

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, April 14

Senior Menu: Spanish rice, green beans, peaches, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: French bread pizza, peas.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Smarter Balance Testing for grades 5, 8 11 (Science)

Groton Senior Citizens Meet, 1 p.m., Groton Community Center

JV Baseball at Northville, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

Tuesday, April 15

Senior Menu: Ham rotini bake, peas and carrots, five cup salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Waffles.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, baked beans.

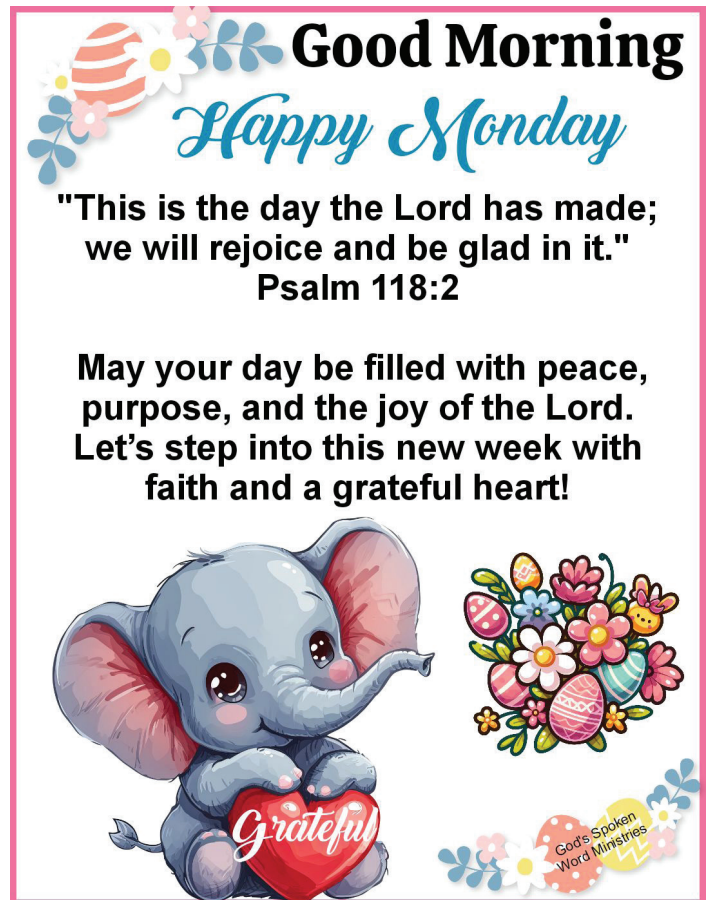
Smarter Balance Testing for grades 5, 8 11 (Science)

Track at Clear Lake, 2 p.m.

Junior High Track at Milbank, 4 p.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.



Wednesday, April 16

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken, wild rice, catalina blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Chicken pot pie, biscuits.

Smarter Balance Testing for grades 5, 8 11 (Science)

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.; Stations of the Cross at Catholic Church)

Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

US-Iran Nuclear Talks

US and Iranian officials held bilateral talks on Iran's nuclear program in Oman Saturday, the first such meeting between the two nations since 2018. The officially indirect discussions ended with a direct exchange between US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, a move observers described as a compromise since the US had requested direct talks.

The meeting comes seven years after President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Obama-brokered agreement traded sanctions relief to Iran in exchange for 15 years of uranium enrichment limits and regular inspections of its nuclear sites. Since the deal collapsed, Iran has accelerated enrichment of its uranium stockpile to nearly 60% purity. Weapons-grade uranium requires purity of 90% or higher, while civilian programs (for power, medicine, or research) need 3.67%.

The US wants Iran to end its weapons-grade program and its support for regional proxies like Hamas, while Iran seeks relief from broad sanctions. Hard-liners in both countries—as well as Israel, a regional foe—are likely to oppose a new deal. Talks will continue later this week.

Meta Antitrust Trial

Opening arguments begin today in a landmark antitrust trial against Meta, with federal regulators arguing the company monopolized personal social networking services by acquiring smaller rivals with the goal of squashing competition. The case may potentially result in Meta being forced to divest from a number of key apps, including Instagram and WhatsApp.

The realization of a suit originally brought in December 2020, prosecutors are expected to focus on alleged emails from CEO Mark Zuckerberg stating it's better to "buy than compete" with potential competitors. The company purchased Instagram in 2012 for \$1B and WhatsApp in 2014 for \$21B—the former now accounts for roughly half of the company's US revenue, while the latter has an estimated 2.7 billion global users. Zuckerberg has reportedly petitioned President Donald Trump to intervene.

The case is the first of two against tech giants unfolding back-to-back—Google will begin an evidentiary hearing next Monday over charges it monopolized the online search market.

McIlroy Hangs On

Rory McIlroy won the 2025 Masters yesterday, hanging on to outlast Justin Rose on the first hole of a sudden-death round while shooting 11 under par for the tournament. Capturing his first green jacket, the 35-year-old Irishman becomes just the sixth men's golfer to capture a career Grand Slam—the Masters, the Open Championship, the US Open, and the PGA Championship. He joins Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, and Tiger Woods in accomplishing the feat.

Considered one of the most successful golfers of his generation, McIlroy—currently ranked as the world's No. 2 men's golfer behind American Scottie Scheffler—has chased the career Grand Slam for more than a decade. McIlroy won his third of the four in 2014 (PGA Championship), and has since fallen just short in the Masters, including a second-place finish in 2022.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"A Minecraft Movie" pulls in \$80M at the box office in its second weekend to become 2025's biggest seller at the US domestic box office.

WNBA Draft is tonight (7:30 pm ET, ESPN); see latest first-round mock draft.

Western Michigan tops Boston to win its first NCAA men's hockey national title.

Don Mischer, 15-time Emmy-winning live events director, dies at age 85.

Nicky Katt, actor best known for "Dazed and Confused" and "Boston Public," dies at age 54.

Science & Technology

Blue Origin to launch first all-female group spaceflight, with crew including pop star Katy Perry, TV host Gayle King, and others; launch window opens at 9:30 am ET.

Astrophysicists find half of the universe's hydrogen; the previously undetected, diffuse ionized gas partially accounts for the universe's "missing" normal matter.

Scientists engineer bacteria capable of emitting signals that can be spotted almost a football field away; technique may aid in monitoring pollution, soil health, and more.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up Friday (S&P 500 +1.8%, Dow +1.6%, Nasdaq +2.1%), closing tumultuous week following tariff uncertainty.

Ten-year US Treasury yield nears 4.5%, notches the biggest weekly jump since 2001 as investors grow anxious over US assets.

President Donald Trump to exempt some major electronics, including smartphones and computers, from 10% global tariffs and additional 125% Chinese tariff.

India's JioHotstar passes 200 million paid subscribers, becomes the world's third-largest streaming service behind Netflix and Amazon Prime Video.

Politics & World Affairs

Trump administration confirms Maryland man mistakenly deported to Salvadoran prison is alive in the facility, declines to say whether it is complying with order to facilitate his return.

At least 34 people killed, 80 others wounded following Russian attack on Ukrainian city of Sumy during Palm Sunday services.

Attack comes two days after US officials push Russian President Vladimir Putin to advance ceasefire process.

Harvard faculty sue Trump administration over its effort to freeze and review nearly \$9B in federal funding; federal officials previously ordered the school to end all DEI-related programs, among other demands.

Police investigating potential arson at Pennsylvania governor's mansion; no injuries reported.

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Newsweek

The
Bulletin

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

WORLD IN BRIEF

Japan refuses quick trade concessions: Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he will not make "big concessions" to President Trump in order to get a U.S. trade deal wrapped up quickly ahead of talks due to start on April 17 in Washington.

China expands Pacific military influence: China has quietly extended its military reach far across the Pacific by building dozens of ports, airports, and communications projects at key points in a vast region that could shut out the United States and its allies in the event of war, a new report says.

Russia's birth rate nears record low: Russia's birth rate has fallen to a historic low, reaching levels not seen since the late 18th to early 19th century, according to a leading Russian demographer.

Helicopter Tour company shuts down: The Federal Aviation Administration announced Sunday that New York Helicopter Tours (also known as New York Helicopter Charter) is shutting down operations immediately following a fatal crash that killed six people.

Trump booed at Coachella during Bernie Sanders speech: Sen. Bernie Sanders made a surprise appearance at the Coachella festival in California on Saturday night. When the Vermont independent mentioned Trump, the crowd booed, and he quickly told them, "I agree," in response.

Texas faces a pileup of unsold homes: An ongoing construction boom has combined with slowing demand to create a pileup of unsold homes in the once-booming Texas housing market, where prices are now starting to "correct" after years of overheating, experts told Newsweek.

China Thinks Trump Has Blinked First in Tariff War

The rundown: President Donald Trump's move to exempt electronics from a sweeping U.S. tariff on China marks a "small step" back from an "erroneous practice," Beijing said on Sunday, urging the administration to scrap its tariff regime altogether. [Learn more.](#)

Why it matters: The U.S. announced another surprise trade update in a memorandum of understanding on Friday, exempting smartphones, computers and chips from its 145 percent tariff rate on Chinese goods. China accounts for much of the world's electronics manufacturing and plays a critical role in global supply chains. Commenting on the move, China's Commerce Ministry suggested the U.S. had blinked and reiterated its opposition to the trade war. "It should be said that this is a small step taken by the U.S. side to correct the erroneous practice of unilateral 'reciprocal tariffs,'" a spokesperson said.

TL/DR: Trump has defended his tariff strategy as a way to restore U.S. manufacturing and push trading partners to eliminate what he calls unfair barriers to American goods.

What happens now? With both sides firmly entrenched, a near-term resolution to the U.S.-China trade war—originally launched by Trump during his first term—appears unlikely.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

With the NFL Draft fast approaching, all eyes turn to team front offices as they finalize their boards and prepare to shape the future of their franchises. For the Minnesota Vikings, this year's draft carries added intrigue—and pressure. With multiple key positions still in flux and rumors swirling about potential trades, general manager Kwesi Adofo-Mensah and head coach Kevin O'Connell have pivotal decisions to make. As the first round of the NFL draft approaches on Thursday, April 24th at 7 pm central time, we'll dive into the biggest needs, top prospects, and potential draft-day scenarios that could define the Vikings' 2025 season and beyond.

Thanks to an aggressive approach in free agency, the Vikings enter the draft without a long list of glaring needs. Key additions on both sides of the ball have helped solidify the roster, giving Minnesota some flexibility in how they approach their picks. That said, no team is ever truly "set," and there are still a few spots where depth would still be valuable—especially with the grind of a 17-game season and the ever-present risk of injuries. Cornerback remains the clear priority, and beyond that, the Vikings could use depth just about everywhere.

Given general manager Kwesi Adofo-Mensah's history of trading down to stockpile draft capital, it wouldn't be a surprise to see the Vikings move back from pick No. 24—especially with a limited number of selections this year. Even if the team stays put at pick No. 24, several intriguing cornerback prospects could be in play.

Will Johnson, Michigan

Johnson is a long, athletic cornerback with elite foot quickness, fluid hips, and the ability to play both outside and in the slot. He shines in off coverage, using his sharp instincts and strong ball skills to consistently make plays—highlighted by nine career interceptions and three pick-sixes. Johnson's size and length allow him to match up with bigger receivers, and he's capable of rerouting opponents in press-man coverage. While questions about his deep speed and physicality against the run remain, his smooth movement and playmaking instincts give him a high ceiling, particularly in zone-heavy or hybrid defenses. Injuries limited him in 2024, including turf toe and a hamstring that kept him out of Michigan's pro day, but when healthy, Johnson looks like a potential difference-maker at the next level.

Maxwell Hairston, Kentucky

Hairston is a fast, feisty corner with elite athleticism and top-tier straight-line speed, posting a 4.28-second 40-yard dash at the combine. His burst and agility are evident in off-coverage, where he closes quickly and has a knack for jumping routes. Hairston tied Kentucky's school record with three career pick-sixes and consistently shows playmaking instincts. Though undersized for a true press-man corner, he uses a one-hand jam and mirrors receivers well thanks to his quick feet and fluid hips. He's willing in run support and flashes as a blitzer, but needs to clean up hand usage downfield and continue developing his processing in zone. Hairston may begin his career as a CB2, but his speed, ball skills, and big-play ability give him intriguing upside as a long-term contributor in the secondary.

Benjamin Morrison, Notre Dame

Morrison is a smooth, intelligent cornerback with strong ball production and impressive versatility. He thrives in press-man coverage thanks to his fluid hips, clean transitions, and ability to stay glued to routes. With nine interceptions over two seasons, he's proven he can make plays on the ball in both off and zone coverage. Despite having shorter arms, he's capable of rerouting receivers in press-man looks and brings physicality to run support. Morrison's positional flexibility—playing both outside and over the slot—makes him even more valuable. He's a technically sound tackler who gives consistent effort, though he'll need to bounce back from a season-ending hip injury that cut short his 2024 campaign. If healthy, Morrison has all the tools to become a quality starting cornerback in virtually any scheme.

Shavon Revel, East Carolina

Shavon Revel is an intriguing prospect with the physical tools to develop into a starting press-man cor-

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ner in the NFL. Standing tall with ideal length and speed, he can reroute receivers at the line and match up with them downfield. Revel flashes the ability to stay in phase with vertical routes and shows good vision in zone coverage, though his technique and anticipation still need refinement. He's capable of recovering when out of phase, using his physicality to close gaps and compete for 50-50 balls. However, his upright stance in press-man coverage and tendency to allow separation can be concerning, especially when defending the deep ball. A torn ACL in September limited him to just three games in 2024, but his raw explosiveness, length, and competitive drive make him an enticing prospect with significant upside.

Next week we will scour NFL mock drafts to find the commonly mocked players to the Vikings, with a breakdown of each player. As the draft day approaches, we'll continue to break down potential fits for the Vikings, so stay tuned for more insights. Skol!



Scooter for Sale

For sale a Kymco scooter super 8 for sale. In good shape. Asking \$1,000 for it. Contact Tina at 605-397-7285. Cash only

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"Zip Code Matter"

Those of us who make our homes in the rural midwest understand that we face medical challenges our countrymen in more populated areas don't. For example, there are two pediatric rheumatologists in the whole state of South Dakota. . . and they are both based in Fargo. In contrast, there are 10 in the Twin Cities with the University of Minnesota alone. In Winner South Dakota, you are nearly 150 miles away from emergency access to a neurosurgeon, assuming you can go by air. No matter where you are in Connecticut, that help is no more than 50 miles away.



Debra Johnston, MD

These ideas are probably obvious to anyone reading this. If we haven't had to travel for medical care ourselves, we know someone who did. But other factors, things that have an even bigger impact on our well being, may be less familiar.

Economics plays a role, of course. Can you afford your medicine, or to go to the doctor? Do you have time off for that appointment? Are you choosing between keeping food on the table and a roof over your family's head? Are you filling up on cheap empty calories, or are you able to buy fruits, vegetables and eggs?

Where you live matters in other ways. Can you buy those healthy groceries nearby? Are there safe places to walk, and for your children to play? How clean is the air in your community? Does your home have lead paint or asbestos insulation? Is the water that comes out of your tap safe to drink, or is it contaminated with chemicals or lead? Does the noise in your neighborhood keep you awake at night?

Zip codes can impact the infrastructure around you in ways that affect residents unequally. How accessible is the environment? Are people with mobility challenges able to easily enter retail spaces? Do they have housing options? Are the schools able to support children who face learning challenges? Can you find childcare while you work? Can you practice your faith in your community? Social engagement protects your well-being.

Even our genes are affected by our environment. This is a fascinating new concept that many of us never study in school. Scientists have learned that external factors influence how our genes are expressed, without changing our DNA. These factors start working before birth: nutrition and stress experienced by a pregnant woman influences the development of her child, and has an impact not only throughout that child's life but into subsequent generations.

As we think about health, let's not forget that we aren't all starting in the same place. It's worth thinking about how we can address some of those disadvantages.

Debra Johnston, MD. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices as a Family Medicine Doctor at Avera Medical Group in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Threads. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB), providing health information based on science, built on trust.

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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.

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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.

Gregory County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: US Highway 18, mile marker 276, four miles west of Gregory, SD
When: 10:13 a.m., Sunday, April 13, 2025
Driver 1: 15-year-old female from Gregory, SD, life threatening injuries
Vehicle 1: 2001 Chevrolet Blazer
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 1a: 15-year-old female from Gregory, SD, fatal injuries
Seat belt Used: No

Gregory County, S.D.- The driver was seriously injured and the passenger fatally injured in a one-car crash four miles west of Gregory, SD, Sunday morning.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2001 Chevrolet Blazer was traveling east on US Highway 18 near mile marker 276 when the vehicle drove onto the shoulder which was under construction. While re-entering the roadway, the vehicle spun and entered the south ditch and rolled, ejecting the passenger.

Both occupants were air lifted to a Sioux Falls hospital. The driver sustained life threatening injuries and the passenger died from her injuries at the hospital.

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

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

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Note: Records of state-reportable crashes are now available at <http://www.safesd.gov/> . Records should be available about 10 days after the investigation is complete.

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Holgate Music Contest Results

Congratulations to the following students on their wonderful showing at the Holgate Music Contest in Aberdeen this past weekend!

37 Superiors (3 Superior +'s)

17 Excellents (3 Excellent +'s)

MS Band received a Superior from all 3 judges

All Ensembles and 5th graders received Superior Ratings

Superior Plus Solos:

Liam Johnson (Alto Sax), Novalea Warrington (Bari Sax and Flute)

Superior Solos:

8th Grade: Ari Dinger (Flute), Tenley Frost (Flute), Aspen Beto (Tenor Sax and Clarinet), Fernando Nava (Mallets)

7th Grade: Amelia Ewalt (Flute), GraceLynn Hubbs-Mullner (Trumpet), Asher Zimmerman (Trombone), Hudson Eichler (Mallets),

Gavin Hanten (Quads)

6th Grade: Gracie Borg (Flute), Addison Steffes (Flute), Lillian Davis (Alto Sax), Amara Freeland (Alto Sax), Ambrielle Feist (Tenor Sax),

Bella Barrera (French Horn), Kendyll Kroll (French Horn), Brinley Guthmiller (Trumpet), Libby Johnson (Trumpet), Rylan Blackwood (Trombone), Ayce Warrington (Baritone), Mason Locke (Snare Drum), Ivan Schwan (Snare Drum & Mallets)

5th Grade: Taylor Fliehs (Alto Sax), Avery Roettele (Alto Sax), Ruby Dosch (Trumpet), Hank Fliehs (Trumpet)

Superior Ensembles:

8th Grade: Jordan Schwan and Logan Olson (Mixed Duet- Snare Drum and Trombone)

8th Grade: Wesley Borg, Sam Crank, and Zach Fliehs (Saxophone Trio)

7th Grade: Hudson Eichler and Gavin Hanten (Snare/Mallet Duet)

5th Grade: Avery Huber, Devan Locke, Blakely Stiegelmeier, and Jernie Weig (Clarinet Quartet)

5th Grade: Arthur Eichler, Hayden Hubbard, Micah Krause, and Jack Schuelke (Percussion Quartet)

Excellent Plus Solos:

7th Grade: Haden Harder (Bass Clarinet), Eli Heilman (Baritone)

6th Grade: Hank Hill (Snare Drum)

Excellent Solos:

8th Grade: May Dallaire

7th Grade: Chloe Witche (Flute), Andi Gauer (Alto Sax), Xzavier Klebsch (Alto Sax), Jameson Penning (Bass Clarinet), Kinleigh Furman (Trumpet)

6th Grade: Hadley Heilman (Clarinet), Zoe Olson (Clarinet), Charles Telkamp (French Horn), Emmett Zoellner (French Horn), Graham Rose (Snare Drum and Mallets), Mason Locke (Mallets), Hank Hill (Mallets)

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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

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

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Pink basket - \$20



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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Q&A: South Dakota's new Republican Party chairman wants to weed out fake Republicans

Jim Eschenbaum was a Democrat for three decades, then switched his registration and rode a property rights movement into leadership

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 13, 2025 7:00 AM

South Dakota's new Republican Party chairman is a former Democrat, but he's been a Republican for nine years. Now he's concerned about "Republicans In Name Only," or RINOs, and wants to weed them out.

"RINOs are a real thing," Jim Eschenbaum said. "People say, 'Don't call us RINOs.' Well, If you're supporting abortion or gun control in any way, or any kind of sequestering of First Amendment rights, well, that does not align with conservative principles."

Eschenbaum is a 62-year-old Hand County commissioner and farmer. He was a registered Democrat for 32 years until he and his wife switched when Democrats nominated Hillary Clinton for president in 2016.

"We said we couldn't align with that one, so we were already planning to vote for Trump, and we both switched and became Republicans," he said.

Eschenbaum got more politically engaged while fighting Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions' proposed \$9 billion carbon capture pipeline, which he calls a "boondoggle." The project would transport carbon dioxide emissions from dozens of ethanol plants in five states to an underground storage site in North Dakota, where the carbon could also be used to extract oil from old wells. For the carbon it sequesters underground, the project could qualify for billions in federal tax credits for removing heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere.

The project's need for eminent domain has motivated staunch opposition in South Dakota. Eminent domain is a method of forcing landowners to provide access to their land, in exchange for compensation determined by a court.

Members of a grassroots movement against the pipeline's use of eminent domain have had a big impact on South Dakota politics. They helped oust 14 state Republican lawmakers in last June's primary election; referred what pipeline critics considered a pro-pipeline law to the ballot in November, where voters rejected it; and helped pass a law earlier this year barring carbon pipeline companies from using eminent domain.

Eschenbaum was a leading figure in the ballot referendum campaign.

"That did indeed gain me a lot of public exposure," Eschenbaum said. "I did public informational meetings all over the state before the general election."

Eschenbaum said the people he met along the way encouraged him to run for state Republican Party chairman. Some of those same people were becoming more active in the party themselves, and were shifting the party's power balance to members of the anti-pipeline movement.

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"They said we need good, honest, outspoken leadership," he said. "I always tell people the truth is easy to speak. It's not tough to speak what you believe."

The state party elects a chair during the first meeting of its state central committee in each odd-numbered year. Voters include Republican county chairs, vice-chairs, state committee members and other designated officials.

Eschenbaum was elected chairman in February and recently spoke with South Dakota Searchlight. The following conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Many Republican donors now give money directly to causes or candidates rather than the state party. Is the state party organization relevant anymore, and why does it exist?

It is, because of the state organization, the county organizations, the county precinct committeemen and committeewomen, and the elected Republican officials in the county who are part of that county central committee.

It exists, most importantly, because of its party platform. That party platform is amended by the entire group of people, which would include precinct committeemen and committeewomen who go to the state convention.

That platform shows what the South Dakota GOP stands for, and then I think our elected officials should be held to the task of promoting and voting along the lines of that platform. And so there is a purpose.

I agree that people are funding candidates now instead of just throwing all the money to the state or state party. And I am perfectly OK with that. We don't need any more money thrown to the state GOP than what we need to operate.

And we've already taken \$77,000 out of the annual operating costs of the state GOP. Reggie Rhoden, Governor Rhoden's son, was executive director and he was being paid \$5,400 a month. He resigned at the meeting on February 22, when we did the elections. And we have decided thus far that we don't need an executive director. Nobody knows that he was doing much.

What makes someone a Republican?

I think you should be a constitutional conservative. And what I mean by constitutional conservative is that you vote and represent Republicans based on the two constitutions: the South Dakota Constitution and the U.S. Constitution, which everyone raises their right hand and swears an oath to when they're sworn in. And then our party platform, which is conservative values.

I have even proposed a South Dakota GOP scorecard. I don't know if the state central committee will decide to do it, but it would be based on just those three principles, the two constitutions and the party platform.

How do you define the factions in the Republican Party?

Well, it's establishment power players and power to the people.

The average Joes are realizing they have a voice. It comes from that 2024 primary. A lot of those candidates that got voted out, those incumbents that got voted out, had all kinds of money behind them from the ethanol plants and Summit Carbon Solutions. And the people got out and talked to people. This is

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what party politics should be. This is what government should be.

Do you want to unify Republicans?

The best thing I can do to bring them all together is be open and honest and communicative with them, and I've been doing that.

I feel like the South Dakota GOP has been run by just a few power players, and they really didn't want a new voice or input. I've stated this so many times: They ask for our money and our vote, but they don't want our voice. They don't want us involved in the process, and that's just a terrible thought when you've got a state central committee that's composed of about 200 members and the bylaws.

The bylaws make it clear to me that the chairman's job is to facilitate the operations and decision-making of the state central committee. The state central committee should have the power, not the chairman or any other executive director or anything. The state central committee's discussions and decision-making should guide the party.

And that's what I ran on. I ran on a campaign of power to the people and being accessible to the people, and so far it's going good.

Some of these counties that did not want me elected are starting to talk to me. There was quite a while there that they didn't like this farmer from Hand County getting in amongst the politicians.

But I said our state motto for God's sake is "Under God the People Rule," and some of these politicians, they get elected to office, they get a fat head about what it is they want to do or who they want to benefit, or using government to do business, and that's not what government is intended to be. It's supposed to be a minimal service to the people, and it just keeps growing and growing and growing and getting more authoritarian and powerful, and that's not what our founders intended it to be, in my opinion.

Why were you a Democrat? Why did you become a Republican?

My wife and I were both raised in Catholic Democrat families. And what do young people do if they haven't really gotten themselves involved in politics in high school and started making decisions of which way they're going to go? You register the same as your parents were.

Well, as abortion became a bigger topic, my wife and I both agreed we wouldn't support any Democrat that supported abortion.

The Democratic Party that we aligned with was more of that JFK kind of a Democrat that worked for the working class and common people. The party got away from that. They just got further and further away from it. They just keep stepping to the left even more all the time and supporting all kinds of foolishness that the Republican Party does not support.

Is there anything you'd like to add?

I'm extremely involved as chairman — like I said, responsive to people. I'm trying to make every Lincoln Day Dinner [a fundraising event for county Republican parties] across the state that I can possibly get to.

These are complaints that I heard about the previous chair or previous administration. You'd have a Lincoln Day Dinner, give plenty of notice for it, and they're like, "No, very busy that day."

If you take a job like this, you have to commit the time that it takes to do it right. I don't know why that didn't happen previously. It could be speculated probably two or three different ways.

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I said when I took this job, "I will not be a butt kisser to any politicians. I'm working for the people to elect good politicians."

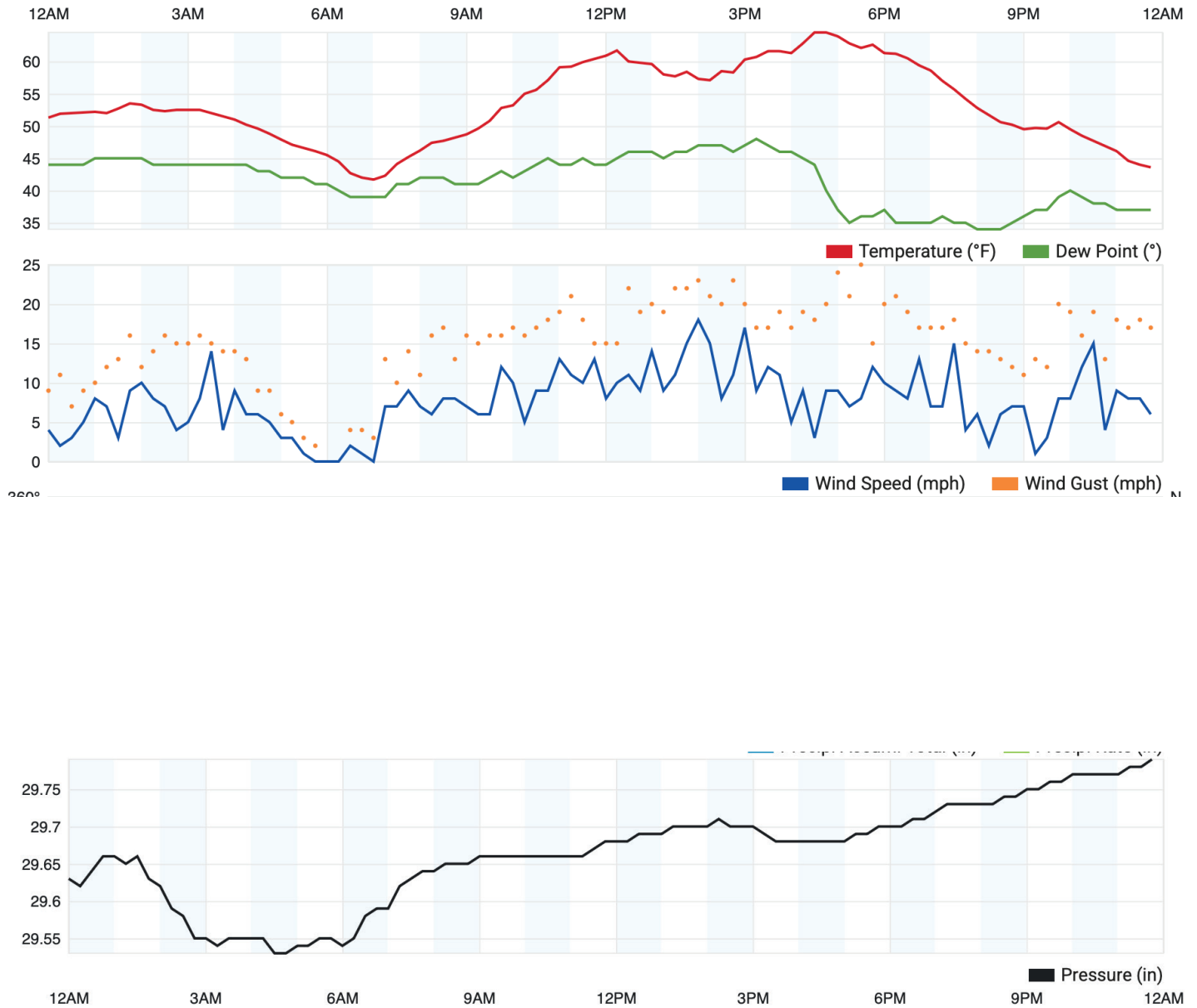
Just because you're elected to office currently does not guarantee you're going to get reelected to office again. It just doesn't.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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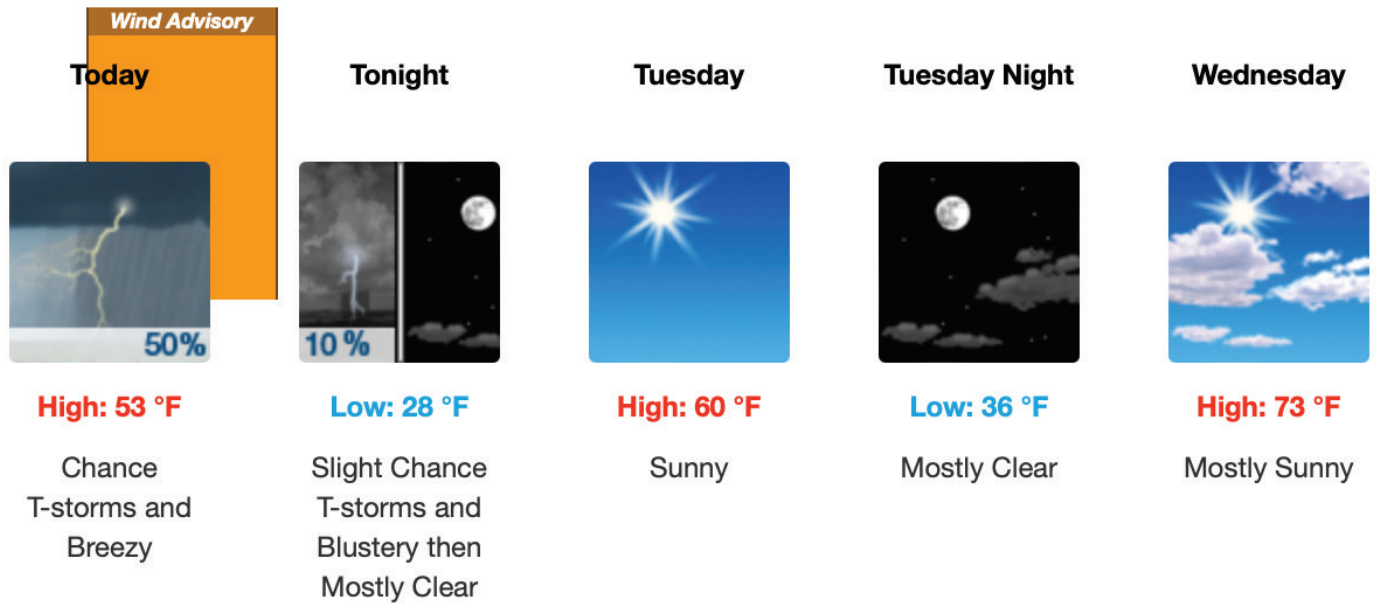
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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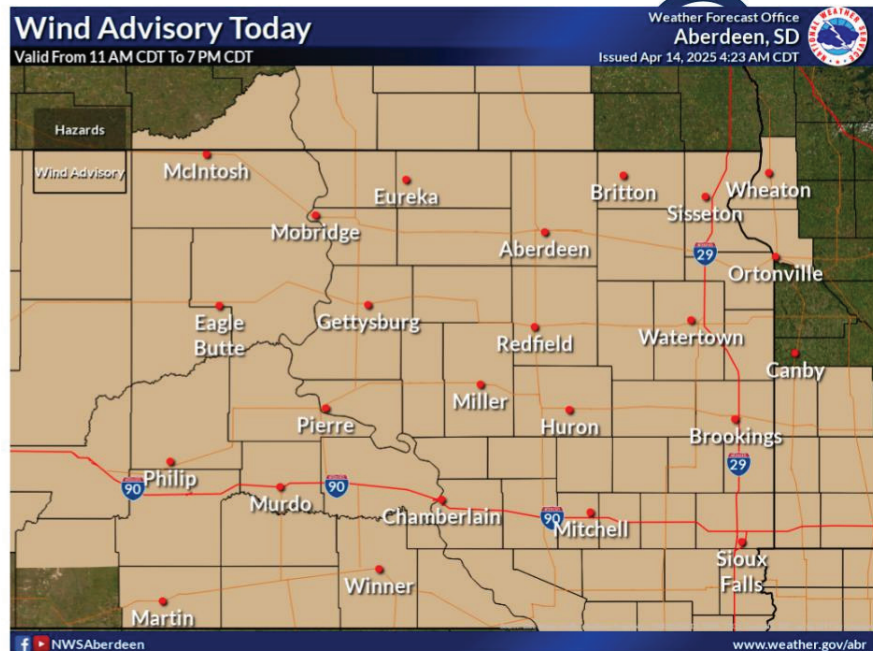


Wind Advisory Today

April 14, 2025
4:45 AM

Key Messages

- Wind Advisory in effect from 11 AM CDT this morning to 7 PM CDT this evening.
- Isolated to scattered showers and weak thunderstorms today may locally enhance these winds/gusts.



Northwest winds 25 to 35 mph with gusts to 45 mph are expected.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 65 °F at 4:25 PM

Low Temp: 41 °F at 6:51 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 5:26 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 32 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 89 in 1908

Record Low: 9 in 1928

Average High: 57

Average Low: 31

Average Precip in April.: 0.67

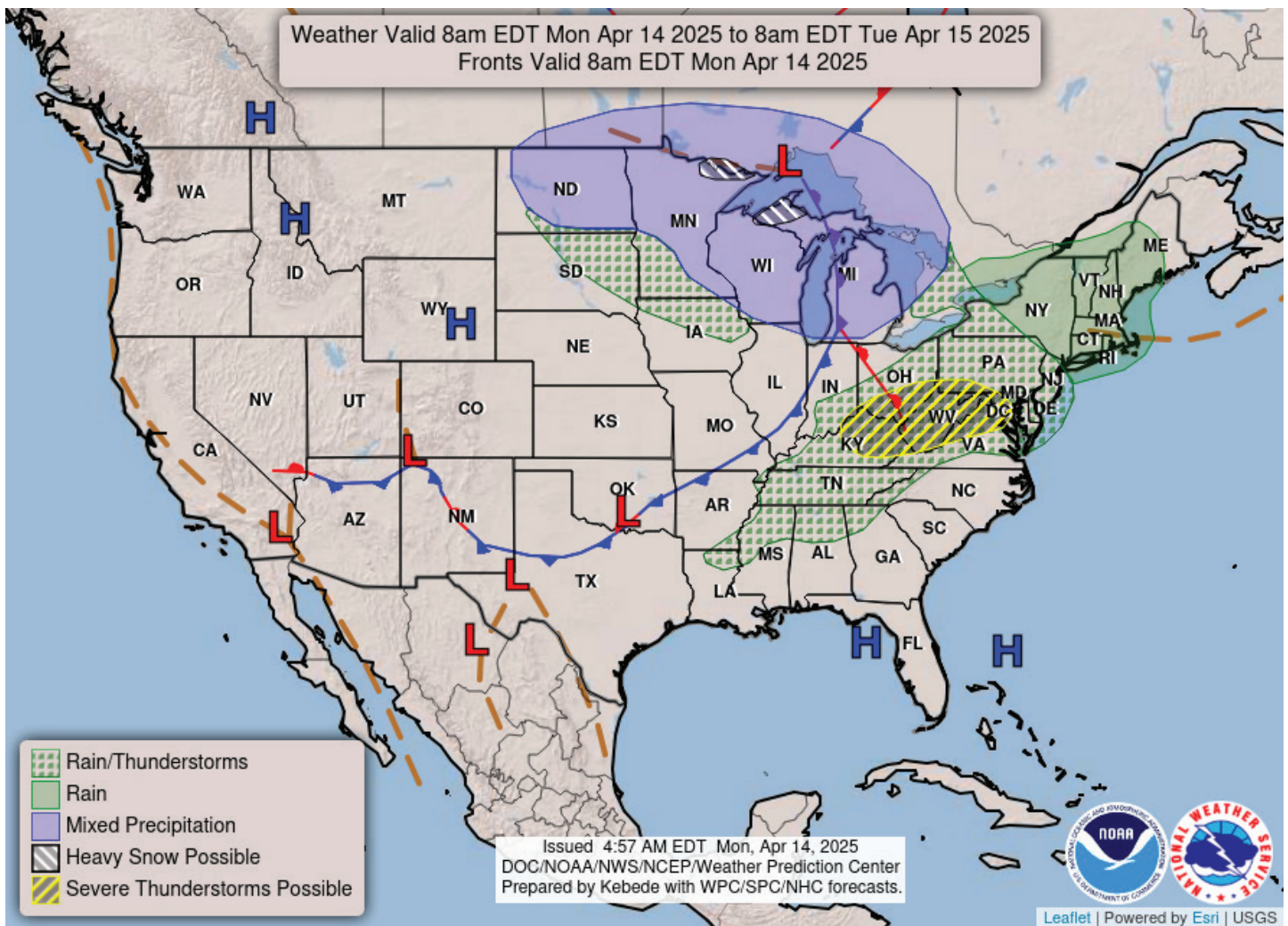
Precip to date in April.: 1.07

Average Precip to date: 2.73

Precip Year to Date: 1.70

Sunset Tonight: 8:19:01 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:44:18 am



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Today in Weather History

April 14th, 1991: Thawing ice on top of a television tower fell onto buildings below in Garden City, Clark County. The ice had accrued during a freezing rain event on the 11th and 12th. No one was injured, but damage estimates ranged from \$35,000 to \$40,000.

April 14th, 2005: A dust devil developed on the west side of Bison as a dry cold front passed through the area. As it moved east across town, it blew out windows on several automobiles, damaged a 160-square-foot section of roof from a house, and tore shingles off several buildings. The dust devil also pulled a flagpole out of the ground. No one was injured. The dust devil was approximately 20 feet wide, and the path length was one and a half miles.

1873 - A famous Easter blizzard raged across Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. Gale force winds blew the wet snow into massive drifts, however there were few deaths due to the sparse population and due to the gradual increase of the storm. (David Ludlum)

1886 - A devastating tornado, 800 yards in width at times, cut a twenty mile path through Saint Cloud MN killing 74 persons. The bottom of the Mississippi River was said to have been seen during the tornado's crossing. Eleven persons were killed at a wedding party near the town of Rice. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm system moving slowly northeastward across the Middle Mississippi Valley produced severe thunderstorms which spawned three tornadoes around Ottumwa IA, and produced up to four inches of rain in southeastern Nebraska, flooding rivers and streams. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A weather disturbance off the southern coast of California brought parts of southern California their first rain in six weeks. Rain-slickened roads resulted in numerous accidents in southern California, including a ten car pile-up at Riverside. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Late afternoon thunderstorms in northern Florida soaked the town of Golden Gate with 4.37 inches of rain in about two hours, resulting in local flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in southeastern Texas during the mid morning hours. Thunderstorms produced dime size hail at Galveston, and wind gusts to 59 mph at Port Arthur. Afternoon thunderstorms over southeast Louisiana spawned tornadoes south of Bogalusa and at Rio. (Storm Data)

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ALWAYS ROOM FOR MORE

Whenever I hear the word "gain," I think it is related to "weight," especially my weight. There are very few mornings that I do not step on the scale to get my "daily report" on what I ate yesterday. Most nutritionists do not recommend such a program. But, my hope to see the arrow pointing downward remains steadfast.

A gain or increase can be good or bad, exciting or depressing, encouraging or discouraging, depending on what the gain refers to. If we depend on the stock market, a gain can be a good thing. But, if we see a gain in our debt, it can be disturbing. Our gains or losses, for the most part, are usually in the physical or material realm.

Solomon speaks of a particular type of "gain" - of being able to achieve some "things" that will last as long as we live. These "gains," these valuable lessons are available and offered to us in Proverbs. Our "attaining" more of God's wisdom, or "life gains" is very important for all Christians because we are constantly challenged to "grow" throughout Scripture, and Proverbs provides this path for us if we want to grow.

The word used for "wisdom" in this verse also means skillfulness - applying knowledge that comes from God to our lives every day. If we do so, we will "do the right things the right way."

When we go one step further, we come to the fact that it is possible to develop decision-making skills that are God-honoring and enable us to establish life-principals that will bring us success. God's proverbs can guide us through life, help us in our relationships with others, lead to good practices in business, enrich our homes, and bless God and others.

Prayer: Lord, You've left us "no excuses" on how we are to live life if we are Christians. Thanks for the directions on how to live a successful life! Now, give us courage! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight. Proverbs 1:2

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.11.25

15 37 38 56 58 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$96,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 49 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.12.25

16 24 42 50 52 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$30,800,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 4 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.13.25

2 29 30 43 45 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 19 Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.12.25

3 7 21 28 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$107,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 19 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.12.25

5 10 46 49 60 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 48 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.12.25

16 22 44 45 53 19

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$100,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 48 Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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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

European officials condemn Russia's deadly Palm Sunday attack on Ukraine's Sumy

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European officials condemned Monday Russia's deadly missile attack on Ukraine's Sumy that killed and wounded scores, accusing Moscow of committing war crimes and demonstrating disregard for Washington-led efforts to end the war.

Ukrainian officials said two ballistic missiles on Sunday morning hit the heart of Sumy, a city about 30 kilometers away from Ukraine's border with Russia, as people gathered to celebrate Palm Sunday, killing at least 34 and wounding 117. It is the second large-scale attack to claim civilian lives in just over a week.

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski, whose country holds the European Union's rotating presidency, said that the recent attacks are "Russia's mocking answer" to Kyiv's agreement to a ceasefire proposed by the U.S. administration over a month ago.

"I hope that President Trump, the U.S. administration, see that the leader of Russia is mocking their goodwill, and I hope the right decisions are taken," Sikorski told reporters Monday in Luxembourg, where EU foreign ministers met.

Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen noted that the attack on Sumy came shortly after Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, was in Saint Petersburg for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. It demonstrates that "Russia shows full disregard for the peace process, but also that Russia has zero regard for human life."

Lithuania's foreign minister Kestutis Budrys said the Russian strike used cluster munitions to target civilians in what he called "a war crime by definition."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said the attack shows that Putin has no intention of agreeing to a ceasefire. "He must therefore be forced to do so, and that's why I'm calling on the European Union to take the toughest sanctions against Russia to suffocate its economy and prevent it from fueling its war effort."

The EU has imposed 16 rounds of sanctions on Russia and is working on a 17th package, but the measures are getting harder to agree on as they also impact European economies.

Germany's chancellor-designate, Friedrich Merz, described the Sumy attack late Sunday as "a serious war crime."

Merz said that, three days after Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban was in Moscow, Russia attacked a children's hospital in Kyiv. "Evidently, he (Putin) interprets our readiness to speak to him not as a serious offer to make peace possible but as weakness," he said in an appearance on ARD television.

Merz made clear that he stands by his past calls to send Taurus long-range cruise missiles to Ukraine, something that outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz refused to do. He said that the Ukrainian military needs to be able to "get ahead of the situation" and that any delivery of long-range missiles must be done in consultation with European partners.

Two children were killed and 15 others were wounded in the attack, according to Ukraine's State Emergency Service.

"Only filthy scum can act like this — taking the lives of ordinary people," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a statement on social media, adding that the first strike hit city university buildings, while the second exploded above street level.

The head of the Ukrainian president's office, Andriy Yermak, said cluster munitions were used to kill as many people as possible. The Associated Press was unable to verify that claim.

The attack on Sumy followed a deadly April 4 missile strike on Zelenskyy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih that killed some 20 people, including nine children.

Zelenskyy called for a global response to the attack. "Talks have never stopped ballistic missiles and aerial bombs. What's needed is an attitude toward Russia that a terrorist deserves," he said.

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Asking about the attack, Trump said late Sunday evening that he was trying to get the war stopped. "I think it was terrible and I was told they made a mistake, but I think it's a horrible thing. I think the whole war is a horrible thing," he told reporters aboard Air Force One as he returned to Washington. He did not clarify whether he was saying the attack was unintentional.

Next Iran-US nuclear talks will be held in Rome, AP source says

By MARIA GRAZIA MURRU and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Talks between Iran and the United States over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program appeared ready Monday to leave the Middle East, as an Italian source said the next round of negotiations would take place in Rome.

Meanwhile, the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog separately confirmed he would be taking a trip to Iran later in the week, possibly to discuss ways to improve access for his inspectors to Tehran's program.

The stakes of the negotiations couldn't be higher for the two nations closing in on half a century of enmity. U.S. President Donald Trump repeatedly has threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

A source in the Italian government confirmed that the next round would take place in Rome on Saturday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

The person's comments came as Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani separately told journalists in Osaka, Japan, that the Italian government has given its OK to host the talks.

"We received the request from the interested parties, from Oman, which plays the role of mediator and we gave a positive response," Tajani said. "We are ready to welcome, as always, meetings that can bring positive results, in this case on the nuclear issue."

Both Iranian and U.S. officials did not immediately acknowledge the venue of the second round of negotiations. However, it's likely that Oman, which hosted the first round of talks on Saturday in Muscat, would continue to mediate between the two sides.

"The next round of talks will probably be held somewhere other than Oman," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told journalists on Monday in Tehran. "It's not an important matter."

IAEA chief to head to Iran ahead of talks

The talks will follow a visit by Rafael Mariano Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency to Iran later this week.

The IAEA played a key role in verifying Iran's compliance with its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and has continued to work in the Islamic Republic, even as the country's theocracy slowly peeled away its access after Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord in 2018.

"Continued engagement and cooperation with the Agency is essential at a time when diplomatic solutions are urgently needed," Grossi wrote on X.

Grossi will arrive in Iran on Wednesday night and will meet Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and President Masoud Pezeshkian, the state-run IRNA news agency reported, quoting Kazem Gharibabadi, a deputy foreign minister.

Sanctions relief and enrichment remain top issues

The 2015 nuclear deal saw Iran agree to drastically reduce its stockpile of uranium and only enrich up to 3.67% — enough for its nuclear power plant at Bushehr. Today, Iran enriches up to 60%, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels and has enough stockpile for multiple nuclear bombs, should it choose to build them.

The deal lifted economic sanctions on Iran and unfroze assets around the world. The deal's collapse refroze those funds and limited Iran's ability to sell crude oil abroad — though it still sells to China, likely at a sharp discount.

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While the U.S. can offer sanctions relief for Iran's beleaguered economy, it remains unclear just how much Iran will be willing to concede. Judging from negotiations since 2018, Iran will likely ask to keep enriching uranium up to at least 20%. However, neither side has offered any public statements about what it is specifically seeking in the talks.

"There must definitely be guarantees in place regarding the fulfillment of commitments," Baghaei said Monday. "The issue of guarantees is especially important given the history of broken promises in the past. God willing, the negotiating team will continue its work with all these factors and points in mind."

He added: "As long as the language of sanctions, pressure, threats, and intimidation continues, direct negotiations will not take place."

However, Abbas and U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff did meet and speak face to face after some two hours of indirect talks mediated by Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi.

Speaking to journalists on Air Force One on Sunday, Trump said he met with Witkoff and that his envoy had "very good meetings on the Middle East."

"We'll be making a decision on Iran very quickly," Trump said, without elaborating.

China's Xi says there are no winners in a tariff war as he visits Southeast Asia

By HUIZHONG WU and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — China's leader Xi Jinping said no one wins in a trade war as he kicked off a diplomatic tour of Southeast Asia on Monday, reiterating China's commitment to global trade in contrast with U.S. President Donald Trump's latest tariffs moves.

Although Trump has paused some tariffs, he has kept in place 145% duties on China, the world's second-largest economy.

"There are no winners in a trade war, or a tariff war," Xi wrote in an editorial jointly published in Vietnamese and Chinese official media. "Our two countries should resolutely safeguard the multilateral trading system, stable global industrial and supply chains, and open and cooperative international environment."

Xi's visit lets China show Southeast Asia it is a "responsible superpower in the way that contrasts with the way the U.S. under President Donald Trump presents to the whole world," said Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Xi was greeted on the tarmac by Vietnam's President Luong Cuong at the start of his two-day visit, a mark of honor not often given to visitors, said Nguyen Thanh Trung, a professor of Vietnamese studies at Fulbright University Vietnam. Students of a drum art group performed as women waved the red and yellow Chinese and Communist Party flags.

While Xi's trip likely was planned earlier, it has become significant because of the tariff fight between China and the U.S. The visit offers a path for Beijing to shore up its alliances and find solutions for the high trade barrier that the U.S. has imposed on Chinese exports.

In Vietnam, Xi will meet with Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary To Lam, his counterpart, as well as the Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh.

"The trip to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia is all about how China can really insulate itself against the from Trump," said Nguyen Khac Giang, pointing out that since Xi became the president in 2013, he has only visited Vietnam twice.

The timing of the visit sends a "strong political message that Southeast Asia is important to China," said Huong Le-Thu of the International Crisis Group think tank. She said that given the severity of Trump's tariffs and despite the 90-day pause, Southeast Asian nations were anxious that the tariffs, if implemented, could complicate their development.

Vietnam is experienced at balancing its relations with the U.S and China. It is run under a communist, one-party system like China but has had a strong relationship with the U.S.

In 2023, it was the only country that received both U.S. President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping. That year it also upgraded the U.S. to its highest diplomatic level, the same as China and Russia.

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Vietnam was one of the biggest beneficiaries of countries trying to decouple their supply chains from China, as businesses moved here. China is its biggest trading partner, and China-Vietnam trade surged 14.6% year-on-year in 2024, according to Chinese state media.

But the intensification of the trade war has put Vietnam in a “very precarious situation” given the impression in the U.S. that Vietnam is serving as a backdoor for Chinese goods, said Giang, the analyst at Singapore’s ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute. Vietnam had been hit with 46% tariffs under Trump’s order before the 90-day pause.

China and Vietnam have real long-term differences, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea, where Vietnam has faced off with China’s coast guard but does not often publicize the confrontations.

After Vietnam, Xi is expected to go to Malaysia next and then Cambodia.

Russian missiles hit Ukrainian city of Sumy during Palm Sunday celebrations, killing more than 30

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

SUMY, Ukraine (AP) — Russian missiles struck the heart of the Ukrainian city of Sumy as people gathered to celebrate Palm Sunday, killing at least 34 people, officials said, in the second large-scale attack to claim civilian lives in just over a week.

The two ballistic missiles hit around 10:15 a.m., officials said. Images from the scene showed lines of black body bags on the side of the road, while more bodies were seen wrapped in foil blankets among the debris. Video footage also showed fire crews fighting to extinguish the shells of burned-out cars among the rubble from damaged buildings.

The dead included two children, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine said in a statement. A further 117 people were wounded, including 15 children, it said.

“Only filthy scum can act like this — taking the lives of ordinary people,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. In a statement on social media, he said the first strike hit buildings belonging to a city university, while the second exploded above street level.

The head of the Ukrainian president’s office, Andriy Yermak, said cluster munitions were used to kill as many people as possible. The Associated Press was unable to verify that claim.

The attack on Sumy followed a deadly April 4 missile strike on Zelenskyy’s hometown of Kryvyi Rih that killed some 20 people, including nine children.

Zelenskyy called for a global response to the attack. “Talks have never stopped ballistic missiles and aerial bombs. What’s needed is an attitude toward Russia that a terrorist deserves,” he said.

Other world leaders also condemned the attack, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying that it undermined Washington-led peace talks between the sides.

“Everyone knows: This war was initiated by Russia alone. And today, it is clear that Russia alone chooses to continue it — with blatant disregard for human lives, international law and the diplomatic efforts” of U.S. President Donald Trump, he wrote in a statement.

Asking about the attack, Trump said late Sunday evening that he was trying to get the war stopped. “I think it was terrible and I was told they made a mistake, but I think it’s a horrible thing. I think the whole war is a horrible thing,” he told reporters aboard Air Force One as he returned to Washington. He did not clarify whether he was saying the attack was unintentional.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, two women, ages 62 and 68, and a 48-year-old man were killed in Russian attacks on the Kherson region, local Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said. Another person was killed during Russian shelling on Ukraine’s Donetsk region, Gov. Vadym Filashkin said.

The mayor of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, Ihor Terekhov, said a Russian strike hit one of the city’s kindergartens, shattering windows and damaging the building’s facade. No casualties were reported.

Spring offensive fears despite peace talks

The strikes come a day after Russia and Ukraine’s senior diplomats accused each other of violating a tentative U.S.-brokered deal to pause strikes on energy infrastructure, underscoring the challenges of

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negotiating an end to the three-year war.

The two countries' foreign ministers spoke at separate events at the annual Antalya Diplomacy Forum a day after U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff met with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss peace prospects.

"The Ukrainians have been attacking us from the very beginning, every passing day, maybe with two or three exceptions," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, adding that Moscow would provide the U.S., Turkey and international bodies with a list of Kyiv's attacks during the past three weeks.

His Ukrainian counterpart, Andrii Sybiha, contested that claim, saying Saturday that Russia had launched almost 70 missiles, over 2,200 exploding drones and more than 6,000 guided aerial bombs at Ukraine, "mostly at civilians" since agreeing to the limited pause on strikes.

Russian forces hold the advantage in Ukraine, and Kyiv has warned that Moscow is planning a fresh spring offensive to ramp up pressure on its foe and improve its negotiating position.

Ukraine has endorsed a broader U.S. ceasefire proposal, but Russia has effectively blocked it by imposing far-reaching conditions. European governments have accused Putin of dragging his feet.

Retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, said the Sumy attack crossed "any line of decency" and that the White House remained committed to ending the conflict.

"There are scores of civilian dead and wounded. As a former military leader, I understand targeting, and this is wrong," he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called the attack "horrifying" and said it offered "a tragic reminder" of why the administration was trying to end the war in favor of "a just and durable peace."

Mario Vargas Llosa, Peruvian author and Nobel literature laureate, dies at 89

By FRANKLIN BRICEÑO and CIARÁN GILES Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel literature laureate and a giant of Latin American letters, died Sunday. He was 89.

He was a prolific author and essayist with such celebrated novels as "The Time of the Hero" (La Ciudad y los Perros) and "Feast of the Goat," and won myriad prizes. The Nobel committee said it was awarding him in 2010 "for his cartography of structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt, and defeat."

"It is with deep sorrow that we announce that our father, Mario Vargas Llosa, passed away peacefully in Lima today, surrounded by his family," read a letter signed by his children Álvaro, Gonzalo and Morgana, and posted by Álvaro on X.

"His departure will sadden his relatives, his friends and his readers around the world, but we hope that they will find comfort, as we do, in the fact that he enjoyed a long, adventurous and fruitful life, and leaves behind him a body of work that will outlive him," they added.

The author's lawyer and close friend, Enrique Gherzi, confirmed the death to The Associated Press and recalled the writer's last birthday on March 28 at the home of his daughter, Morgana. "He spent it happy; his close friends surrounded him, he ate his cake, we joked that day that there were still 89 more years to go, he had a long, fruitful, and free life," Gherzi said.

Latin America's new wave of writers

Vargas Llosa published his first collection of stories "The Cubs and Other Stories" (Los Jefes) in 1959. But he burst onto the literary stage in 1963 with his groundbreaking debut "The Time of the Hero," a novel that drew on his experiences at a Peruvian military academy and angered the country's military. A thousand copies were burned by military authorities, with some generals calling the book false and Vargas Llosa a communist.

That, and subsequent novels such as "Conversation in the Cathedral," (Conversación en la Catedral) in 1969, quickly established Vargas Llosa as one of the leaders of the so-called "Boom," or new wave of Latin American writers of the 1960s and 1970s, alongside Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes.

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Vargas Llosa started writing early, and at 15 was a part-time crime reporter for La Crónica newspaper. According to his official website, other jobs he had included revising names on cemetery tombs in Peru, working as a teacher in the Berlitz school in Paris and briefly on the Spanish desk at Agence France-Presse in Paris.

He continued publishing articles in the press for most of his life, most notably in a twice-monthly political opinion column titled "Piedra de Toque" (Touchstones) that was printed in several newspapers.

Vargas Llosa came to be a fierce defender of personal and economic liberties, gradually edging away from his communism-linked past, and regularly attacked Latin American leftist leaders he viewed as dictators.

Although an early supporter of the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro, he later grew disillusioned and denounced Castro's Cuba. By 1980, he said he no longer believed in socialism as a solution for developing nations.

In a famous incident in Mexico City in 1976, Vargas Llosa punched fellow Nobel Prize winner and ex-friend García Márquez, whom he later ridiculed as "Castro's courtesan." It was never clear whether the fight was over politics or a personal dispute, as neither writer ever wanted to discuss it publicly.

As he slowly turned his political trajectory toward free-market conservatism, Vargas Llosa lost the support of many of his Latin American literary contemporaries and attracted much criticism even from admirers of his work.

A pampered early life and 'hell' in a military school

Jorge Mario Pedro Vargas Llosa was born March 28, 1936, in Peru's southern city of Arequipa, high in the Andes at the foot of the Misti volcano.

His father, Ernesto Vargas Maldonado, left the family before he was born. To avoid public scandal, his mother, Dora Llosa Ureta, took her child to Bolivia, where her father was the Peruvian consul in Cochabamba.

Vargas Llosa said his early life was "somewhat traumatic," pampered by his mother and grandmother in a large house with servants, his every whim granted.

It was not until he was 10, after the family had moved to Peru's coastal city of Piura, that he learned his father was alive. His parents reconciled and the family moved to Peru's capital, Lima.

Vargas Llosa described his father as a disciplinarian who viewed his son's love of Jules Verne and writing poetry as surefire routes to starvation, and feared for his "manhood," believing that "poets are always homosexuals."

After failing to get the boy enrolled in a naval academy because he was underage, Vargas Llosa's father sent him to Leoncio Prado Military Academy — an experience that was to stay with Vargas Llosa and led to "The Time of the Hero." The book won the Spanish Critics Award.

The military academy "was like discovering hell," Vargas Llosa said later.

He entered Peru's San Marcos University to study literature and law, "the former as a calling and the latter to please my family, which believed, not without certain cause, that writers usually die of hunger."

After earning his literature degree in 1958 — he didn't bother submitting his final law thesis — Vargas Llosa won a scholarship to pursue a doctorate in Madrid.

Vargas Llosa drew much of his inspiration from his Peruvian homeland, but preferred to live abroad, residing for spells each year in Madrid, New York and Paris.

His early novels revealed a Peruvian world of military arrogance and brutality, of aristocratic decadence, and of Stone Age Amazon Indians existing simultaneously with 20th-century urban blight.

"Peru is a kind of incurable illness and my relationship to it is intense, harsh and full of the violence of passion," Vargas Llosa wrote in 1983.

After 16 years in Europe, he returned in 1974 to a Peru then ruled by a left-wing military dictatorship. "I realized I was losing touch with the reality of my country, and above all its language, which for a writer can be deadly," he said.

In 1990, he ran for the presidency of Peru, a reluctant candidate in a nation torn apart by a messianic Maoist guerrilla insurgency and a basket-case, hyperinflation economy.

But he was defeated by a then-unknown university rector, Alberto Fujimori, who resolved much of the political and economic chaos but went on to become a corrupt and authoritarian leader in the process.

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Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Vargas Llosa's longtime friend, later confessed that he had rooted against the writer's candidacy, observing: "Peru's uncertain gain would be literature's loss. Literature is eternity, politics mere history."

Vargas Llosa also used his literary talents to write several successful novels about the lives of real people, including French Post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin and his grandmother, Flora Tristan, in "The Way to Paradise" in 2003 and 19th-century Irish nationalist and diplomat Sir Roger Casement in "The Dream of the Celt" in 2010. His last published novel was "Harsh Times" (Tiempos Recios) in 2019 about a U.S.-backed coup d'état in Guatemala in 1954.

He became a member of the Royal Spanish Academy in 1994 and held visiting professor and resident writer posts in more than a dozen colleges and universities across the world.

In his teens, Vargas Llosa joined a communist cell and eloped with and later married a 33-year-old Bolivian, Julia Urquidi — the sister-in-law of his uncle. He later drew inspiration from their nine-year marriage to write the hit comic novel "Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter" (La Tía Julia y el Escribidor).

In 1965, he married his first cousin, Patricia Llosa, 10 years his junior, and together they had three children. They divorced 50 years later, and he started a relationship with Spanish society figure Isabel Preysler, former wife of singer Julio Iglesias and mother of singer Enrique Iglesias. They separated in 2022.

Vargas Llosa is survived by his children.

Their letter announcing his death said his remains will be cremated and there won't be any public ceremony.

War in Ethiopia's Tigray region has left many disabled veterans without care

By SAMUEL GETACHEW Associated Press

MEKELE, Ethiopia (AP) — Chandra Weldesenbet is worried about dying before he receives the help he needs.

The 41-year-old veteran of the recent war in Ethiopia's Tigray region has metal shrapnel in his body that is yet to be removed, more than two years after the fighting ended.

Unable to get specialized medical care, Chandra is bedridden most of the time because of the pain. He is one of many casualties whose untreated or poorly treated injuries are a reminder of the war's toll.

"When I think about my future prospect and my ability to raise a child in such hardship and circumstances, I feel hopeless," he said, with a toddler at home.

Chandra, a former hotel worker in the town of Shire, found that health facilities across the region had been largely destroyed in the fighting.

The head of the Ethiopian National Rehabilitation Commission, Temesgen Tilahun, told The Associated Press there are more than 43,000 Tigrayan former combatants.

Thousands of people were killed in the war that pitted local fighters against federal troops who were allied with fighters from other regions, and ended in 2022. No one knows how many were wounded.

Some former combatants in Tigray returned to their homes to find there was no way to receive medical support for permanent disabilities.

Hiluf Haile managed to receive therapy in the Tigray capital, Mekele, to adjust to a new prosthetic leg at the only center in Tigray that offers such treatment. But he has witnessed the chronic shortage of support for other disabled ex-combatants.

Many who had serious injuries have limited access to orthopedic therapy and must navigate damaged communities that have little or no infrastructure to accommodate them.

They "survive by begging, laying bare the scar of the war," Haile said.

Tesfaye Kiros, another veteran, lost a leg and has been unable to find employment. He regularly begs at a busy bus station in Mekele, Tigray's capital.

He dreams of returning to his hometown of Zalambessa, near the border with Eritrea. That remains elusive as new tensions rise between Ethiopia and Eritrea, its former ally in the war.

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The 31-year-old had been elated when a diaspora-led initiative, Rescue & Oasis Actions for the Disabled of War, chose him to receive a three-wheel electric bike to help him be mobile. But, still unable to find work, he sold it to feed his children.

"The bike would have helped me a great deal," he said.

With limited resources as Tigray recovers from the war, the regional government has appealed to the federal government in Addis Ababa, the capital, for more support — and for international donors to come to the rescue.

The government has offered veterans reintegration into the armed forces.

"Tigray has too many individuals with disabilities who need support, especially medicine, and the situation is extremely dire," said Gebrehiwot Gebrezgiabher, commissioner for the Tigray Disaster Risk Management Commission. "We are too overwhelmed to support them without more financial support."

The Mekelle Ortho-Physiotherapy Center, which has operated in Tigray for nearly three decades with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross, is trying to fill the gap.

The group has treated disabled combatants, providing prosthetic limbs and mobility aid such as crutches. But it is unable to help everyone who needs support without more funding.

"Over the years, we have delivered a total of 180,000 services. However, this number pales in comparison to the 65,000 we have provided in just the last three years," manager Birhane Teame said.

Teame urged international organizations to assist his group "in alleviating the burden" in Tigray.

What to know about Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and the alleged arson at his official residence

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A man is facing charges after authorities say he broke into the Pennsylvania governor's mansion in the middle of the night, set a fire that left significant damage and forced Gov. Josh Shapiro, his family and guests to evacuate the building during the Jewish holiday of Passover.

Firefighters extinguished the fire early Sunday morning and no injuries were reported. The suspect, identified as Cody Balmer, 38, was arrested nearby later in the day, police said.

Authorities said they were investigating how someone was able to elude police to break into the governor's residence in Harrisburg.

Pennsylvania State Police Col. Christopher Paris said the fire was a carefully planned attack but emphasized the investigation is continuing. He did not give a possible motive.

Police call arson a planned attack

Balmer apparently scaled an iron security fence that stands around 7 feet (2.1 meters) and is monitored by security cameras, police said.

Police became aware someone had climbed over the fence and began a pursuit on the grounds but initially didn't locate anyone.

Police allege Balmer broke into the southern wing of the residence, entering a room often used to entertain crowds and display art, and set a fire using a homemade incendiary device. Police declined to elaborate on the device, but the fire left significant damage to the room, charring walls, tables, buffet serving dishes, plates and a piano. Window panes and brick around doors and windows were blackened.

Balmer was inside for around a minute before he left and escaped the premises, authorities said.

Suspect faces charges

Authorities said Balmer will face charges of attempted murder, terrorism, aggravated arson and aggravated assault.

Balmer has faced criminal charges over the past decade including simple assault, theft and forgery, according to online court records. He drew a sentence of probation after guilty pleas to theft and forgery counts. Simple assault charges from 2023 appeared unresolved.

Authorities did not say whether Balmer has a lawyer or where he was being held. Calls to people believed to be his relatives went unanswered or unreturned on Sunday. One recent residence listed for him

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in Harrisburg was condemned in 2022.

Governor is a rising Democratic star

Shapiro, 51, is the first-term governor of the nation's fifth-most populous state, a presidential battleground that has helped make him a rising star in the Democratic Party and viewed as a potential White House contender in 2028.

Shapiro said he, his wife, their four children, two dogs and another family had celebrated Passover at the residence on Saturday and were awakened by state troopers pounding on their doors at about 2 a.m. Sunday.

Shapiro has been outspoken about his Jewish faith.

He used his first ad in his campaign for governor in 2022 to tell family stories and describe his commitment to making "it home Friday night for Sabbath dinner," complete with footage of him and his children at the table.

"Family and faith ground me," he said.

In stump speeches and his election-night victory speech, Shapiro regularly quoted an ancient rabbinic maxim: "No one is required to complete the task, but neither are we free to refrain from it."

Attack happened during Passover

The attack happened on the Jewish holiday of Passover, which began at sundown Saturday.

The holiday commemorates the Israelites' liberation from slavery in ancient Egypt, including their 40-year journey through the desert. It is one of the holiest days of the year for Jews and is celebrated with a special meal called a Seder, which includes the eating of matzah, a type of unleavened bread, and the retelling of the Exodus story.

Shapiro had celebrated with a Seder at the official residence with his family and members of the Jewish community in the same room where authorities said the fire was set.

What to know about Ecuador's reelected President Noboa and his plans to fight crime

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Daniel Noboa stunned voters in 2023 when he won a snap election for a 16-month presidency after only a brief stint as a lawmaker and with no established political machinery.

No longer a political neophyte, the conservative millionaire defeated the protégé of Ecuador's most influential recent president for a second time and earned four years in office with Sunday's election victory.

The new term will allow Noboa, 37 and heir to a fortune built on the banana trade, to continue some of his no-holds-barred crimefighting strategies that part of the electorate finds appealing but which have tested the limits of laws and norms of governing.

"A huge hug to all the Ecuadorians who always believed in this young president," he told supporters after the National Electoral Council said results showed an "irreversible trend" in his favor. "Ecuador wants to be different... it wants to move forward."

Only 16 months in office

Noboa opened an event organizing company when he was 18 and then joined his father's Noboa Corp., where he held management positions in the shipping, logistics and commercial areas. He began his political career in 2021, when he won a seat in the National Assembly and chaired its Economic Development Commission.

Noboa defeated leftist lawyer Luisa González in the October 2023 runoff of a snap election triggered by the decision of then-President Guillermo Lasso to dissolve the National Assembly and shorten his own mandate as a result. Noboa defeated her again in Sunday's runoff election.

Figures released by Ecuador's National Electoral Council showed Noboa receiving 55.8% of the vote with more than 92% of ballots counted, while González earned 44%. However, González, the mentee of former President Rafael Correa, vowed to seek a recount over what she described as "grotesque" electoral fraud.

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Under Noboa's watch, the homicide rate dropped from 46.18 per 100,000 people in 2023, to 38.76 per 100,000 people in 2024. But despite the decrease, the rate remained far higher than the 6.85 homicides per 100,000 people seen in 2019.

During his brief first term, Noboa has sought to establish a friendly relationship with the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump. Grace Jaramillo, an Andean region expert and professor at the University of British Columbia, said these efforts played a role in some voters' decisions.

"The majority of Ecuadorians have migrant relatives and know well that a scenario with González, a leftist, would be terrible for deportations," Jaramillo said. "It's an issue that touches every middle- and working-class home... Showing closeness to Trump was crucial for many families."

Questionable tactics

Noboa's crime-fighting strategies have been questioned inside and outside the South American country.

Ecuador has been under a state of internal armed conflict since he declared it in January 2024 in order to mobilize the military in certain places, including prisons, where organized crime has taken hold. To the shock and bewilderment of world leaders, Noboa also authorized last year's police raid on Mexico's embassy in the capital, Quito, to arrest former Vice President Jorge Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive who had been living there for months.

Further, he entrusted presidential powers while campaigning earlier this year to a government official, unelected Vice President Verónica Abad, as required by the Ecuadorian Code of Democracy.

Ahead of February's first-round election, Quito's University of the Americas professor Maria Cristina Bayas said Noboa "has not hesitated to use the law and the Constitution to keep things working the way he wants" and may continue to do so if reelected.

Noboa and Abad began feuding before taking office. The origins of the dispute are unknown, but shortly after becoming president, Noboa dispatched Abad to serve as ambassador to Israel, effectively isolating her from his administration. She has described her monthslong posting as "forced exile."

A key ally in Trump's migrant crackdown is coming for a visit.

What might El Salvador's Bukele get?

By SEUNG MIN KIM and MARCOS ALEMÁN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is hosting Nayib Bukele, the president of El Salvador, at the White House on Monday as the small Central American nation becomes a critical linchpin of the U.S. administration's mass deportation operation.

Since March, El Salvador has accepted from the U.S. more than 200 Venezuelan immigrants — whom Trump administration officials have accused of gang activity and violent crimes — and placed them inside the country's notorious maximum-security gang prison just outside of the capital, San Salvador. It is also holding a Maryland man who the administration admits was wrongly deported but has not been returned to the U.S., despite court orders to do so.

That has made Bukele, who remains extremely popular in El Salvador due in part to the crackdown on the country's powerful street gangs, a vital ally for the Trump administration, which has offered little evidence for its claims that the Venezuelan immigrants were in fact gang members, nor has it released names of those deported.

Asked whether he has any concerns about the prison there where deportees are being held, Trump told reporters early Sunday that Bukele was doing a "fantastic job."

"He's taking care of a lot of problems that we have that we really wouldn't be able to take care of from cost standpoint," Trump said. "And he's doing really, he's been amazing. We have some very bad people in that prison. People that should have never been allowed into our country."

Since Secretary of State Marco Rubio's visit in February, Bukele — whose government has arrested more than 84,000 people as part of his three-year crackdown on gangs — has made it clear he's ready to help the Trump administration with its deportation ambitions.

Bukele struck a deal under which the U.S. will pay about \$6 million for El Salvador to imprison the Ven-

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ezuelan immigrants for a year. When a federal judge ordered the Trump administration to turn around a flight carrying the immigrants already en route to El Salvador, Bukele wrote on social media: "Oopsie ... too late."

Though other judges had ruled against the Trump administration, this month the Supreme Court cleared the way for Trump to use the Alien Enemies Act, an 18th century wartime law, to deport the immigrants. The justices did insist that the immigrants get a court hearing before being removed from the U.S. Over the weekend, 10 more people who the administration claims are members of the MS-13 and Tren de Aragua gangs arrived in El Salvador, Rubio said Sunday.

"We've also found cooperation in other countries that are willing to take some of these people, some very dangerous criminals," Rubio said during a Cabinet meeting on Thursday. Bukele, Rubio added, "has really been a good friend to the United States in that regard. These are some of the worst people you'll ever encounter."

Trump has said openly that he would also favor El Salvador taking American citizens who have committed violent crimes, although he added, "I'd only do according to the law." It is unclear how lawful U.S. citizens could be deported elsewhere. Leavitt said such citizens would be "heinous, violent criminals who have broken our nation's laws repeatedly."

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has called for the administration to "facilitate" the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Maryland resident and Salvadoran citizen who had an immigration court order preventing his deportation to his native country over fears of gang persecution. Leavitt said the administration's job is "to facilitate the return, not to effectuate the return," but Trump indicated later Friday that he would return Abrego Garcia to the U.S. if the high court's justices said to bring him back.

"I have great respect for the Supreme Court," Trump told reporters traveling on Air Force One. Government lawyers indicated in a legal filing Saturday that Abrego Garcia remains in El Salvador but did not detail what, if any, steps the administration is taking to return him to the U.S. In its required daily status update on Sunday, the government essentially stated that it had nothing to add beyond Saturday's filing.

While Bukele's crackdown on gangs has popular support, the country has lived under a state of emergency that suspends some basic rights for three years. He built the massive prison, located just outside San Salvador in the town of Tecoluca, to hold those accused of gang affiliation under his crackdown.

Part of his offer to receive the Venezuelans there was that the U.S. also send back some Salvadoran gang leaders. In February, his ambassador to the U.S., Milena Mayorga, said on a radio program that having gang leaders face justice in El Salvador was "an issue of honor."

Bukele could also seek relief from the 10% tariff recently imposed by Trump, using the argument that it weakens the economy Bukele is trying to bolster.

César Ríos, director of the El Salvador Immigrant Agenda Association, said "it's crucial that (the visit) isn't limited to diplomatic gestures, but rather translates to concrete actions that benefit Salvadorans abroad and at home."

Populists who have successfully crafted their images through media, Bukele and Trump hail from different generations but display similar tendencies in how they relate to the press, political opposition and justice systems in their respective countries.

Bukele came to power in the middle of Trump's first term and had a straightforward relationship with the U.S. leader. Trump was most concerned with immigration and, under Bukele, the number of Salvadorans heading for the U.S. border declined.

Bukele's relationship with the U.S. grew more complicated at the start of the Biden administration, which was openly critical of some of his antidemocratic actions.

Just before Bukele's arrival in Washington, the State Department updated its travel advisory for El Salvador to Level 1, which is for countries that are considered the safest to visit for U.S. citizens. The advisory notes that gang activity, and the accompanying murders and other violent crimes, has declined in the past three years.

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President Trump says CBS and '60 Minutes' should 'pay a big price' for going after him

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

President Donald Trump bitterly attacked "60 Minutes" shortly after the CBS newsmagazine broadcast stories on Ukraine and Greenland on Sunday, saying the network was out of control and should "pay a big price" for going after him.

"Almost every week, 60 Minutes ... mentions the name 'TRUMP' in a derogatory and defamatory way, but this Weekend's 'BROADCAST' tops them all," the president said on his Truth Social platform. He called on Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr to impose maximum fines and punishment "for their unlawful and illegal behavior."

The network had no immediate comment.

Trump has an ongoing \$20 billion lawsuit against "60 Minutes" for how it edited an interview with Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris last fall. The president claims it was edited in a way to make Harris look good, something the newscast denies. But there are ongoing reports that Trump's lawyers and CBS' parent company are involved in settlement talks.

Carr and the FCC have launched a parallel investigation of CBS News about the same case, one of several that it has undergone that also involve ABC News, NBC, PBS, NPR and the Walt Disney Co.

Despite the legal battle, "60 Minutes" has been unstinting in its coverage of Trump's administration since he took office for a second term, particularly correspondent Scott Pelley. He traveled to Ukraine to conduct an interview with that country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on the site of a Russian attack where nine children were killed earlier this month.

In the interview broadcast on Sunday, Zelenskyy said he has "100%" hatred for Russian President Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine, and invited Trump to his visit his country to see what has been done.

Also Sunday, correspondent Jon Wertheim reported from Greenland on what some people in that nation are saying about Trump's desire to take control.

In his social media message, Trump said "60 Minutes" was no longer a news show but "a dishonest Political Operative simply disguised as 'News,' and must be responsible for what they have done, and are doing."

Suspect arrested in arson fire that forced Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, family to flee residence

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A man scaled an iron security fence in the middle of the night, eluded police and broke into the Pennsylvania governor's mansion where he set a fire that left significant damage and forced Gov. Josh Shapiro, his family and guests to evacuate the building, authorities said Sunday.

The man, captured later in the day, will face charges of attempted murder, terrorism, aggravated arson and aggravated assault, authorities said.

Shapiro said he, his wife, their four children, two dogs and another family had celebrated the Jewish holiday of Passover at the residence on Saturday and were awakened by state troopers pounding on their doors at about 2 a.m. Sunday. They fled and firefighters extinguished the fire, officials said. No one was injured.

At a Sunday evening news conference in front of the badly damaged south wing of the governor's residence, Pennsylvania State Police Col. Christopher Paris identified the man in custody as Cody Balmer, 38, of Harrisburg.

Shapiro says he is unbowed

Paris emphasized that the investigation is continuing. Authorities did not disclose the man's motive, but an emotional Shapiro, who is viewed as a potential White House contender for the Democratic Party in 2028, said he is unbowed.

Shapiro said that if Balmer was trying to stop him from doing his job, then he'll work harder, and he

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added that Balmer will not stop him from observing his faith.

"When we were in the state dining room last night, we told the story of Passover" and the exodus of the Jews from slavery in Egypt to freedom, Shapiro said. "I refuse to be trapped by the bondage that someone attempts to put on me by attacking us as they did here last night. I refuse to let anyone who had evil intentions like that stop me from doing the work that I love."

Police say suspect hopped security fence and forcibly entered residence

Authorities said the suspect hopped over a nearly 7-foot-high (2.1-meter-high) iron security fence surrounding the property, eluded officers who became aware of the breach and forcibly entered the residence before setting it on fire.

Lt. Col. George Bivens said Balmer had a homemade incendiary device — he would not describe what kind — and appeared to have carefully planned the attack. He was inside the residence for about a minute before he escaped, Bivens said.

Bivens said Balmer was later arrested in the area. Authorities did not say whether Balmer has a lawyer or where he was being held and calls to people believed to be relatives went unanswered or unreturned. One recent listed residence in Harrisburg was condemned in 2022.

Balmer has faced criminal charges over the past decade including simple assault, theft and forgery, according to online criminal court records.

'We have to be better than this,' Shapiro says

Shapiro said the fire was set in the very room where he and his family celebrated Passover with a seder with members of Harrisburg's Jewish community on Saturday night.

"We don't know the person's specific motive yet," Shapiro told the news conference. "But we do know a few truths. First: This type of violence is not OK. This kind of violence is becoming far too common in our society. And I don't give a damn if it's coming from one particular side or the other, directed at one particular party or another or one particular person or another. It is not OK, and it has to stop. We have to be better than this."

The fire badly damaged the inside of the large room that is often used for entertaining crowds and art displays. Large west- and south-facing windows were completely missing their glass panes, shattered glass littered the pathways and doors stood ajar amid signs of charring. Window panes and brick around doors and windows were blackened and charred.

Inside, a charred piano, tables, walls, metal buffet serving dishes and more could be seen through broken windows and fire-blackened doors.

Justice Department and other agencies pledge to help

Shapiro said he had received pledges of help from the Department of Justice, the FBI and the U.S. attorney's office, as well as numerous messages of support from fellow governors and others.

Yellow tape cordoned off an alleyway on the residence's south side, where investigators dogs outside the iron security fence and sawed off a section from the top of the security fence. They wrapped it in heavy black plastic and took it away in a vehicle.

Shapiro splits his time between the mansion that has housed governors since it was built in the 1960s and a home in Abington, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) east. He posted a photograph on social media Saturday of the family's Passover Seder table at the residence.

"Thanks be to God that Governor Shapiro and his family were unharmed in this attack," Vice President JD Vance posted to X. "Really disgusting violence, and I hope whoever did it is brought swiftly to justice."

Former Pennsylvania Gov. Mark Schweiker, a Republican, called the attack a "despicable act of cowardice" and said he hoped Pennsylvanians joined he and his wife in keeping the Shapiros in their prayers.

Former Gov. Tom Ridge, also a Republican, said images of the damage to the residence where he lived for eight years with his family were "heartbreaking" and said the attack on the official residence was shocking.

"Whoever is responsible for this attack — to both the Shapiro family and our Commonwealth — must be held to account," Ridge said.

FAA says company whose sightseeing chopper crashed, killing 6, is ceasing operations immediately

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Federal Aviation Administration said Sunday that the helicopter tour company whose sightseeing chopper broke apart in flight and crashed in New York, killing the pilot and a family of five visitors from Spain, is shutting down operations immediately.

The FAA, in a statement posted on X, also said it would launch an immediate review of New York Helicopter Tours' operating license and safety record.

The move came hours after New York Sen. Chuck Schumer had called on federal authorities to revoke the operating permits of New York Helicopter Tours.

The company's sightseeing helicopter broke apart in midair and plunged into the Hudson River Thursday, killing the tourists from Spain and the pilot, a Navy SEAL veteran.

At a news conference Sunday, before the announcement by the FAA, Schumer said the company should be required to halt all flights as the National Transportation Safety Board investigates the deadly crash.

The Senate Democrat minority leader also called on the Federal Aviation Administration to ramp up safety inspections for other helicopter tour companies, accusing them of "cutting corners and putting profits over people."

The victims included passengers Agustin Escobar, 49, his wife, Mercè Camprubí Montal, 39, and their three children, Victor, 4, Mercedes, 8, and Agustin, 10. The pilot was Seankese Johnson, 36, a U.S. Navy veteran who received his commercial pilot's license in 2023.

"One of the things we can do to honor those lives and try to save others is to make sure it doesn't happen again," Schumer said. "We know there is one thing for sure about New York City's helicopter tour companies: they have a deadly track record."

Thursday's crash has renewed safety concerns about New York's sightseeing excursions, a popular tourist draw that whisks passengers high above the city, offering soaring views of the Statue of Liberty, the World Trade Center and other landmarks.

In the last two decades, five helicopters on commercial sightseeing flights have fallen into the Hudson and East rivers as a result of mechanical failures, pilot errors or collisions, killing 20 people.

The president of New York Helicopter Tours, Michael Roth, did not respond to phone and email inquiries. The company said in a statement published on its website that it was cooperating with authorities in the investigation.

In response to Schumer's calls for more oversight, an industry group, Eastern Region Helicopter Council, said Manhattan's sightseeing choppers "already operate under the most stringent of regulations."

"We stand ready to work with leaders on finding ways to ensure the safety and preservation of our businesses and aviation community," the group said.

Critics of the industry have long sought to limit or entirely ban nonessential helicopter flights from taking off above the city, though they have had limited success. After New York City capped the number of flights that could take off from Manhattan heliports at 30,000 annually in 2016, many companies moved operations to New Jersey.

Two years later, in 2018, five people died when a helicopter offering "open door" flights crashed in the East River after a passenger's restraint tether snagged on a fuel switch, stopping the engine.

The cause of Thursday's crash is not yet determined. According to Schumer, rescue divers were continuing to search for the helicopter's main rotor and assembly gear box, which would give clues about what happened.

Rory McIlroy wins Masters playoff to complete the career Grand Slam

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By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — The closer Rory McIlroy came to fulfilling his lifetime dream — winning the Masters — the more it kept slipping away. Sunday at Augusta National felt like his last 11 years in the majors, blunders mixed in with sheer brilliance.

A two-shot lead gone in two holes. A four-shot lead gone in three holes with a shocker of a mistake. A 5-foot putt on the final hole to win narrowly missed.

And then McIlroy turned what could have been another major collapse into his grandest moment of all when he hit wedge to 3 feet for birdie in a sudden-death playoff against Justin Rose to become — finally — a Masters champion and take his place in golf history as the sixth player with the career Grand Slam.

"There were points in my career where I didn't know if I would have this nice garment over my shoulders," McIlroy said, that Masters green jacket looking like a perfect fit. "But I didn't make it easy today. I certainly didn't make it easy. I was nervous.

"It was one of the toughest days I've ever had on the golf course."

The reward was greater than he imagined, and it showed. He rapped in that final putt, raised both arms in the air and let the putter fall behind him. He covered his head, dropped to his knees, and before long his forehead was on the green as his chest heaved with emotion.

That was 11 years of pent-up emotion from his last major, when he began to carry the burden of getting the final leg of the Grand Slam. It was 14 years of remembering the time he wasted a four-shot lead with an 80 on the final day as a 21-year-old.

"I started to wonder if it would ever be my time," he said.

The thought could have easily crossed his mind during the final round.

What could have been a coronation for McIlroy along the back nine turned into a heart-racing, lead-changing, jaw-dropping finish at golf's greatest theater that ended with McIlroy sobbing with joy and disbelief.

It ended with more heartache for Rose, who lost to Sergio Garcia in a playoff in 2017 and forced this one with a clutch 20-foot birdie on the 18th hole for a 6-under 66. He wound up joining Ben Hogan as the only players to lose twice in playoffs at Augusta National.

"It's the kind of putt you dream about as a kid, and to have it and hole it, it was a special feeling," Rose said. "And unfortunately, the playoff, they always end so quickly. If you're not the guy to hit the great shot or hole the great putt, it's over. But not really anything I could have done more today."

The joy on McIlroy's face never left him from the time that putt dropped — on the green, in Butler Cabin when defending champion Scottie Scheffler first helped him into the green jacket, and during the trophy presentation on the 18th green.

"My dreams have been made today," McIlroy said.

Moments later, speaking to 4-year-old daughter Poppy, he told her: "Never give up on your dreams. Never, ever give up on your dreams."

This was shaping up as another horror show for McIlroy, who in 2011 lost a four-shot lead on the final day with a 43 on the back nine, a highlight reel that now can start collecting dust.

"I didn't make it easy today," McIlroy said.

Right when it looked as though he would throw away another major, McIlroy delivered two majestic shots when nothing less would do, two birdies that sent him to the 18th hole with a one-shot lead.

That still wasn't enough. He hit a wedge into the bunker and wound up missing a 5-foot par putt for a 1-over 73 and the first Masters playoff in eight years.

Faced with more failure, McIlroy responded with another booming drive, and this wedge bounced onto the slope of the top shelf with enough spin to trickle down toward the hole, closer and closer, until it stopped 3 feet away.

And when Rose missed from 15 feet, McIlroy finally sealed it.

"I just think all week how I responded to setbacks, that's what I'll take from this week," McIlroy said, though he could have been speaking for the last decade. "Couldn't be more proud I myself for that and being able to back bounce when I needed to."

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McIlroy went 11 long years without any major, knowing the Masters green jacket was all that kept him from joining Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Ben Hogan and Gene Sarazen as the only winners of golf's four professional majors.

Nicklaus and Player spoke on Thursday how they thought this was his time. Woods was among those to congratulate McIlroy and welcome him to the club.

So wild was this Sunday at Augusta National that McIlroy set a Masters record as the first champion to make four double bogeys — two in the first round that put him seven shots behind, two in the final round that turned this into a thriller.

U.S. Open champion Bryson DeChambeau, who beat McIlroy at Pinehurst No. 2 last June, had the lead after two holes when McIlroy opened with a double bogey. DeChambeau crashed out with a pair of three-putts and two shots into the water on the back nine, closing with a 75.

Ludvig Aberg, a runner-up in his Masters debut a year ago, suddenly had a share of the lead when McIlroy fell apart on the middle of the back nine. He missed a birdie putt from the fringe to take the lead, then finished bogey-triple bogey.

McIlroy and Rose finished at 11-under 277, two shots ahead of former Masters champion Patrick Reed (69). Scheffler, trying to win the Masters for the third time in four years, never got anything going this week and still shot 69 to finish fourth.

Rose had every reason to believe he threw away his chances on Saturday with a 75 that put him seven shots behind, and then two bogeys on the front nine. Even as he steadied himself, he was four shots back and running out of time.

He did his part in a 10-birdie round and that dynamic birdie putt to cap it off.

McIlroy did his part, too.

Nothing was more shocking than the 13th. McIlroy played it safe, leaving himself a big target from 82 yards away and a lob wedge. He missed his mark by some 20 yards, the ball disappearing into the tributary of Rae's Creek and leading to double bogey.

Rose was on the par-3 16th and hit his tee shot to 4 feet for birdie, and suddenly they were tied. Then, McIlroy hit a weak drive to the right and was blocked by pines. He didn't reach the green, didn't make the par putt and no longer had the lead.

But he was resilient as ever — he's been like that his entire career. Seemingly in trouble left of the 15th fairway, McIlroy hit 7-iron around the trees and onto the green to 6 feet.

He missed the eagle putt — the birdie still helped him regain a share of the lead. Two holes later, facing a semi-blind shot, he drilled 8-iron and chased after it, urging it to "Go! Go! Go! Go!" And it did, barely clearing the bunker and rolling out to 2 feet for birdie and a one-shot lead.

Turns out that wasn't enough, either. He was 5 feet away from victory and badly missed the putt, leaving him more work to do — another chance to fail.

Not this time. The 35-year-old from Northern Ireland never wavered in what he came to Augusta National to do. He leaves with a green jacket.

Israel intensifies strikes across Gaza on Palm Sunday and hits a hospital in the north

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A wave of Israeli strikes across Gaza on Sunday hit a hospital and other sites, killing at least 21 people, including children, as Israel vowed to expand its security presence in the small coastal strip.

The predawn strike on Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City was the latest of several attacks on northern Gaza's last major hospital providing critical health care.

Hospital director Dr. Fadel Naim said the emergency room, pharmacy and surrounding buildings were severely damaged, affecting over 100 patients and dozens of staff.

One patient, a girl, died during the evacuation following an Israeli warning because staff were unable

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to provide urgent care, Gaza's Health Ministry said. Israel said it struck a Hamas command and control center at the hospital, without providing evidence. Hamas denied the allegations.

Al-Ahli Hospital is run by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, which condemned the attack, saying in a statement it happened on "Palm Sunday, the start of the Holy Week, the most sacred week of the Christian year."

Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and worshipers in Gaza City marked it in a church whose gilded trim and intact walls were a contrast to the widespread debris elsewhere.

Associated Press video showed the hospital's caved-in roof surrounded by rubble. The health ministry's director general, Dr. Munir al-Boursh, said patients had been carried outside in beds and slept in the streets.

"Nothing was left safe inside the hospital, or all over Gaza," said Mohammad Abu Nasser, an injured man who sat on his bed outdoors and looked at the destruction.

The health ministry said the hospital was temporarily out of service and patients were transferred to other hospitals in Gaza City. The aid group Medical Aid for Palestinians called it the fifth attack on Al-Ahli since the war began.

Hospitals have special protection under international law. Israel has besieged and raided them, some several times, and struck multiple ones while accusing Hamas of using them as cover for its fighters.

Last month Israel struck Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, the largest in southern Gaza, killing two people and causing a large fire, the health ministry said. The facility had been overwhelmed when Israel ended a two-month ceasefire last month with a surprise wave of airstrikes.

Charity workers killed

Hours later Sunday, a strike on a car in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza killed at least seven people including six brothers, according to staff at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. The youngest brother was 10.

Their father, Ibrahim Abu Mahadi, said his sons worked for a charity that distributes food to Palestinians. "For what sin were they killed?" he said.

AP reporters saw the mangled, bloodied car as relatives wept over the bodies. Israel's military asserted that it killed the deputy head of a Hamas sniper cell.

An airstrike Sunday afternoon hit a house in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, killing at least seven people including two women, according to the Indonesian hospital.

A pregnant woman was rescued from the rubble. Alaa Manoun later wept after learning her youngest daughter had died, along with her husband and her mother. Two other daughters, ages 4 and 7, were injured.

Manoun had a broken ankle but otherwise seemed OK, according to a doctor. No scan was available, since the only machine in northern Gaza was at Al-Ahli Hospital, now damaged.

"We don't know whose body is this and whose body is that," said a neighbor, Abdallah Dardouna. "There is no resistance, there is no Qassam, no Hamas, there is no one here. It's only civilians here."

Another strike in Deir al-Balah hit a municipal building and killed at least three people, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. In Khan Younis, a strike killed at least three people, according to staff at Nasser Hospital.

Israel's military said in a statement it had struck over 90 militant targets over the past 48 hours including command and control centers, tunnels and weapons. The military also said it had intercepted a projectile fired from Gaza.

The war started when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, during an Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel and took 250 people captive. Many were eventually freed in ceasefire deals.

Israeli authorities have vowed to pressure Hamas to release the remaining 59 hostages, 24 believed to be alive, and accept new ceasefire terms. It cut off all supplies to Gaza over a month ago.

More than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between combatants and civilians in its count but says more than half of the dead have been women and children.

Missile reported from Yemen

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Israel's military said a missile was launched from Yemen on Sunday afternoon and the details were under review. Sirens sounded in several parts of Israel and the occupied West Bank. There were no reports of casualties or damage.

The Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen continue to target Israel in what they have called solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza.

US still won't say whether it will return mistakenly deported man, despite Supreme Court decision

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

The Trump administration is doubling down on its decision not to tell a federal court whether it has any plans to repatriate a Maryland man who was mistakenly deported last month and remains confined in a notorious prison in El Salvador, despite a Supreme Court ruling and lower court order that the man should be returned to the United States. The U.S. district court judge handling the case of Kilmar Abrego Garcia now is weighing whether to grant a request from the man's legal team to compel the government to explain why it should not be held in contempt. Any move toward a contempt finding would represent an extraordinary turn in the Trump administration's assertion of presidential authority, both generally and specifically over immigration policy.

The government's latest daily status update, filed Sunday as required by Judge Paula Xinis, states essentially that the Trump administration has nothing to add beyond its Saturday statement that, for the first time, confirmed that Abrego Garcia, 29, was alive and remained in an El Salvador prison under the control of that country's government. That means for the second consecutive day, the administration has not addressed Xinis' demands that the administration detail what steps it was taking to return Abrego Garcia to the United States.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last Thursday that the Trump administration must bring him back. Xinis followed that with an order Friday requiring the administration to disclose Abrego Garcia's "current physical location and custodial status" and "what steps, if any, Defendants have taken (and) will take, and when, to facilitate" his return.

The Trump administration has asserted that Abrego Garcia, who lived in the U.S. for about 14 years before being deported, is a member of the MS-13 gang. Abrego Garcia has disputed that claim, and he has never been charged with any crime related to such activity. The Trump administration has called his deportation a mistake but also has argued, essentially, that its conclusion about Abrego Garcia's affiliation makes him ineligible for protection from the courts.

Abrego Garcia's location was first confirmed to the court by Michael G. Kozak, who identified himself in the Saturday filing as a "Senior Bureau Official" in the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. Sunday's status update was signed by Evan C. Katz, who was identified in the filing as assistant director of Enforcement and Removal Operations for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency within the Department of Homeland Security.

Separately, Abrego Garcia's lawyers have asked Xinis to issue an order compelling the government to explain to the court why it should not be held in contempt for failing to comply fully with previous orders. As of early Sunday evening, Xinis had not filed such an order.

Abrego Garcia's lawyers also have asked Xinis to order the government, among other things, to produce documents and contracts that detail the U.S. agreement with El Salvador to house people deported from the U.S. or, in absence of such records, to require that government officials testify in court about the arrangement.

Xinis expressed frustration Friday during a hearing in her Maryland courtroom when a U.S. government attorney struggled to provide any information about Abrego Garcia's whereabouts.

"Where is he and under whose authority?" the judge asked during the hearing. "I'm not asking for state secrets. All I know is that he's not here. The government was prohibited from sending him to El Salvador, and now I'm asking a very simple question: Where is he?"

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The judge repeatedly asked a government attorney about what has been done to return Abrego Garcia, asking pointedly: "Have they done anything?"

Drew Ensign, a deputy assistant attorney general, told Xinis that he had no personal knowledge about any actions or plans to return Abrego Garcia. But he told the judge the government was "actively considering what could be done" and said that Abrego Garcia's case involved three Cabinet agencies and significant coordination.

Kozak's statement a day later stated: "It is my understanding based on official reporting from our Embassy in San Salvador that Abrego Garcia is currently being held in the Terrorism Confinement Center in El Salvador. He is alive and secure in that facility. He is detained pursuant to the sovereign, domestic authority of El Salvador."

The Justice Department has not responded to an Associated Press request for comment.

During his time in the U.S., Abrego Garcia worked construction, got married and was raising three children with disabilities, according to court records.

A U.S. immigration judge initially shielded Abrego Garcia from deportation to El Salvador because he likely faced persecution there by local gangs that terrorized his family. The Trump administration deported him there last month anyway, before describing the mistake as "an administrative error" but standing by its claims that he was in MS-13.

Trump team tries to project confidence and calm after his tariff moves rattled markets

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Trump administration officials were out in force across the television networks Sunday defending President Donald Trump's economic policies after another week of reeling markets that saw the Republican administration reverse course on some of its steepest tariffs.

Trump, meanwhile, said on his social media platform that there ultimately will be no exemptions for his sweeping tariff agenda, disputing characterizations that he has granted tariff exceptions for certain electronics, including smart phones, whose production is concentrated in China. Rather, Trump said, "those products are subject to the existing 20% Fentanyl Tariffs, and they are just moving to a different Tariff 'bucket.'"

White House advisers and Cabinet members tried to project confidence and calm amid Trump's on-again, off-again approach to tariffs on imported goods from around the world. But their explanations about the overall agenda, coupled with Trump's latest statements, also reflected shifting narratives from a president who, as a candidate in 2024, promised an immediate economic boost and lower prices but now asks American businesses and consumers for patience.

A week ago, Trump's team stood by his promise to leave the impending tariffs in place without exceptions. They used their latest news show appearances to defend his move to ratchet back to a 10% universal tariff for most nations except China (145%), while seeming to grant exemptions for certain electronics like smartphones, laptops, hard drives, flat-panel monitors and semiconductor chips.

Here are the highlights of what Trump lieutenants said last week vs. Sunday:

There are varying answers on the purpose of the tariffs

Long before launching his first presidential campaign in 2015, Trump bemoaned the offshoring of U.S. manufacturing. His promise is to reindustrialize the United States and eliminate trade deficits with other countries.

LAST WEEK

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, interviewed on CBS' "Face the Nation," played up national security. "You've got to realize this is a national security issue," he said, raising the worst-case scenarios of what could happen if the U.S. were involved in a war.

"We don't make medicine in this country anymore. We don't make ships. We don't have enough steel and aluminum to fight a battle, right?" he said.

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SUNDAY

Lutnick stuck to that national security framing, but White House trade adviser Peter Navarro focused more on the import taxes being leverage in the bigger economic puzzle.

"The world cheats us. They've been cheating us for decades," Navarro said on NBC's "Meet the Press." He cited practices such as dumping products at unfairly low prices, currency manipulation and barriers to U.S. auto and agricultural products entering foreign markets.

Navarro insisted the tariffs would yield broader bilateral trade deals to address all those issues. But he also relied on a separate justification when discussing China: the illicit drug trade.

"China has killed over a million people with their fentanyl," he said.

Speaking before Trump's Truth Social post disputing the notion of exemptions, Lutnick alluded to that coming policy. "They're going to have a special focus-type of tariff to make sure that those products get reshored," he told ABC's "This Week."

The status of negotiations with other nations, including China, remains fuzzy

LAST WEEK

With the higher rates set to be collected beginning April 9, administration officials argued that other countries would rush to the negotiating table.

"I've heard that there are negotiations ongoing and that there are a number of offers," Kevin Hassett, director of the White House Economic Council, told ABC. He claimed that "more than 50 countries (were) reaching out," though he did not name any.

SUNDAY

Navarro named the United Kingdom, the European Union, India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and Israel as among the nations in active negotiations with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, Lutnick and other officials.

Greer said on CBS that his goal was "to get meaningful deals before 90 days" — the duration of Trump's pause — "and I think we're going to be there with several countries in the next few weeks."

Talks with China have not begun, he said. "We expect to have a conversation with them," he said, emphasizing it would be between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Trump took an aggressive tone himself Sunday in his social media post, saying "we will not be held hostage by other Countries, especially hostile trading Nations like China, which will do everything within its power to disrespect the American People."

Navarro was not as specific about Beijing. "We have opened up our invitation to them," he said. Lutnick characterized the outreach as "soft entrees ... through intermediaries."

Pressed on whether there is any meaningful back and forth, Navarro said, "The president has a very good relationship with President Xi."

Then he proceeded to criticize several China's policies and trade practices.

The pitches are different, but confidence is constant

LAST WEEK

Navarro was bullish even after U.S. and global trading markets suffered trillions of dollars in losses.

"The first rule, particularly for the smaller investors out there, you can't lose money unless you sell. And, right now, the smart strategy is not to panic," he said on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures."

SUNDAY

Navarro's optimism did not waver despite another net-loss week for securities markets and rocky bond markets. "So, this is unfolding exactly like we thought it would in a dominant scenario," he said.

Others confronted some of the more complex realities of trying to achieve Trump's goal of restoring a bygone era of U.S. manufacturing.

Lutnick suggested the focus is on returning high-tech jobs, while sidestepping questions about lower-skilled manufacturing of goods such as shoes that could mean higher prices because of higher wages for U.S. workers. But some of that high-tech production is what Trump has, for now, exempted from the tariffs that he and his advisers frame as leverage for forcing companies to open U.S. facilities.

Hassett did acknowledge widespread angst.

"The survey data has been showing that people are anxious about the changes a little bit," he said, before steering his answer to employment rates. "The hard data," he said, "has been really, really strong."

Osaka Expo opens in Japan offering a vision of the future. Here's what to know

By AYAKA MCGILL and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

OSAKA, Japan (AP) — The Expo 2025 opened in Osaka on Sunday with more than 10,000 people singing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to celebrate the start of the six-month event that Japan hopes will unite the world divided by tensions and wars.

Here is what to know about the Expo 2025 Osaka:

What is Expo 2025 Osaka about?

The Osaka Expo is held at Yumeshima, which means "dream island," a reclaimed industrial waste burial site in the Osaka Bay, where participants from more than 160 countries, regions and organizations showcase their futuristic exhibits inside about 80 pavilions of unique architecture.

"Creating a future society for our lives" is the main theme. It is Osaka's second Expo after the hugely successful 1970 event that attracted 64 million visitors, a record until Shanghai in 2010.

Organizers expect 28 million visitors through mid-October, though ticket sales have been slow, with about 9 million sold in advance, short of an initial target of 14 million.

"It's been 55 years since the last Expo in Osaka. I've been looking forward to it," said Daiki Chiba, who traveled from Sendai, about 900 kilometers (560 miles) northeast of Osaka.

Many visitors carried Myaku-Myaku mascots or wore clothes matching its colors — red, blue and white — to get in the mood.

What does it mean to hold Expo amid global tensions

The Expo comes only four years after Japan struggled to host the no-audience Tokyo Olympics during the coronavirus pandemic.

It opens in the wake of trade wars and fears of a global economic downturn sparked by U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs, the three-year Russian invasion of Ukraine and Middle East conflicts.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba compared the global tensions to a "national crisis" and said that Trump's tariffs, especially the 25% duty on automobiles, would be a blow to all industries and Japan's economy.

Still, Japan wants to turn the pinch into a chance.

"I think the timing is actually quite fitting," said Sachiko Yoshimura, head of Expo 2025 global communications. "Holding the Expo now could eventually help to address the divisions in the world. ... I believe this Expo in Japan might actually lead to stronger international relationships and improvements."

What is the Grand Ring?

The iconic ring, designed by architect Sou Fujimoto, is a lattice-like structure encircling the venue and recognized by the Guinness World Records as the largest wooden architecture. It is 20 meters (65 feet) high and has a 2-kilometer (1.2-mile) circumference.

The costly ring takes up more than 14% of the Expo's total spending of 235 billion yen (\$1.64 billion) and has triggered public criticism.

The total cost nearly doubled from the initial estimate largely due to the weaker yen, causing construction delays. Several pavilions, including those of Nepal, India, Vietnam and Chile, were not ready for the opening.

The ring is supposed to be partially reusable, reflecting the theme of creating a sustainable future.

What are other highlights?

Exhibits of cutting-edge technology, such as robots and flying cars, as well as pop culture like Hello Kitty and Gundam, are among the highlights.

"Pavilions all look amazing," said Laurel Sylvester from New Zealand, visiting with her husband and two children. Her family is interested in ocean sustainability and planned to visit the Blue Ocean Dome. She said

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the boys are "super excited to have their photo with the (big Gundam) robot and some of the interesting tech things that are going on."

A small artificial heart made from induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPS, demonstrated a heartbeat at a Japanese health care pavilion. At the Future of Life pavilion, visitors can interact with robots. A human washing machine that was a sensation at the 1970 expo returned with a high-tech makeover.

The U.S. pavilion focuses on space travel. Its lunar stone from the Apollo 12 mission, a sensation at the 1970 expo, was back on display.

China, also highlighting space technology, exhibits soil samples from its lunar missions.

Carrying a "Not for sale" sign and decorated with its blue-and-yellow national flags, Ukraine attracted many visitors with a globe and other items carrying barcodes. By scanning them, visitors can see videos showing people's lives at war and their reconstruction effort.

Dymtro Liuyi, Ukrainian creative director, said his country's participation was undecided until December due to the war. The preparation was finished Sunday morning, he said, showing blue paint on his fingers.

What is Myaku-Myaku?

With its blue face encircled by red balls, some of them eyeballs, the mysterious, smiley creature Myaku-Myaku welcomes visitors.

The imaginary creature was born from the fusion of cells and water in a small spring in the Kansai region, organizers say. The friendly but clumsy character can transform into various shapes and is good at finding a rainbow after the rain.

Assisted living isn't just for people. A zoo in Spain helps elderly elephants age gracefully

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — At the Barcelona Zoo, a 40-year-old African elephant places her foot through the metal barrier where a zookeeper gently scrubs its sole — the beloved pachyderm gets her "pedicure," along with apple slices every day.

The treatment is part of the zoo's specialized geriatric care for aging animals that cannot be reintroduced into the wild as zoos world over increasingly emphasize lifelong care.

"Sending them back into nature would be an error," said Pilar Padilla, head of the zoo's mammal care. "It is very likely they wouldn't survive."

Zoos have undergone a rethink in recent decades with the emphasis on the conservation of species and education, moving away from the past paradigm that often displayed exotic animals as a spectacle.

The new approach includes knowing how to adapt to the needs of aging animals, which has led zoos to create bigger, more nature-like enclosures, such as the Sahel-Savannah area at the zoo in the Spanish city of Barcelona.

Along with breeding programs to reintroduce fit animals into nature, zoos today want to ensure that animals living longer due to advancements in veterinary care can age gracefully, said Martín Zordan, the CEO of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, or WAZA.

"Specialized geriatric care is becoming increasingly essential," Zordan told The Associated Press at the organization's Barcelona offices.

Zordan said that just like older people, elderly animals require more care: regular health checks, arthritis treatment, softer foods or nutritional supplements, adapted living spaces and monitoring of mental and behavioral health.

Along with caring for a pair of aging elephants, the Barcelona Zoo is also the home for a 15-year-old wolf, a leopard and a tiger who are both 17, as well as some older birds — including a flock of senior flamencos.

It's not alone — several zoos in the United States, for example, highlight their treatment of older animals, such as the zoos in Baltimore and Baton Rouge.

A study of grief

Zookeepers at the Barcelona Zoo, not far from the city's Mediterranean coastline, are closely monitor-

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ing its two aging female pachyderms, Susi and Bully (pronounced BUH'-yi), as they cope with the recent death of Yoyo, their former pen-mate and long-time companion.

Yoyo died in December at age 54.

Susi, at 52, is now among the oldest known African elephants in captivity, even though WAZA said the age of animals born in the wild is approximate. Bully, who is 40, is also considered old for an African elephant. All three were captured in the wild and spent time in circuses and other zoos before coming to Barcelona.

The zoo is now working with the University of Barcelona to study the impact of Yoyo's death on Susi and Bully. It's the first study of its kind, focused on elephants not from the same family after the death of a long-time companion, Padilla told The Associated Press during a recent visit to the zoo's elephant enclosure.

At first, Susi and Bully showed their shock by not eating, but are now adapting well and turning to one another, including even sharing food, Padilla said, adding that Susi has taken on the dominant role that Yoyo had.

The proof is in the teeth

For elephants, their teeth are the real age test.

"What marks the decline of the animal is the wear on their teeth," Barcelona zookeeper José María Santamaría said after finishing the Bully's pedicure. "They go through six sets of molars during their life, and when they reach around 40 years old they lose the last set."

Susi and Bully require daily checkups, food suited for their now molar-less mouths and extra attention to their legs — hence the daily pedicures and the enclosure's soft sandy floor to cushion aching feet.

"Those are the sort of considerations taken because we care about these animals living comfortably and leading lives with dignity," Zordan said.

Gabon's coup leader Oligui Nguema elected president with 90% of votes cast, provisional results show

By YVES LAURENT GOMA and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

LIBREVILLE, Gabon (AP) — Gen. Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, Gabon's interim president who staged a 2023 coup that ended a decadeslong political dynasty, has been elected president, according to provisional results announced by the country's interior ministry.

Oligui Nguema, 50, recorded a landslide victory with 90.35% of votes cast, defeating seven other candidates, including immediate past Prime Minister Alain Claude Bilie-By-Nze. He came in a distant second with 3% of votes cast, Interior Minister Hermann Immongault said as he announced the provisional results.

The Interior Ministry announced a turnout of 87.21% in the election in which some 920,000 voters, including over 28,000 overseas, were registered to participate across more than 3,000 polling stations.

It's Gabon's first election since the 2023 military coup that ended a political dynasty that lasted over 50 years. It was seen as a crucial election for the central African nation's 2.3 million people, a third of whom live in poverty despite its vast oil wealth.

Bilie-By-Nze recently told The Associated Press that Oligui Nguema took advantage of state resources to support his campaign. The government denies this.

Local observers deemed the conduct of the election satisfactory in nearly all the polling stations monitored.

At least 94.8% of the polling stations observed operated under satisfactory conditions, while the transparency of operations was deemed satisfactory in 98.6% of cases, the Gabonese Civil Society Organizations Observation Mission said late Saturday.

Oligui Nguema, who has been serving as interim president, had his representatives present in 69.6% of the polling stations observed while Bilie-By-Nze's representation stood at just 8.2%, the observers said.

Oligui Nguema, the former head of the country's Republican Guard, toppled President Ali Bongo Ondimba nearly two years ago. He hopes to consolidate his grip on power for a seven-year term in office.

After casting his ballot on Saturday in the capital, Libreville, the interim president said he felt proud of the citizens seeking to "turn the page to join the new Republic."

In a video message shared after he voted in the north of the country, Bilie-By-Nze said he was concerned

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that unused voting cards could be used for potential electoral fraud.

Voters who spoke to the AP were divided on how the military has performed since taking over power in 2023, with most saying they have failed in their promises.

"I'm telling you that for me, the military has failed," said Antoine Nkili, a 27-year-old unemployed man with a master's degree in law. "They promised to reform the institutions, but they haven't. Instead, they've enriched themselves."

'A Minecraft Movie' stomps to \$80.6 million in second weekend

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After just two weeks in theaters, "A Minecraft Movie" is already the highest grossing Hollywood release of 2025.

The Warner Bros. videogame adaptation followed up its blockbuster opening with a second weekend of \$80.6 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday. Worldwide, it's quickly surpassed \$550 million.

After doubling expectations in its \$300 million global debut, "A Minecraft Movie" continued to draw audiences unlike anything else this year. The film, directed by Jared Hess and starring Jack Black and Jason Momoa, slid 50% in its second go-around in U.S. and Canadian theaters — an impressive hold after such a big debut.

Though critics slammed the movie (46% "fresh" on Rotten Tomatoes) and audience scores were merely good (a "B+" CinemaScore), "A Minecraft Movie" latched on with moviegoers who have increasingly turned out in droves for big-budget videogame adaptations.

"A Minecraft Movie," a \$150 million co-production of Warner Bros. and Legendary Entertainment, has helped — at least for now — reinvigorate theaters after a dismal start to the year. Overall ticket sales were double that of the same weekend in 2024, according to Comscore. Before "A Minecraft," box office revenues trailed last year's by 11%, but have now virtually pulled even. (2025 grosses still trail 2019's by 31%, according to Comscore.)

None of the weekend's new releases — Angel Studios' "The King of Kings," the Walt Disney Co.'s "The Amateur," Universal Pictures' "Drop" or A24's "Warfare" — came close to challenging "Minecraft," but several films outperformed expectations.

"The King of Kings," an animated tale of Jesus' life aimed at Christian audiences, came in second with \$19.1 million in 3,200 theaters. The film, loosely based on a children's book by Charles Dickens, includes a starry voice cast led by Oscar Isaac, Kenneth Branagh and Uma Thurman.

With an enviable "A+" CinemaScore from audiences, "The King of Kings" is posed to capitalize in the coming week before Easter. Part three of Fathom Entertainment's TV series, "The Chosen: Last Supper," also looked to appeal to Christian audiences. It launched with \$6.2 million from 2,296 cinemas.

"The Amateur," a 20th Century production starring Rami Malek as a CIA cryptographer hunting down his wife's killers, debuted with \$15 million domestically, plus another \$17.2 million overseas. Critics deemed the revenge thriller an awkward star vehicle for Malek, who also produced. "The Amateur" cost \$60 million to make.

"Warfare," director Alex Garland's follow-up to 2024's "Civil War," opened with \$8.3 million in ticket sales from 2,670 theaters. Garland co-wrote and co-directed the A24 release with Iraq War veteran Ray Mendoza, who based the film on 2006 mission he and his fellow Navy SEALs undertook during the war. "Warfare," which cost about \$20 million to make, was lauded by critics as an uncommonly realistic portrait of combat.

"Drop," the latest thriller from Blumhouse Productions, debuted with \$7.5 million from 3,085 theaters. Christopher Landon's film stars Meghann Fahy ("The White Lotus") as a single-mom widow on a first date (Brandon Sklenar) who's being terrorized by an unknown person by messages to her phone. "Drop," which premiered at SXSW, cost less than \$10 million to produce.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday

through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "A Minecraft Movie," \$80.6 million.
2. "The King of Kings," \$19.1 million.
3. "The Amateur," \$15 million.
4. "Warfare," \$8.3 million.
5. "Drop," \$7.5 million.
6. "The Chosen: Last Supper (Part 3)," \$6 million.
7. "A Working Man," \$3.1 million.
8. "Snow White," \$2.8 million.
9. "The Woman in the Yard," \$2.1 million.
10. "The Chosen: Last Supper (Part 2)," \$932,106.

Measles exploded in Texas after stagnant vaccine funding. New cuts threaten the same across the US

By LAURA UNGAR, MICHELLE R. SMITH and DEVI SHASTRI Associated Press

The measles outbreak in West Texas didn't happen just by chance.

The easily preventable disease, declared eliminated in the U.S. in 2000, ripped through communities sprawling across more than 20 Texas counties in part because health departments were starved of the funding needed to run vaccine programs, officials say.

"We haven't had a strong immunization program that can really do a lot of boots-on-the-ground work for years," said Katherine Wells, the health director in Lubbock, a 90-minute drive from the outbreak's epicenter.

Immunization programs nationwide have been left brittle by years of stagnant funding by federal, state and local governments. In Texas and elsewhere, this helped set the stage for the measles outbreak and fueled its spread. Now cuts to federal funding threaten efforts to prevent more cases and outbreaks.

Health departments got an influx of cash to deal with COVID-19, but it wasn't enough to make up for years of neglect. On top of that, trust in vaccines has eroded. Health officials warn the situation is primed to get worse.

Recent cuts by the Trump administration have pulled billions of dollars in COVID-19 related funding — \$2 billion of it slated for immunization programs for various diseases. Overseeing the cuts is Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who rose to prominence leading an anti-vaccine movement. While Kennedy has said he wants his agency to prevent future outbreaks, he's also declined to deliver a consistent and forceful message that would help do so — encouraging people to vaccinate their children against measles while reminding them it is safe.

At the same time, lawmakers in Texas and about two-thirds of states have introduced legislation this year that would make it easier to opt out of vaccines or otherwise put up barriers to ensuring more people get shots, according to an analysis by The Associated Press. That further undercuts efforts to keep infectious diseases at bay, health officials said.

The more than 700 measles cases reported this year in the U.S. have already surpassed last year's total. The vast majority — more than 540 — are in Texas, but cases have popped up in 23 other states. Two Texas children have died. A 6-year-old girl from Gaines County, the center of the outbreak, died in February, the first measles death in the U.S. in a decade. An 8-year-old girl from the same town, Seminole, died earlier this month.

Children in the U.S. are generally required to be vaccinated to go to school, which in the past ensured vaccination rates stayed high enough to prevent infectious diseases like measles from spreading. But a growing number of parents have been skipping the shots for their kids. The share of children exempted from vaccine requirements has reached an all-time high, and just 92.7% of kindergartners got their required shots in 2023. That's well below the 95% coverage level that keeps diseases at bay.

Keeping vaccination rates high requires vigilance, commitment and money.

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Though the outbreak in Texas started in Mennonite communities that have been resistant to vaccines and distrustful of government intervention, it quickly jumped to other places with low vaccination rates. There are similar under-vaccinated pockets across the country that could provide the tinder that sparks another outbreak.

"It's like a hurricane over warm water in the Caribbean," said Dr. Peter Hotez, co-director of the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development in Houston. "As long as there's warm water, the hurricane will continue to accelerate. In this case, the warm water is the unvaccinated kids."

Flatlined vaccine funding in Texas

Lubbock receives a \$254,000 immunization grant from the state annually that can be used for staff, outreach, advertising, education and other elements of a vaccine program. That hasn't increased in at least 15 years as the population grew.

It used to be enough for three nurses, an administrative assistant, advertising and even goodies to give out at health fairs, Wells said. "Now it covers a nurse, a quarter of a nurse, a little bit of an admin assistant, and basically nothing else."

Texas has among the lowest per capita state funding for public health in the nation, just \$17 per person in 2023, according to the State Health Access Data Assistance Center.

Vaccines are among the most successful tools in public health's arsenal, preventing debilitating illnesses and lowering the need for expensive medical care. Childhood vaccines prevent 4 million deaths worldwide each year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which says the measles vaccine will save some 19 million lives by 2030.

U.S. immunization programs are funded by a variable mix of federal, state and local money. Federal money is sent to every state, which then decides how much to send to local health departments.

The stagnant immunization grant funding in Texas has made it harder for local health departments to keep their programs going. Lubbock's health department, for example, doesn't have the money to pay for targeted Facebook ads to encourage vaccinations or do robust community outreach to build trust.

In Andrews County, which borders Gaines County, the biggest cost of its immunization program is personnel. But while everything has gotten more expensive, the grant hasn't changed, Health Director Gordon Mattimoe said. That shifts the burden to county governments. Some kick in more money, some don't. His did.

The problem: keeping people safe from outbreaks requires high vaccination rates across a broad region, and germs don't stop at county borders.

Andrews County, population 18,000, offers a walk-in vaccine clinic Monday through Friday, but other West Texas communities don't. More than half the people who come to the clinic travel from other counties, Mattimoe said, including much larger places and Gaines County.

Some had to drive an hour or more. They did so because they had trouble getting shots in their home county due to long waits, lack of providers and other issues, Mattimoe said.

"They're unable to obtain it in the place that they live. ... People are overflowing, over to here," Mattimoe said. "There's an access issue."

That makes it more likely people won't get their shots.

In Gaines County just 82% of kindergartners were vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella. Even in Andrews County, where, at 97%, the vaccination rate is above the 95% threshold for preventing outbreaks, it has slipped two percentage points since 2020.

Vaccine funding crises aren't only in Texas

The health departments millions of Americans depend on for their shots largely rely on two federal programs: Vaccines for Children and Section 317 of the Public Health Services Act. Vaccines for Children mostly provides the actual vaccines. Section 317 provides grants for vaccines but also to run programs and get shots into arms.

About half of kids qualify for Vaccines for Children, a safety-net program created in response to a 1989-1991 measles epidemic that sickened 55,000 people and killed 123. Section 317 money sent to state and local health departments pays for vaccines as well as nurses, outreach and advertising.

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Health departments generally use the programs in tandem, and since the pandemic they've often been allowed to supplement it with COVID-19 funds.

The 317 funds have been flat for years, even as costs of everything from salaries to vaccines went up. A 2023 CDC report to Congress estimated \$1.6 billion was needed to fully fund a comprehensive 317 vaccine program. Last year, Congress approved less than half that: \$682 million.

This, along with insufficient state and local funding, forces hard choices. Dr. Kelly Moore, a preventive medicine specialist, said she faced this dilemma when directing Tennessee's immunization program from 2004 to 2018.

"What diseases can we afford to prevent and how many people can we afford to protect? Those decisions have to be made every year by every state," said Moore, who now runs the advocacy group Immunize.org.

A rural clinic may have to be closed, or evening and weekend hours eliminated, she said. "It becomes difficult for them to staff the clinics they have and difficult for the people in those communities to access them, especially if they're the working poor."

At the same time, health officials say more funding is needed to fight misinformation and mistrust about vaccines. In a 2023 survey by the National Association of County and City Health Officials, 80% of local health departments reported vaccine hesitancy among patients or their parents in the previous year, up from 56% in 2017.

"If we don't invest in education, it becomes even more difficult to get these diseases under control," Moore said.

An unclear future given continuing cuts and hesitancy

Facing these headwinds, things got much worse in March when Kennedy's health department canceled billions of dollars in state and local funding. After 23 states sued, a judge put a hold on the cuts for now in those states but not in Texas or other states that didn't join the lawsuit.

But local health departments are not taking chances and are moving to cut services.

HHS said the money, allocated through COVID-19 initiatives, was cut because the pandemic was over. But CDC had allowed the money to be used to shore up public health infrastructure generally, including immunization programs.

Before he was confirmed as health secretary, Kennedy vowed not to take vaccines away. But in Texas, his department's cuts mean state and local health departments are losing \$125 million in immunization-related federal funding as they deal with the measles outbreak. A spokesperson for the federal health department did not respond to an AP request for comment.

Dallas County, 350 miles from where the outbreak began, had to cancel more than 50 immunization clinics, including at schools with low measles vaccination rates, said Dr. Philip Huang, the county's health director.

Near the center of the outbreak, Lubbock's health department said seven jobs are on the line because they were paid by those grants. Included in the affected work are immunizations.

Across the border in New Mexico, where the outbreak has spread, the state lost grants that funded vaccine education.

Kennedy's cuts also hit vaccination programs in other states

It's still unclear how the recently announced \$2 billion in cuts will affect immunization programs across the country, but details are starting to trickle out from some states.

Washington state, for example, would lose about \$20 million in vaccination-related funding. Officials were forced to pause mobile vaccine efforts on their "Care-A-Van," which has administered more than 6,800 COVID-19 vaccines, 3,900 flu vaccines and 5,700 childhood vaccines since July. The state also had to cancel more than 100 vaccine clinics scheduled through June, including more than 35 at schools.

Connecticut health officials estimate if the cuts stand, they will lose \$26 million for immunization. Among other reductions, this means canceling 43 contracts with local health departments to increase vaccination rates and raise confidence in vaccines, losing vaccination clinics and mobile outreach in underserved neighborhoods, and stopping the distribution of vaccine-related educational materials.

Several of the 23 states suing the federal government, including Minnesota, Rhode Island and Massa-

chusetts, cite losses to vaccine programs.

As the cuts further cripple already struggling health departments, alongside increasingly prominent and powerful anti-vaccine voices, doctors worry that vaccine hesitancy will keep spreading. And measles and other viruses will too.

"My whole life's purpose is to keep people from suffering. And vaccines are a tremendous way to do that," Moore said. "But if we don't invest in them to get them in arms, then we don't see their benefits."

Wisconsin teen charged in parents' deaths is accused of plotting to kill Trump

Associated Press undefined

MILWAUKEE (AP) — A Wisconsin teenager charged in the deaths of his parents faces wider allegations that he killed them to "obtain the financial means" to assassinate President Donald Trump and overthrow the government, according to a recently unsealed federal warrant.

Nikita Casap, 17, was charged last month by Waukesha County authorities with first-degree murder, theft and other crimes in the deaths of his mother, Tatiana Casap, and his stepfather, Donald Mayer. Authorities allege the teenager fatally shot them at their home outside Milwaukee in February and lived with the decomposing bodies for weeks before fleeing with \$14,000 cash, passports and the family dog. He was arrested last month in Kansas.

Casap, in custody at the Waukesha County jail on a \$1 million bond, is due in court next month to enter a plea. County prosecutors have offered a glimpse of the federal allegations, which were outlined in an FBI warrant unsealed Friday.

Federal authorities accuse Casap of planning his parents' murders, buying a drone and explosives, and sharing his plans with others, including a Russian speaker. His intentions are detailed in a three-page antisemitic manifesto praising Adolf Hitler. The warrant filed at the federal court in Milwaukee also contains excerpts of communications on TikTok and the Telegram messenger app.

"Casap appears to have written a manifest calling for the assassination of the President of the United States. He was in touch with other parties about his plan to kill the President and overthrow the government of the United States," the search warrant says. "The killing of his parents appeared to be an effort to obtain the financial means and autonomy necessary to carrying out his plan."

In court, prosecutors alleged Casap was in touch with a person who speaks Russian and shared a plan to flee to Ukraine. Authorities found him in Kansas with money, passports, a car and the family's dog.

Federal prosecutors alleged Casap's manifesto outlined his reasons for wanting to kill Trump and included ideas about how he would live in Ukraine.

Citing Casap's writings, the federal warrant said the teenager wanted to spur governmental collapse by "by getting rid of the president and perhaps the vice president."

Phone and online messages seeking comment were left Sunday for Casap's public defender, Nicole Ostrowski. In court last month, she moved to dismiss some of the charges against her client, including theft, arguing that prosecutors had not laid out their case. She's also noted her client's age during court proceedings.

"He is young, he is still in high school," she said on March 12.

County authorities also charged Casap with hiding a corpse, theft and misappropriating identification to obtain money.

Officers found the bodies of Tatiana Casap, 35; and Mayer, 51, on Feb. 28. Family members requested a well-being check after Mayer didn't report for work and Nikita Casap skipped school for about two weeks.

Authorities believe the parents were killed weeks earlier. Prosecutors said in court that the couple's bodies were so badly decomposed that they had to be identified through dental records.

50 years after Lebanon's civil war began, a bullet-riddled bus stands as a reminder

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — It was an ordinary day in Beirut. In one part of Lebanon's capital, a church was inaugurated, with the leader of the Christian Phalange party there. In another, Palestinian factions held a military parade. Phalangists and Palestinians had clashed, again, that morning.

What happened next on April 13, 1975, would change the course of Lebanon, plunging it into 15 years of civil war that would kill about 150,000 people, leave 17,000 missing and lead to foreign intervention. Beirut became synonymous with snipers, kidnappings and car bombs.

Lebanon has never fully grappled with the war's legacy, and in many ways it has never fully recovered, 50 years later. The government on Sunday marked the anniversary with a small ceremony and minute of silence, a rare official acknowledgement of the legacy of the conflict.

The massacre

Unrest had been brewing. Palestinian militants had begun launching attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory. Leftist groups and many Muslims in Lebanon sympathized with the Palestinian cause. Christians and some other groups saw the Palestinian militants as a threat.

At the time, Mohammad Othman was 16, a Palestinian refugee in the Tel al-Zaatar camp east of Beirut.

Three buses had left camp that morning, carrying students like him as well as militants from a coalition of hardline factions that had broken away from the Palestinian Liberation Organization. They passed through the Ein Rummaneh neighborhood without incident and joined the military parade.

The buses were supposed to return together, but some participants were tired after marching and wanted to go back early. They hired a small bus from the street, Othman said. Thirty-three people packed in.

They were unaware that earlier that day, small clashes had broken out between Palestinians and Phalange Party members guarding the church in Ein Rummaneh. A bodyguard for party leader Pierre Gemayel had been killed.

Suddenly the road was blocked, and gunmen began shooting at the bus "from all sides," Othman recalled.

Some passengers had guns they had carried in the parade, Othman said, but they were unable to draw them quickly in the crowded bus.

A camp neighbor fell dead on top of him. The man's 9-year-old son was also killed. Othman was shot in the shoulder.

"The shooting didn't stop for about 45 minutes until they thought everyone was dead," he said. Othman said paramedics who eventually arrived had a confrontation with armed men who tried to stop them from evacuating him.

Twenty-two people were killed.

Conflicting narratives

Some Lebanese say the men who attacked the bus were responding to an assassination attempt against Gemayel by Palestinian militants. Others say the Phalangists had set up an ambush intended to spark a wider conflict.

Marwan Chahine, a Lebanese-French journalist who wrote a book about the events of April 13, 1975, said he believes both narratives are wrong.

Chahine said he found no evidence of an attempt to kill Gemayel, who had left the church by the time his bodyguard was shot. And he said the attack on the bus appeared to be more a matter of trigger-happy young men at a checkpoint than a "planned operation."

There had been past confrontations, "but I think this one took this proportion because it arrived after many others and at a point when the authority of the state was very weak," Chahine said.

The Lebanese army had largely ceded control to militias, and it did not respond to the events in Ein Rummaneh that day. The armed Palestinian factions had been increasingly prominent in Lebanon after the PLO was driven out of Jordan in 1970, and Lebanese Christians had also increasingly armed themselves.

"The Kataeb would say that the Palestinians were a state within a state," Chahine said, using the Phalange

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Party's Arabic name. "But the reality was, you had two states in a state. Nobody was following any rules."

Selim Sayegh, a member of parliament with the Kataeb Party who was 14 and living in Ein Rummaneh when the fighting started, said he believes war had been inevitable since the Lebanese army backed down from an attempt to take control of Palestinian camps two years earlier.

Sayegh said men at the checkpoint that day saw a bus full of Palestinians with "weapons apparent" and "thought that is the second wave of the operation" that started with the killing of Gemayel's bodyguard.

The war unfolded quickly from there. Alliances shifted. New factions formed. Israel and Syria occupied parts of the country. The United States intervened, and the U.S. embassy and Marine barracks were targeted by bombings. Beirut was divided between Christian and Muslim sectors.

In response to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, a Shiite militant group was formed in the early 1980s with Iranian backing: Hezbollah. It would grow to be arguably the most powerful armed non-state group in the region.

Hezbollah was the only militant group allowed to keep its weapons after Lebanon's civil war, given special status as a "resistance force" because Israel was still in southern Lebanon. After the group was badly weakened last year in a war with Israel that ended with a ceasefire, there has been increasing pressure for it to disarm.

The survivors

Othman said he became a fighter after the war started because "there were no longer schools or anything else to do." Later he would disarm and become a pharmacist.

He remembers being bewildered when a peace accord in 1989 ushered in the end of civil war: "All this war and bombing, and in the end they make some deals and it's all over."

Of the 10 others who survived the bus attack, he said, three were killed a year later when Christian militias attacked the Tel al-Zaatar camp. Another was killed in a 1981 bombing at the Iraqi embassy. A couple died of natural causes, one lives in Germany, and he has lost track of the others.

The bus has also survived, as a reminder.

Ahead of the 50th anniversary of the attack, it was towed from storage on a farm to the private Nabu Museum in Heri, north of Beirut. Visitors took photos with it and peered into bullet holes in its rusted sides.

Ghida Margie Fakih, a museum spokesperson, said the bus will remain on display indefinitely as a "wake-up call" to remind Lebanese not to go down the path of conflict again.

The bus "changed the whole history in Lebanon and took us somewhere that nobody wanted to go," she said.

No booze, no cover, no judging: Inside Mexico City's free dance parties

By CATERINA MORBIATO Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — It's 4 p.m. on a recent Sunday afternoon, and a pavilion of towering windows in a Mexico City urban park is nearly packed. The public is diverse, but everyone here wants the same thing: to dance freely, at no cost, without harassment or prejudice.

Twenty-somethings, children with their mothers, teenagers and elderly couples gather around the disc jockey's console. A murmur fills the air as roughly 300 people await the start. The first notes then pierce the air and a shiver runs through the crowd.

"This is an open invitation for everyone to move as they wish in a safe space!" said Axel Martínez, one of the collective's founders, as he grabs a microphone and cheers the revelers on. At their own pace, each person is carried away by the music — and no one seems surprised by the moves of others.

From experimental jazz pieces and smooth Egyptian hip-hop to the more familiar pulse of cumbias grooved with an electronic touch, people dance to it all.

The party was organized by the Nueva Red de Bailadores or NRB (New Network of Dancers), a collective that aims to create spaces where people can gather to dance freely. There's no cover charge, no booze, and no pressure to do the "right" moves.

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Dancing with peace of mind

The collective began nine years ago as a simple gathering of friends dancing freely in an apartment. As word spread, their numbers swelled from 20 to 50, then more than 100 — so they had to move to a park.

"The New Network of Dancers is (a community) of philosophy and action," said Martínez. "Dancing alone is very fulfilling, but dancing with a lot of people is also very enriching."

As their numbers grew, the NRB approached the authorities and established a relationship with the agency responsible for preserving Mexico City's historic center and with museum directors, who agreed to provide sound equipment and other resources for the events.

Building on its network of contacts, it has organized some 300 dancing sessions in ever more striking and unexpected spaces, such as old factories and gardens.

The latest NRB party featured two dance floors — one inside and one outside the pavilion — both areas filled with joy and lightness. As organizers pointed out, their parties forgo police and security, fostering a sense of collective care where attendees look out for one another.

"Being able to come to a space where you feel happiness and respect ... it gives you peace of mind," said Ana Celia Agustín, 29, a regular at NRB dances.

A key to the collective's success comes from having become a real social network, and what NRB member Elías Herrera describes as a "virtuous circle" between online and in-person interaction that the collective has unleashed.

While social media videos and posts have played a role in promoting the dance parties, word-of-mouth has been key to make them so popular.

"I knew a lot about dancing and my body always mixed it with alcohol," said Mateo Cruz, 27. "Here I found a new place. It's been an eye-opening experience for me to discover that I have all this stuff inside me that I can let go of. I can completely free myself from what others think, from what I think myself."

'Fun without any trouble'

The Mexican capital is a city that dances, especially in its most popular neighborhoods, where public space is often turned into a dance floor for market anniversaries, patron saint celebrations or simply the joy of weekend cumbias.

Generally, however, these parties feature a more homogenous crowd and musical selection. In contrast, the NRB dances have opened the dance floor to a more diverse audience and invites everyone on a shape-shifting musical journey.

Isabel Miraflores, a 73-year-old retired high school assistant principal, came with her husband and said she enjoyed both the dancing and the presence of people of different ages. "I think it's wonderful because it's a free event," she said. "We get together with people from all parts of society and we have fun without any trouble."

The sun has set, it's almost 7 p.m., and there is just over one hour left before the dance ends, but dozens are still waiting in line to enter the pavilion in the famed Bosque de Chapultepec, an urban park that stretches across more than 2,000 acres in the heart of Mexico City.

"In a capitalist reality like ours, it's very difficult to find an alternative, especially one that is free," said Martínez. "Accessibility is everything for us."

Convalescing Pope Francis opens Holy Week with in-person greeting in St. Peter's Square

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — A convalescing Pope Francis greeted the crowd in St. Peter's Square on Palm Sunday, wishing more than 20,000 faithful a "Happy Palm Sunday, Happy Holy Week," in yet another reassuring public sign of his recovery from a life-threatening battle with double pneumonia.

Many in the crowd reached out to touch Francis' hand or garments as he was brought in a wheelchair down a ramp to the main altar, where he issued his brief greeting into a microphone. The 88-year-old pope was not wearing nasal tubes for supplemental oxygen, as he had during a similar appearance last Sunday.

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On his way back to St. Peter's Basilica from where he had emerged, Francis stopped to bless a rosary, and offered candy to a boy who greeted him.

The 88-year-old Francis is entering his fourth week of convalescence during which doctors have advised him to avoid crowds. While Francis is clearly eager to show he is feeling better, he has not spoken more than a few words in public as he recovers from a severe respiratory crisis that has labored his speech. The Vatican said it was waiting to advise on what role he may play in upcoming Holy Week events leading up to Easter Sunday.

It was his second time in St. Peter's Square before a crowd since leaving the hospital, following last Sunday's unexpected appearance that thrilled the faithful. He also met privately with King Charles III and Queen Camilla this week, and made an impromptu tour of St. Peter's Basilica, stopping to pray, and to thank a pair of restorers for their work on the basilica's masterpieces.

On Saturday, the eve of Holy Week, Francis went to the St. Mary Major Basilica in central Rome to pray privately before a favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, Salus Populi Romani. The basilica, which he typically visits before and after his foreign trips, was also his first stop after leaving the Gemelli hospital on March 23.

In the traditional Sunday blessing, the pontiff thanked the faithful for their prayers. "At this time of physical weakness, they help me to feel God's closeness, compassion and tenderness even more." For the ninth week, including his five-week hospitalization starting Feb. 14, the blessing was delivered as a text.

The pope offered prayers for those suffering in the conflict in Sudan, which marks its second anniversary on Tuesday, and for Lebanon, where civil war began 50 years ago, as well as for peace in Ukraine, the Middle East, Congo, Myanmar and South Sudan.

In a prepared Palm Sunday homily read by a top Vatican cardinal, Francis urged the faithful to carry the cross "of those who suffer around us" to mark the start of the solemn Holy Week.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, vice dean of the College of Cardinals, led the celebrations, leading a procession of cardinals around the piazza's central obelisk carrying an ornately braided palm that recalls Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, when crowds waved palm branches to honor him.

The initial welcome contrasts with the suffering that follows, leading up to his crucifixion, which Christians observe on Good Friday, followed by his resurrection, celebrated on Easter Sunday.

The faithful emerged from St. Peter's Square carrying blessed palm fronds or olive branches to mark the occasion. While the pope's appearance was widely expected, pilgrims acknowledged some concern that gusts of wind might keep him from entering the square.

"There was a bit of worry when a few drops fell and it was windy but then at the end he surprised us and it was a really great emotion," said Luigi Mighali. "I think his words, 'Happy Holy Week and Happy Palm Sunday,' moved everyone."

Yesica Andagua, a Peruvian nun, said she was gratified to see the pope doing so well.

"The truth is that it has given me a lot of joy, at least for me, to see that he is getting better and may he get better soon, God willing," she said.

Takeaways from AP's report on how flat funding set stage for Texas measles outbreak, might fuel more

By LAURA UNGAR, MICHELLE R. SMITH and DEVI SHASTRI Associated Press

The measles outbreak in West Texas didn't happen just by chance.

The easily preventable disease, declared eliminated in the U.S. in 2000, ripped through Texas communities in part because health departments were starved of the funding needed to run vaccine programs, officials say.

Nationwide, immunization programs have been left brittle by years of stagnant funding by federal, state and local governments. Health departments got an influx of cash to deal with COVID-19, but it wasn't enough to make up for years of neglect.

In Texas and elsewhere, this helped set the stage for the measles outbreak and fueled its spread. And

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now, new federal funding cuts threaten efforts to curb it .

Already, the more than 700 measles cases reported this year in the U.S. have surpassed last year's total. The vast majority — more than 540 — are in Texas, but cases have popped up in 23 other states. Two Texas children have died.

Here are some takeaways from The Associated Press examination of funding for vaccination programs, how it exacerbates growing vaccine hesitancy and how that fuels outbreaks of infectious disease.

Decreasing vaccine rates provide kindling for disease outbreaks

Children in the U.S. are generally required to be vaccinated to go to school, which in the past ensured vaccination rates stayed high enough to prevent infectious diseases like measles from spreading. But a growing number of parents have been skipping the shots for their kids. The share of children exempted from vaccine requirements has reached an all-time high, and just 92.7% of kindergartners got their required shots in 2023. That's well below the 95% coverage level that keeps diseases at bay.

Though the outbreak in Texas started in Mennonite communities that have been resistant to vaccines and distrustful of government intervention, it quickly jumped to other places with low vaccination rates. There are similar under-vaccinated pockets across the country that could provide the tinder that sparks another outbreak.

Keeping vaccination rates high requires vigilance, commitment and money.

Even as the population grew, funding for immunization programs in Texas health departments stayed the same

U.S. immunization programs are funded by a variable mix of federal, state and local money. Without enough money, health departments struggle.

Lubbock, about a 90-minute drive from the outbreak's epicenter, receives a \$254,000 immunization grant from the state annually that can be used for staff, outreach, advertising, education and other elements of a vaccine program. That hasn't increased in at least 15 years.

It used to be enough for three nurses, an administrative assistant, advertising and even goodies to give out at health fairs, said Katherine Wells, the health director. "Now it covers a nurse, a quarter of a nurse, a little bit of an admin assistant, and basically nothing else."

Other local health departments have seen the same trend. Some, such as Andrews County, have shored up programs with local money. But others haven't.

Overall, Texas has among the lowest per capita state funding for public health in the nation, just \$17 per person in 2023, according to the State Health Access Data Assistance Center.

Funding issues extend far beyond Texas

The health departments millions of Americans depend on for their shots largely rely on two federal programs: Vaccines for Children and Section 317 of the Public Health Services Act. Vaccines for Children mostly provides the actual vaccines. Section 317 provides grants for vaccines but also to run programs and get shots into arms.

Health departments generally use the programs in tandem, and since the pandemic they've often been allowed to supplement it with COVID-19 funds.

The 317 funds have been flat for years, even as costs of everything from salaries to vaccines went up. A 2023 CDC report to Congress estimated \$1.6 billion was needed to fully fund a comprehensive 317 vaccine program. Last year, Congress approved less than half that: \$682 million.

This, along with insufficient state and local funding, forces hard choices, officials and advocates said. Rural clinics may have to be closed, evening and weekend hours eliminated and efforts to fight vaccine mistrust curtailed.

Recent federal funding cuts are making things worse

In March, the Trump administration pulled billions of dollars in COVID-19 related funding for state and local health departments — \$2 billion of it slated for immunization programs for various diseases. They said it was cut because the pandemic was over, but the federal government had allowed it to be used to shore up public health infrastructure generally, including immunization programs.

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After 23 states sued, a judge put a hold on the cuts for now in those states but not in Texas or other states that didn't join the lawsuit.

Meanwhile, local health departments are not taking chances and are moving to cut services. Details are starting to trickle out.

For example, Dallas County, 350 miles from where the outbreak began, had to cancel more than 50 immunization clinics, said Dr. Philip Huang, the county's health director. New Mexico, where the outbreak has spread, lost grants that funded vaccine education. Other states have also been hit.

As the cuts further cripple already struggling health departments, alongside increasingly prominent and powerful anti-vaccine voices, doctors worry that vaccine hesitancy will keep spreading. And measles and other viruses will too.

Trump goes with his gut and the world goes along for the ride

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After President Donald Trump reversed course on his tariffs and announced he would pursue trade negotiations, he had a simple explanation for how he would make decisions in the coming weeks.

"Instinctively, more than anything else," he told reporters this past week. "You almost can't take a pencil to paper, it's really more of an instinct than anything else."

It was the latest example of how Trump loves to keep everyone on edge for his next move. Trump has not only expansively flexed the powers of the presidency by declaring emergencies and shredding political norms, he has eschewed traditional deliberative procedures for making decisions. The result is that more of life around the country and the world is subject to the president's desires, moods and grievances than ever before.

"We have a democratic leader who seems to have the authority to act as whimsically as a 19th century European autocrat," said Tim Naftali, a historian and senior research scholar at Columbia University. "He sneezes and everyone catches a cold."

The White House rejects criticism that Trump is overstepping his authority or improperly consolidating power. Administration officials frequently emphasize that the Republican president won a clear election victory and is now pursuing the agenda that he campaigned on. In this view, resisting his will, such as when courts block his executive orders, is the real threat to democracy.

"Trust in President Trump," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Friday while answering questions about economic policy. "He knows what he's doing."

The presidency has been accumulating power for years, long before Trump ran for office, and it is not unusual for administrations to veer in various directions based on political and policy priorities. But Trump's new term has been different in the early months, and he seems to recognize it.

"The second term is just more powerful," Trump marveled recently. "When I say 'do it,' they do it."

Although international trade offers the most extensive example of Trump's inclination to act unilaterally since he returned to office in January the same approach has been evident elsewhere.

He installed himself as chair of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to overhaul programming at Washington's premier cultural institution. He issued an order to purge "improper ideology" from the Smithsonian Institution's network of museums. He punished law firms associated with his opponents. He directed the Justice Department to investigate former officials who crossed him during his first term.

When Trump decided to remove regulations on household water efficiency — he wants more water flowing in showers — his executive order said the normal public comment period "is unnecessary because I am ordering the repeal."

"What the president ends up having is what he wants, which is everyone's attention all of the time," Naftali said.

Trump's ambitions stretch beyond the United States, such as his goal of annexing Greenland. Vice President JD Vance visited the island last month to talk about its strategic location in the Arctic, where Russia

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and China want to expand their influence, but also its importance to Trump himself.

"We can't just ignore the president's desires," Vance said.

Trump has spent decades trying to turn his impulses into reality, whether it's skyscrapers in Manhattan or casinos in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He once sued a journalist for allegedly underestimating his net worth. During a deposition, Trump said "it goes up and down with the markets and with attitudes and with feelings, even my own feelings."

A lawyer for the journalist appeared puzzled. "You said your net worth goes up and down based upon your own feelings?"

Trump said yes. "I would say it's my general attitude at the time that the question may be asked."

He took a similar approach into the White House for his first term. While talking about the economy with The Washington Post, Trump said "my gut tells me more sometimes than anybody else's brain can ever tell me."

Leon Panetta, who was White House chief of staff under Democratic President Bill Clinton and later served in national security roles for Democratic President Barack Obama, said there normally is a more deliberative process for critical issues.

"If you throw all of that out of the window and operate based on gut instincts, what you're doing is making every decision a huge gamble," Panetta said. "Because you just haven't done the homework to really understand all of the implications."

"When you roll dice," he added, "sometimes it's going to come up snake eyes."

Because Trump does not have a clear process for making decisions, Panetta said "that means everybody has to kowtow to him because that's the only way you're going to have any impact."

Trump has seemed to enjoy that aspect of the ongoing controversy over tariffs. During a Republican dinner this past week, he said foreign leaders were "kissing my ass" to talk him out of his trade agenda.

The saga began on April 2 when Trump declared that trade deficits — when the U.S. buys more products from some countries than it sells — represented a national emergency, enabling him to enact tariffs without congressional approval.

The stock market collapsed and then the bond market began to slide. On Wednesday, Trump backed off his plans.

Although high taxes have been left in place on imports from China, many of the other targeted tariffs have been paused for 90 days to allow time for negotiations with individual countries.

"Americans should trust in that process," said Leavitt, the press secretary.

Scott Lincicome, vice president of general economics at the conservative Cato Institute, expressed concern that the course of international trade was becoming dependent on the "whims of a single dude in the Oval Office."

Lincicome said the White House timeline to reach trade deals was "not credible" given the complexity of the issues. A more likely scenario, he said, is that the resulting agreements will be nothing more than "superficial nothingburgers" and Trump will "declare a great victory and all this stuff settles down."

Peter Navarro, Trump's trade adviser, said in an interview with Fox Business Network that there's "a whole portion of our White House working day and night" on negotiations.

"We're going to run 90 deals in 90 days," he said. "It's possible."

As tariffs put trade between China and the US in peril, Chinese businesses ponder the future

By HUIZHONG WU and DIDI TANG Associated Press

When the first two rounds of 10% tariffs hit, Zou Guoqing, a Chinese exporter, groaned but didn't find the barriers insurmountable. He gave up some of his profits and offered his client, a snow-bike factory in Nebraska, price cuts ranging from 5% to 10%. It seemed to work: The factory agreed to a new order of molds and parts.

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But when President Donald Trump announced an additional 34% universal tariff on Chinese goods on April 2, Zou, who has been exporting to the United States for more than a decade, was incredulous.

"There's not a thread of feasibility," said Zou, who does business in the eastern Chinese city of Ningbo. "It looks like I would have no choice but give up trading with the U.S."

Then came 50% more from Trump, followed by another increase that pushed the universal tariff on Chinese goods to 145%, and Zou said he now could only hope that Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping can communicate. "We are pausing the shipments," he said, "until the leaders talk."

That U.S. tariff and the retaliatory 125% tariff from China are putting businesses that trade between the U.S. and China on edge. They are fretting not only about their next orders but also their viability if there is no quick relief. Experts are worried the decades-long trade ties that have underpinned the relationship between the world's two largest economies could be unraveling.

Trade ties are tested

If the high tariff is sustained for the next six months or longer, "that would actually lead to a real effective decoupling between the American and Chinese economies," said Chen Zhiwu, professor of finance at Hong Kong University Business School.

Josh Lipsky, senior director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center, said the tariff, if kept in place, amounts to "almost a trade embargo," making it impossible for China to export low-value items such as apparel to the U.S. It also would force U.S. businesses to source elsewhere, away from China, if there should be alternatives, he said.

The Trump administration late Friday said it would exclude electronics such as smartphones and laptops from the reciprocal tariffs, which means they won't be subject to the 145% tariffs levied on China. The exemption seemed to reflect Trump's realization that his China tariffs are unlikely to shift more manufacturing of smartphones, computers and other gadgets to the U.S. any time soon.

In China, the central tariff office declared there was "no possibility for market acceptance" of U.S. goods exported to China at the current tariff level.

"Everyone's pretty worried," said Hu Jianlong, founder of Brands Factory, a consultancy that works with Chinese companies trying to break into overseas markets. "At this point in time, there's no good way forward. This situation has not resolved ... there's no final number. And so everyone's still waiting to see how this will develop."

The tariff war has come more than 20 years after China, with the help of the United States, joined the World Trade Organization and began to see its economy soar on luring foreign investments and exporting to the U.S. and other Western markets. By last year, China-U.S. trade was \$582 billion, but tensions have flared over China's widening trade imbalance with the U.S. That led to the first tariff skirmish during the first Trump term.

The trade deficit has since narrowed but stayed stubbornly high, at a time when the U.S. and other Western markets have also grown concerned about another onslaught of Chinese products such as electric vehicles.

Decouple or 'de-risk'?

During his term, Democratic President Joe Biden stressed that the U.S. was not trying to decouple from China but to "de-risk." He took the "small-yard, high-fence" approach, under which his administration put up barriers in targeted sectors such as advanced chips, artificial intelligence and quantum computing that have national security implications.

Now, Trump is declaring universal tariffs on Chinese goods but has said he's also willing to talk with Beijing. It remains unclear what the Republican president's goals might be.

"What are they looking for in those negotiations? How much is it possible to reduce these tariffs? What are the other demands apart from China removing its retaliatory tariffs that the United States wants to put forward. We don't know what that would be," said Greta Peisch, who served as the general counsel for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative in 2021-2024.

The message from China's leadership is loud and clear. It will talk only when the U.S. stops "maximum pressure and capricious and destructive behavior," said Lin Jian, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

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Li Cheng, professor of political science at the University of Hong Kong, said the Chinese leadership is upset over being singled out by Trump when the U.S. president paused reciprocal tariffs for 90 days for all other countries. Beijing wants to make sure that "Donald Trump not state one thing in the morning and say other things in the evening," Li said, and that Trump's policies on China are not hijacked by his anti-China, hawkish advisers.

With no leadership-level negotiations in the immediate future, businesses are exploring their options.

Lisa Li, who works in sales for an athletic wear manufacturer in the northern Chinese province of Hebei, said her business was negotiating with clients over whether they could split the increased costs. It's too early to say if her company is to give up on the U.S. market, she said, but it will "definitely expand other avenues for sales," such as in Australia or Europe.

Differing views, but optimism is sagging

In the eastern Chinese city of Wenzhou, a manufacturing hub, a holiday lights maker was less optimistic. Bo, who shared only his surname out of concern for retaliation, said he could "only give up" if the tariff hikes were here to stay because other markets might not work.

"In the past few years, the European market has been in a slump," Bo said. "So we had wanted to try and develop our business in the United States."

In Hong Kong, Danny Lau, who runs an aluminum-coating factory in the nearby southern Chinese city of Dongguan, said one of his U.S. clients would keep buying from him for an ongoing project but was unsure about the next project. Another client told Lau that the chances are slim to strike a deal when tariffs are so high. Lau has been exploring other markets, but he says it's not easy because some may find his high-quality products too expensive.

At a port in the Chinese city of Shanghai, ships heading to the U.S. had almost vanished by Thursday, the day after Trump's tariff on China took effect, according to a report by the financial news site Caixin. Major shipping lines were drastically cutting back on trans-Pacific routes, the report said.

For the longer term, the tariff war is likely to prompt Chinese businesses to diversify their supply chains and move part of their manufacturing capacity outside of China, and even to the United States, said Hu, the consultant.

Some might follow in the footsteps of the Tianjin steelmaking business, which gave up trading with the U.S. after both Trump and Biden raised tariffs on Chinese steel. "The best plan is to not come into contact," said David Yu, who works in the company's foreign sales department.

However, not everyone is ready to give up on the U.S. market. Zou, the exporter in Ningbo, describes the U.S. market as "reliable and without finicky demands."

"It's the best market on Earth," he said. "I am waiting for the rainbow after the storm."

Trump sits cageside at Miami UFC event in his latest appearance at a sports event

By STEPHANY MATAT and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — President Donald Trump said the standing ovation and cheers he drew when he took his seat at a UFC event in his home state of Florida were signs "we're doing a good job."

Trump shook hands with some supporters as he walked to his cageside seat Saturday night at Miami's Kaseya Center while others waved his trademark red campaign cap. The Republican president, who stayed for several hours before flying back to his home in Palm Beach, said it was a "great honor" to receive that recognition from the crowd.

"It says we're doing a good job. If we weren't doing a good job, we'd get the opposite," he told reporters accompanying him aboard Air Force One.

In the nearly three months since he has been back in office, Trump has launched a broad effort led by billionaire Elon Musk to shrink government by firing thousands of workers and cutting spending, tried unsuccessfully thus far to end Russia's war against Ukraine and impose tariffs against many countries, including close allies of the United States.

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Democrats, and even some Trump supporters, have criticized his early actions.

But at UFC, it was a night focused on the fighters in the cage.

"Every one of them came up at the end, and they were great," Trump said. "I mean, they're all warriors, modern day warriors."

At one point, fighter Dominick Reyes walked over to the side of the Octagon after winning his bout and acknowledged Trump. Reyes went to take a photo with the president after the post-fight interview.

Trump's granddaughter, Kai Trump, who attended UFC 314 with him, said it was "awesome."

The president watched as Australian Alexander Volkanovski won his 10th championship fight in a row, defeating Diego Lopes of Brazil early Sunday morning by unanimous decision in the featherweight contest.

Trump is a longtime UFC fan and sports enthusiast who has frequently attended major fights and has had a longtime friendship with Dana White, the UFC president and CEO.

It was Trump's first UFC visit since returning to the White House in January and came weeks after he attended the Saudi-sponsored LIV golf tournament at his golf club in Miami.

Trump attended the Super Bowl and Daytona 500, both in February. He was cageside at a UFC championship fight in New York in November, shortly after winning the election. Trump's close affiliation with UFC had helped boost his campaign among young male voters.

As Trump entered the Miami arena accompanied by White, the president shared an embrace with podcast host Joe Rogan. Musk and Rogan sat by Trump's side.

Also at the event were several members of his administration, including Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., FBI Director Kash Patel, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Southeast Asia water festivals begin, but earthquake recovery blunts Myanmar's celebrations

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Several Southeast Asian countries kicked off their annual water festival holiday on Sunday, but in the wake of a devastating earthquake last month, Myanmar is missing out on the fun.

The holiday is an occasion for merrymaking during what is usually the hottest time of the year. In Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, millions normally take part in a mix of raucous play with uninhibited splashing of water on friends and strangers alike, and sober ceremonies to show respect to one's elders.

Temperatures this time of year can creep above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). Many who have moved to cities for work return to their native villages and towns to reunite with their families. The celebration is normally spread over several days, culminating on the actual New Year's Day.

In Myanmar, the holiday is called Thingyan. But this year, the country is struggling to recover from the 7.7 magnitude earthquake on March 28 that devastated its central heartland, killing more than 3,600 people and leveling structures from new condos to ancient pagodas.

Central Myanmar was shaken again on Sunday by a 5.5 magnitude earthquake in one of the biggest aftershocks since the March 28 temblor.

Even before last month's quake, Myanmar was reeling from a repressive military that seized power in 2021 and is carrying out a brutal war on the pro-democracy forces trying to unseat it. In 2020, the pandemic also quashed celebrations.

Still, the holiday offered a brief respite from the grim struggles of daily life in one of the region's poorer countries, and this is the first year Myanmar could celebrate Thingyan's inclusion on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, an honor attained last December.

A few days after the quake, the military government announced that this year's festival would be observed peacefully in pursuit of traditional culture and would not include joyous singing and dancing, due to a nationwide grieving period.

People are free to celebrate privately and quietly, and items related to the festival, including water guns, are being sold in malls and stores. However, there is no government-organized entertainment. In Yangon,

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the country's largest city, major festival pavilions and decorations that were already being built in front of the City Hall were dismantled.

People's Square, a major celebration spot in Yangon, will not host the festival this year, but a traditional charity feast will be held without music and dance, the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported on Thursday.

In Yangon, the downtown area near City Hall was quiet, in sharp contrast to many past occasions.

The only visible signs of the holiday were the sights of children playing with water in the streets of residential neighborhoods, and mostly elderly people going to Buddhist monasteries and pagodas for traditional prayers.

In the capital, Naypyitaw, state-media reported Saturday that a quiet celebration of the holiday's recognition by UNESCO would include events such as applying Thanaka, a yellowish-white paste made from ground tree bark as a traditional natural cosmetic, gently washing the heads and cutting the nails of elderly people as a gesture of respect, and donating food.

Neighboring Thailand, where the holiday is called Songkran, was expected to celebrate with revelry as usual. It sees a mass exodus of the workforce in the capital, Bangkok, return to their upcountry home towns, often extending what is officially a three-day holiday into an entire working week.

Foreign tourists join locals in almost orgiastic water fights, especially in Bangkok's Khao San Road backpackers district. Water pistols are merely small arms. It is not unusual to see huge buckets of water dumped on any convenient target. Moving vehicles serve as both platforms and targets for attacks.

The holiday is historically pegged to a seasonal movement of the sun, critical to largely agrarian societies. The water hijinks originated in olden days as a ceremony to welcome rainy season. A traditional ritual still practiced by many involves cleansing images of the Buddha and washing the hands and feet of elders.

There is a darker side to the goings-on, as well. Thailand already has one of the world's highest rates of traffic fatalities, which spikes during Songkran with so many on the move and often inebriated.

Cambodia, where the holiday is called Choul Chnam Thmey, and Laos, where it is Pi Mai Lao, have similar celebrations, generally smaller in scale and less raucous than those in Thailand.

Today in History: April 14, Abraham Lincoln fatally shot at Ford's Theatre

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, April 14, the 104th day of 2025. There are 261 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was shot and mortally wounded by John Wilkes Booth during a performance of the play "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre in Washington; Lincoln was taken to a boarding house across the street and died the following morning at 7:22 am.

Also on this date:

In 1828, the first edition of Noah Webster's "American Dictionary of the English Language" was published.

In 1912, the British liner RMS Titanic collided with an iceberg in the North Atlantic at 11:40 p.m., ship's time, and began sinking. (The ship went under two and a half hours later, killing over 1,500 people.)

In 1910, William Howard Taft became the first U.S. president to throw the ceremonial first pitch at a baseball game as the Washington Senators beat the Philadelphia Athletics 3-0.

In 1935, the devastating "Black Sunday" dust storm descended upon the central Plains as hundreds of thousands of tons of airborne topsoil turned a sunny afternoon into total darkness.

In 1981, the first test flight of America's first operational space shuttle, the Columbia, ended successfully with a landing at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

In 2021, A white former suburban Minneapolis police officer, Kim Potter, was charged with second-degree manslaughter for killing 20-year-old Black motorist Daunte Wright in a shooting that ignited days of unrest. (Potter would be found guilty and serve 16 months in prison.)

Today's Birthdays: Former NYPD detective Frank Serpico is 89. Actor Julie Christie is 85. Rock musician

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Ritchie Blackmore is 80. Actor Peter Capaldi is 67. Actor Brad Garrett is 65. Actor Robert Carlyle is 64. Golf Hall of Famer Meg Mallon is 62. Baseball Hall of Famer Greg Maddux is 59. Actor Anthony Michael Hall is 57. Actor Adrien Brody is 52. Rapper Da Brat is 51. Actor Sarah Michelle Gellar is 48. Actor-producer Rob McElhenney is 48. Actor Abigail Breslin is 29.