode dissatisfaction with higher prices to the presidency and promised to quickly bring down inflation, but the yearly rate is higher now than in September, when it briefly touched 2.1%.

Consumer spending rose 0.4% in February, though the gain was just 0.1% after adjusting for prices. The mild increase follows a sharp 0.6% drop in January.

The spending and inflation figures steepened a market downturn early Friday. The broad S&P 500 stock market index fell 1.4%. The Dow Jones index fell more than 500 points and the Nasdaq fell as well.

The spending increase was driven by greater purchases of long-lasting goods, such as cars and appliances, which could reflect an effort by shoppers to buy things before tariffs are imposed. They are the kind of purchases that won't likely be repeated in coming months.

Spending on services, including discretionary spending such as at restaurants and hotels, fell.

"The fact that consumers chose to increase outlays on goods that are about to see price increases at the expense of the far more economically important service sector provides insight into the mindset of the consumer," said Joseph Brusuelas, chief economist at tax and advisory firm RSM.

Also Friday, the University of Michigan released its updated consumer sentiment survey for March, which showed a sharp drop in Americans' outlook for the economy. The survey also found growing anxiety over inflation and jobs.

"This month's decline reflects a clear consensus across all demographic and political affiliations," said Joanne Hsu, director of the survey. "Republicans joined independents and Democrats in expressing worsening expectations since February for their personal finances, business conditions, unemployment, and inflation."

Trump has slapped 20% tariffs on all Chinese imports, 25% import taxes on steel and aluminum, and on Wednesday said he would hit imported cars with another 25% duty. Most economists, and the Federal Reserve, now expect inflation to tick higher this year as a result of the tariffs. Fed Chair Jerome Powell last week said elevated inflation from the tariffs could be temporary. But he also added the outlook was unusually uncertain given the swift changes in policy from the White House.

On a monthly basis, prices rose 0.3% in February from the previous month, the same as in January, while core prices increased 0.4%, the largest increase in more than a year. Increases at that pace, for a full year, would drive inflation far above the Fed's 2% target.

One bright spot in the report was a big jump in incomes for the second straight month — they rose 0.8% in February from January. Higher income with weaker spending pushed up the savings rate, which can fuel future spending. But it also could reflect greater caution among consumers.

"Savings went up, consistent with reports of flagging consumer confidence, rising uncertainty about the future and reduced expectations for the future," Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics, said.

Consumer and business confidence in the economy has fallen sharply since Trump began rolling out tariffs, and a measure of Americans' outlook for the future of the economy dropped to a 12-year low on Tuesday. Many polls find that most of the public sees the economy as fair or poor. A survey last month by the Pew Research Center found that 63% of Americans still see inflation as a "very big problem."

Apparel company Lululemon on Thursday became the latest retailer to warn that slumping consumer confidence will hurt sales, while the parent company of Tommy Bahama, Lilly Pulitzer, and Johnny Was stores said that sales slowed to start the year as consumer sentiment darkened.

Nike previously issued a similar warning and expectations from major retailers like Target and Walmart have grown subdued as customers pull back.



## Boys with cancer can face infertility as adults. Can storing their stem cells help?

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man who battled childhood cancer has received the first known transplant of sperm-producing stem cells, in a study aimed at restoring the fertility of cancer's youngest survivors.

Jaiwen Hsu was 11 when a leg injury turned out to be bone cancer. Doctors thought grueling chemotherapy could save him but likely leave him infertile. His parents learned researchers at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center were freezing testicular cells of young boys with cancer in hopes of preserving their future fertility — and signed him up.

Hsu, now 26, is the first to return as an adult and test if reimplanting those cells might work.

"The science behind it is so incredibly new that right now it's kind of a waiting game," said Hsu, of Vienna, Virginia. "It's kind of eagerly crossing our fingers and hoping for the best."

It may seem unusual to discuss future fertility when a family is reeling from the diagnosis of a child's cancer. But 85% of children with cancer now survive to adulthood and about 1 in 3 are left infertile from chemotherapy or radiation.

Young adults with cancer can bank sperm, eggs or sometimes embryos ahead of treatment. But children diagnosed before puberty don't have that option because they're not yet producing mature sperm or eggs.

Boys are born with stem cells inside spaghetti-like tubes in the testes, cells that start producing sperm after puberty sparks a rise in testosterone. With funding from the National Institutes of Health, Pitt reproductive scientist Kyle Orwig studies how to preserve and potentially use testicular cells to restore fertility.

It starts with a biopsy-like removal of a small amount of testicular tissue that contains millions of cells — some of them precious sperm-producing stem cells. Since 2011, Orwig's team has frozen samples from about 1,000 prepubertal boys.

It's impossible to tell if enough stem cells are in each tiny sample to matter. But in 2019, Orwig used preserved testicular tissue from a young male monkey that, in an animal version of IVF, led to the birth of a healthy baby monkey.

By 2023, Orwig was ready to reimplant now-grown cancer survivors' cells when Hsu — not ready to start a family yet but curious about his long-ago study participation — reached out.

"We're not expecting a miracle result," cautioned Orwig, whose colleagues transplanted Hsu's thawed cells in November 2023.

In a paper posted online this week, Orwig reported the injection, guided by ultrasound to the right spot, was safe and easy to perform. His work has not yet been reviewed by other scientists.

And Orwig said it's too soon to know if the experiment worked and standard tests likely won't tell, as animal testing found assisted reproduction techniques were needed to detect and retrieve small amounts of sperm. Still, he hopes the ongoing research will alert more families to consider fertility preservation so they'd have the option if it eventually pans out.

Belgian researchers announced a similar experiment in January, implanting pieces of testicular tissue rather than cells in a childhood cancer survivor.

"These developments are of great importance," said researcher Ellen Goossens of Vrije Universiteit Brussel. While animal research "was very promising, transplantations in humans will be the only way" to tell if this really works.

Similar research with immature ovarian tissue is underway for female childhood cancer survivors, too, noted Dr. Mahmoud Salama, who directs the Oncofertility Consortium at Michigan State University.

Hsu said even if his experimental transplant doesn't work, it will guide further research. He's grateful his parents years ago "made a call that gave me the option to make the choice for myself today."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 79 of 85

## Trump restricts federal research funding, a lifeblood for colleges

By SHARON LURYE and JOCELYN GECKER AP Education Writers

After decades of partnership with the U.S. government, colleges are facing new doubts about the future of their federal funding.

President Donald Trump's administration has been using the funding spigot to seek compliance with his agenda, cutting off money to schools including Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. All the while, universities across the country are navigating cuts to grants for research institutions.

The squeeze on higher education underscores how much American colleges depend on the federal government — a provider of grants and contracts that have amounted to close to half the total revenue of some research universities, according to an Associated Press analysis.

It adds up to a crisis for universities, and a problem for the country as a whole, say school administrators and advocates for academic freedom. America's scientific and medical research capabilities are tightly entwined with its universities as part of a compact that started after World War II to develop national expertise and knowledge.

"It feels like any day, any university could step out of line in some way and then have all of their funding pulled," said Jonathan Friedman, managing director of free expression programs at PEN America.

Tens of billions of dollars are at stake

The AP analysis looked at federal funding for nearly 100 colleges currently under investigation for programs the administration has deemed as illegally pushing diversity, equity and inclusion, or for not doing enough to combat antisemitism. Those schools took in over \$33 billion in federal revenue in the 2022-2023 academic year. That's before taking into account federal student aid, which represents billions more in tuition and room-and-board payments.

For most of the schools, around 10% to 13% of their revenue came from federal contracts or research funding, according to the analysis. For some prestigious research universities, however, federal money represented up to half of their revenue.

The AP analyzed data from the National Center for Education Statistics and federal audit reports, with help from researchers Jason Cohn and James Carter at the Urban Institute.

Perhaps no school is more vulnerable than Johns Hopkins University, which received \$4 billion in federal funds, close to 40% of its revenue, according to the analysis. Much of that went to defense research, paying for projects like missile design, submarine technology and precision tracking systems in outer space. Billions of dollars also went to medical research for topics such as immunology and transplants, aging, neuroscience and mental health.

Johns Hopkins is facing an antisemitism investigation, which threatens its federal money, but already it has been feeling the effects of cuts to research grants from the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies. Earlier this month, it announced 2,200 layoffs.

"We face challenging times for the patients and families that rely on us for cures and treatments, and for the researchers dedicated to the pursuit of improving the health of all Americans," the university said in a statement.

Trump extracted concessions from Columbia

Trump has singled out Columbia University, making an example of the Ivy League school by withholding \$400 million in federal money. The administration repeatedly accused Columbia of letting antisemitism go unchecked at protests against Israel that began at the New York City university last spring and quickly spread to other campuses — a characterization disputed by those involved in the demonstrations.

As a precondition for restoring that money — along with billions more in future grants — the Republican administration demanded unprecedented changes in university policy. Columbia's decision last week to bow to those demands, in part to salvage ongoing research projects at its labs and medical center, has been criticized by some faculty and free speech groups as capitulating to an intrusion on academic freedom.

At the White House on Wednesday, Trump expressed satisfaction with the pressure campaign on colleges.

"You see what we're doing with the colleges, and they're all bending and saying, 'Sir, thank you very

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 80 of 85**

much, we appreciate it," Trump said during an event for Women's History Month.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, Columbia got close to a fifth of its revenue from federal sources, around \$1.2 billion. An audit shows that much of Columbia's federal money went to research and development, including \$166 million for global AIDS programs, \$99 million to study aging, \$28 million for cancer biology and \$24 million for drug abuse and addiction research.

A new approach on enforcement of civil rights laws

Federal law allows the Education Department to terminate funding to colleges that violate civil rights laws, but only after taking certain steps. Title VI of the law says the department must first make a formal finding of noncompliance, offer a hearing, notify Congress and then wait 30 days before pulling aid.

But the Trump administration has a new strategy, moving quickly from demands to penalties with little room for negotiating, and little indication of due process, legal experts say.

At Penn, the administration suspended \$175 million in federal funding from the Defense Department and the Department of Health and Human Services over a transgender swimmer who last competed for the school in 2022. The White House said the action came out of a review of discretionary money going to universities.

"It looks like much of the playbook is intimidation, more so than actual substantiated legal findings," said Michael Pillera, director of educational equity issues at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. "I think all of this is designed as an attempt to intimidate all universities, not just the institutions under investigation."

The cuts and the uncertainty have led some universities to accept fewer graduate students, cutting off pathways to careers. Many graduate students in science programs receive scholarships and stipends that come from federal research grants.

Purdue University senior Alyssa Johnson had been planning to pursue graduate research on amphibian diseases, and she was accepted into one of three schools she applied to. She said one of the schools appeared to have limited their acceptances to preemptively avoid funding concerns. But given her application experience, the changing landscape of research and her shifting interests, she decided to change her course of study to something she felt would help build trust between scientists and the public.

"I kind of went through a little bit of career crisis, which was definitely catalyzed by what's going on with the current administration and their attitudes toward science and science communication," Johnson said.

## **King Charles III's brief hospital stay reminds UK that monarch is still a cancer patient**

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III waved to well-wishers in central London on Friday as he headed for his country estate in western England a day after he was briefly hospitalized because of side effects from a scheduled cancer treatment.

Charles canceled planned engagements on Thursday afternoon and Friday on the advice of his doctors, Buckingham Palace said, without providing details about the "temporary side effects" that he experienced.

But the episode was a reminder that the king is 76 and continues to undergo treatment for an undisclosed form of cancer diagnosed more than a year ago.

That reality has slipped away from the collective consciousness since last spring, when Charles returned to public duties after stepping away for almost three months to focus on his initial treatment and recovery. In the intervening months, he has attended D-Day commemoration events in France, presided over the State Opening of Parliament and even embarked on a nine-day visit to Australia and Samoa.

But during the early stages of his treatment, Charles continued fulfilling his constitutional duties as head of state, including reviewing government papers and meeting with the prime minister.

Here's a brief rundown of what we know about the king's health.

What happened?

The king went to the London Clinic on Thursday morning for a scheduled cancer treatment. The clinic

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 81 of 85**

is a private hospital in central London, where Charles has been receiving treatment since his diagnosis in February 2024.

"Following scheduled and ongoing medical treatment for cancer this morning, the king experienced temporary side effects that required a short period of observation in hospital," Buckingham Palace said in a statement. "His majesty's afternoon engagements were therefore postponed."

The king then returned to his home at Clarence House, where he reviewed papers and made calls, the palace said. Queen Camilla didn't join him at the hospital.

"His majesty would like to send his apologies to all those who may be inconvenienced or disappointed as a result," the palace said in a statement.

Will this affect future events?

The king is expected to press ahead with his work in the coming days, including a state visit to Italy scheduled for early April.

Why did the palace decide to reveal this information?

Palace officials have recognized that it's better to release some information about the king's health, rather than allow media speculation to fill the void when he's forced to cancel scheduled events.

But they have tried to walk a fine line, seeking to balance the public's legitimate interest in the health of the head of state with Charles' right to privacy.

This was seen first in January 2024, when the palace announced Charles was being treated for an enlarged prostate, followed by the cancer diagnosis a few weeks later.

The decision to talk about the king's health issues marked a departure from past palace protocols. For example, when Queen Elizabeth II began missing events toward the end of her life, royal officials repeatedly said that she was suffering from "mobility issues," without providing further details. Her death certificate listed the cause as "old age."

The public was unaware that Charles' grandfather, King George VI, had lung cancer before his death in February 1952 at the age of 56. Some historians suggest that even the king wasn't told about the gravity of his condition.

Charles' decision to break with the past has paid dividends

Health authorities have applauded the king's openness, saying his disclosures saved lives by encouraging thousands of men to have prostate exams.

Royal experts say Charles' candor has also brought him closer to the public by demonstrating that he faces the same kinds of challenges that they do. Health is, after all, the great leveler.

Why is Charles doing so much?

Charles' busy schedule is a reminder that this is a man who waited around seven decades to become monarch and he wants to make the most of it.

The king has been open about his desire to demonstrate that the monarchy still has a role to play as a symbol of unity and tradition in the sometimes fractious, multicultural nation that is 21st-century Britain.

And the job of a modern king is to take part in a whirl of public events, from the pageantry of state occasions when he wears the crown and rides through the streets of London in a horse-drawn carriage to more mundane appearances such as opening public buildings or handing out awards for public service.

Charles took part in 372 public engagements last year, even after stepping aside for almost three months because of cancer treatment, according to data compiled by The Times of London newspaper. That made him the second-busiest royal behind his sister, Princess Anne, who had 474 engagements.

Charles has long been known as a workaholic, and Queen Camilla said last year that he "won't slow down and won't do what he's told." During her Reading Room literary festival in July, the queen told author Lee Child that her husband was "doing fine," but hadn't heeded her advice to curtail his schedule.

Prince Harry once said that his father worked so hard that he would fall asleep at his desk and wake up with bits of paper stuck to his face.

What are royal experts saying?

The king's busy schedule has obscured the fact that he is an older man with cancer, said Robert Hardman, author of "Charles III: New King, New Court, the Inside Story."



"We've seen him go back to normal," Hardman told the BBC on Friday.  
"I think this is sort of a reminder that this is a head of state undergoing treatment for cancer, because I think a lot of us tended to forget it."

## Hegseth tells Philippines the Trump administration will ramp up deterrence against China threat

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Friday that the Trump administration would work with allies to ramp up deterrence against threats across the world, including China's aggression in the South China Sea.

Hegseth, who was visiting the Philippines, blamed the previous Biden administration for insufficient actions that emboldened aggressors like China over the years. He said the U.S. military was being rebuilt under President Donald Trump and was re-establishing its "warrior ethos" in the region, but did not elaborate.

"What we're dealing with right now is many years of deferred maintenance, of weakness, that we need to reestablish strength and deterrence in multiple places around the globe," Hegseth told a news conference with his Philippine counterpart, Gilberto Teodoro, after meeting President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in Manila.

"There's a long line of countries in the past who have attempted to test U.S. resolve," Hegseth added. "We are resolved at this time ... to work with our partners."

Earlier, he told Marcos that deterrence was particularly needed in the Indo-Pacific region "considering the threats from the communist Chinese."

"Friends need to stand shoulder to shoulder to deter conflict, to ensure that there is free navigation whether you call it the South China Sea or the West Philippine Sea," he told Marcos.

The U.S. was not gearing up for war, Hegseth said — while underscoring that peace would be won "through strength."

The Philippines was the first stop in Hegseth's first trip to Asia. He is due to travel next to Japan, another staunch U.S. ally.

Ahead of his visit to the region, China called the United States a "predator" and an unreliable ally.

Hegseth said the Trump administration would commit more security assistance to the Philippines in addition to a \$500 million fund to help the Philippine military modernize. The U.S. funding was first announced by the previous Biden administration.

US-Philippine joint war games

The U.S. would also deploy an anti-ship missile system called the Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System as well as unmanned sea vessels for largescale military exercises involving thousands of American and Filipino forces next month in the Philippines, Hegseth said.

That would enable the allied forces to train together to defend Philippine sovereignty, he said.

Additionally, the allied forces agreed to stage special operations forces training in Batanes province, a cluster of islands in the northernmost tip of the Philippine archipelago across a sea border from Taiwan, he said.

Taiwan is the self-ruled island that China regards as a province and has threatened to annex, by force if necessary.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea, a major security and global trade route. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims to the resource-rich and busy waters, but confrontations have spiked between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and naval forces in the last two years.

Hegseth said that U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief Adm. Samuel Paparo, who heads the largest number of American combat forces outside the U.S. mainland, has "real war plans" and was ready to work with allied forces to create "strategic dilemmas for the communist Chinese that (will) help them reconsider whether or not violence or action is something they want to undertake."

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 83 of 85**

Aside from the U.S., Teodoro said the Philippines has been building security alliances with other friendly countries for added deterrence.

"God forbid. We must be prepared ... to deter any possibility in the future for our mutual defense and the defense of freedom and international law," Teodoro said.

Trump's "America First" foreign policy thrust has triggered concerns in Asia about the scale and depth of U.S. commitment to the region.

Under the previous Biden administration, the U.S. has repeatedly warned that it is obligated to help defend the Philippines if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. Hegseth renewed that Biden commitment in his talks with Marcos and Teodoro.

China warns of 'opening the door to a predator'

Ahead of Hegseth's visit, Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian said China opposes "interference from outside countries" in the South China Sea.

"U.S.-Philippines military cooperation must not harm the security interests of other countries or undermine regional peace and stability," he said Thursday in a news conference.

He added without elaborating that the United States has "an astonishing record of breaking its promises and abandoning its allies" throughout its history.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun separately warned the Philippines earlier this week "that nothing good could come out of opening the door to a predator. Those who willingly serve as chess pieces will be deserted in the end."

Hegseth, who has come under strong criticism for texting attack plans to a Signal group that included top-level U.S. security officials and the editor-in-chief of The Atlantic magazine, projected composure and camaraderie while in Manila.

Clad in a sweatshirt and shorts, he joined American and Filipino forces in physical training, including push-ups, in a gym after arriving Thursday in Manila.

The U.S. defense chief shook hands and posed smiling with military personnel while they flashed the thumbs-up in pictures posted by the U.S. Embassy on X.

## **South Korea's worst wildfires are now almost contained following rain and cooler weather**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The most destructive wildfires ever to hit South Korea were almost contained, authorities announced Friday, after rain and cooler temperatures helped fire crew put out the blazes that have killed 28 people and razed vast swaths of land since last week.

In a televised briefing, Korea Forest Service chief Lim Sang-seop said that all main fires at four of the hardest-hit areas in the southeast have been fully contained.

The forest service's website shows efforts to extinguish the wildfires remain at only one place as of Friday afternoon. The government's disaster response team earlier said that wildfires at other sites have been put out.

"As we've completed works to contain main fires, we're turning into a system to deal with small fires," Lim said. "There are still dangers of breakouts of another wildfires so we won't loosen our vigilance and will make all-out efforts to prevent them."

The raging inferno, fueled by windy and dry conditions, has destroyed thousands of houses, factories, vehicles and other structures since last Friday, while mountains and hills were stripped to a carpet of smoldering ashes. But light rain that began Thursday night and subsequent cooler weather have helped fire-fighting efforts.

"Hazes have been diminished because of the rain last night, so that's favorable for securing visibility. Also temperatures are now lower than the last few days, so things are very favorable to put out the wildfires," Lim said in an earlier briefing Friday.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 84 of 85**

Authorities mobilized about 9,000 people, 125 helicopters and hundreds of other vehicles Friday to battle the wildfires.

Tens of thousands have fled their homes

Firefighters — many in their 60s, a reflection of one of the world's fastest-aging populations — navigated forests in yellow helmets and red protective suits, spraying suppressants at flames that flickered near their feet. Helicopters dropped buckets of water over hills that glowed red in the night.

Residents hunkered down in temporary shelters in places like schools and gyms, but the fire crept dangerously close to some of them too. A video shared by one evacuee shows blazes approaching a school soccer field under a sky choked with smoke.

"I just kept crying this morning," said 79-year-old Seo Jae Tak, an evacuee at a gym in Andong city, on Thursday. "When I went back yesterday, the entire mountain had turned to ashes. It's just unbelievable, I can't even put it into words. All I can do is cry."

The wildfires have burned 47,860 hectares (118,265 acres) of land, forced more than 30,000 people to flee their homes and injured 37 others since last Friday. Officials said Friday that 8,000 residents remained at temporary shelters.

Wake-up call to overhaul wildfire responses

While it's hard to link any one event to climate change, officials and experts say that it is making wildfires more likely and more severe. Scientists have already warned the warming atmosphere around the world is driving ever more extreme weather events, including deadly wildfires, flooding, droughts, hurricanes and heat waves that are causing billions of dollars in damage every year.

"We must completely overhaul our wildfire response strategy in the face of extreme climate conditions," said Lee Cheol-woo, governor of North Gyeongsang Province.

Lee noted that the past week has shown how wildfires can quickly overwhelm the country's resources. He said he would request that the government establish better evacuation guidelines, adopt more powerful firefighting tools including aircraft equipped with water cannons, and adopt other approaches to improve firefighting efforts during nighttime hours.

"We don't have the equipment for firefighting at night," Lee said. "In the night, firefighting is done solely with manual efforts, but with the increased density of our forests compared to the past, it's difficult to manage with just that."

The people killed were mostly in their 60s or older. They include a pilot whose helicopter crashed during efforts to contain a fire Wednesday and four firefighters and other workers who died earlier after being trapped by fast-moving flames. Officials say older people found it difficult to evacuate quickly but have not provided details of the civilian dead.

In Uiseong, the fires damaged about 20 of the 30 structures at the Gounsa temple complex, said to have been originally built in the 7th century. Among them were two state-designated "treasures": a pavilion overlooking a stream that dates to 1668, and a Joseon dynasty structure built in 1904 to mark the longevity of a king.

## **Today in History: March 29, 'Terra-cotta Army' discovered in China**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, March 29, the 88th day of 2025. There are 277 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 29, 1974, a group of Chinese farmers digging a well struck fragments of terra-cotta buried underground; archaeologists would ultimately discover terra-cotta sculptures of more than 8,000 soldiers and other figures. The "Terra-cotta Army" would become one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the 20th century.

Also on this date:

In 1943, World War II rationing of meat, fats and cheese began, limiting American consumers to store purchases of an average of about two pounds a week for beef, pork, lamb and mutton using a coupon

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, March 29, 2025 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 277 ~ 85 of 85**

system.

In 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted in New York of conspiracy to commit espionage for the Soviet Union. (They were executed in June 1953.)

In 1961, the 23rd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, allowing residents of Washington, D.C., to vote in presidential elections.

In 1971, Army Lt. William L. Calley Jr. was convicted of murdering 22 Vietnamese civilians in the 1968 My Lai massacre. (Initially sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor, Calley's sentence would ultimately be commuted by President Richard Nixon to three years of house arrest.)

In 1971, a jury in Los Angeles recommended the death penalty for Charles Manson and three female followers for the 1969 Tate-La Bianca murders. (The sentences were commuted when the California state Supreme Court struck down the death penalty in 1972.)

In 1973, the last United States combat troops left South Vietnam, ending America's direct military involvement in the Vietnam War.

In 1984, under the cover of early morning darkness, the Baltimore Colts football team left its home city of three decades, sending the team's equipment to Indianapolis in moving trucks without informing Baltimore city or Maryland state officials.

In 2004, President George W. Bush welcomed seven former Soviet-bloc nations (Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) into NATO during a White House ceremony.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian Eric Idle is 82. Former British Prime Minister John Major is 82. Basketball Hall of Famer Walt Frazier is 80. Football Hall of Famer Earl Campbell is 70. Actor Brendan Gleeson is 70. Actor Christopher Lambert is 68. Actor Annabella Sciorra is 65. Comedian-actor Amy Sedaris is 64. Model Elle Macpherson is 61. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, a Democrat from Nevada, is 61. Actor Lucy Lawless is 57. Tennis Hall of Famer Jennifer Capriati is 49. Musician-author Michelle Zauner is 36.