

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, May 12

Senior Menu: Meatball, mashed potato with gravy mixed vegetables, mixed fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.

School Lunch: French bread pizza, cooked broccoli.

D.A.R.E. Graduation, 2 p.m.

Girls Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.

Junior High Track at Webster, 3 p.m.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

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

Tuesday, May 13

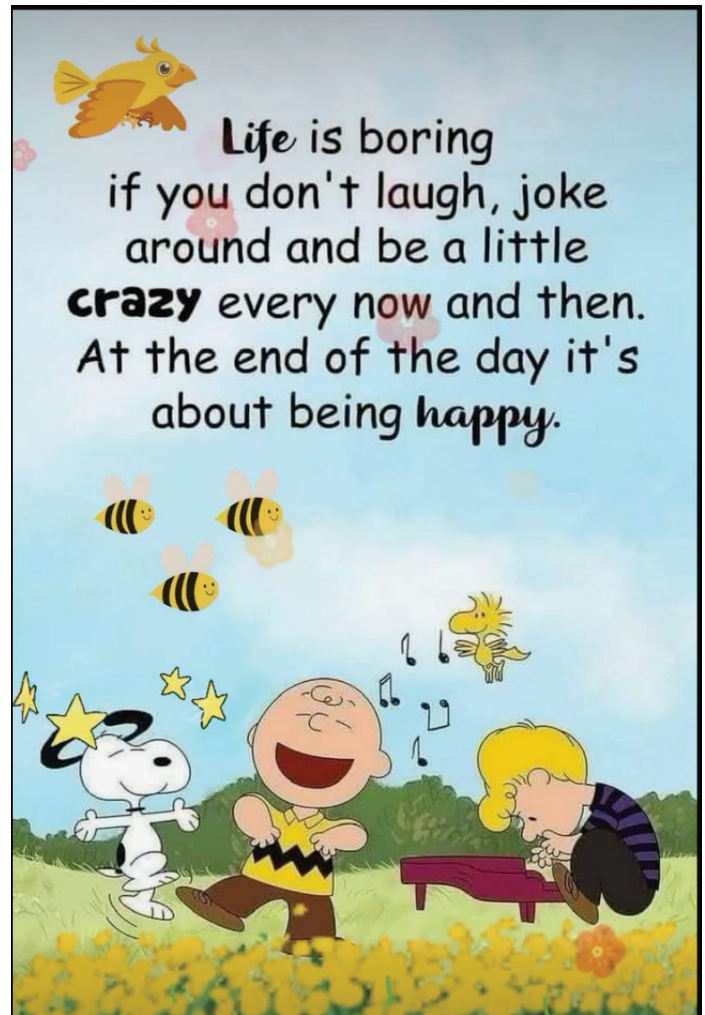
Senior Menu: Breaded chicken sandwich, scalloped potato, carrots, strawberry ambrosia.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, sweet tots.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

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



Wednesday, May 14

Senior Menu: Baked fish, rice pilaf, pea and cheese salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Chicken pasta, mixed vegetables.

Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

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

Thursday, May 15

Senior Menu: Baked turkey crunch with dressing, catalina blend, baked apples, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Cerela.

School Lunch: Sack lunch made by the kitchen.
School dismisses at noon.

End of Fourth Quarter

Northeast Conference Track at Redfield, 11 a.m.

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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.

India-Pakistan Ceasefire

India and Pakistan agreed to a US-brokered ceasefire Saturday. Despite violations yesterday, the ceasefire remains in effect as of this writing, alleviating some of the worst hostilities between the two countries in roughly 50 years.

The ceasefire ended four days of air fighting in which India is believed to have lost at least two of its most advanced fighter jets, Pakistan lost control of its airspace, and dozens of people were killed in gunfire and airstrikes. The exact toll could not be immediately determined; India and Pakistan have disputed each other's accounts. The air battle, which began May 7, is believed to have been among the largest dogfights since World War II.

The violence stems from an April 22 attack in which at least four gunmen killed 26 people, most of them Indian tourists, in the Indian-controlled region of Kashmir. India blames Pakistan for harboring terrorists.

Chimps Got the Rhythm

A new study revealed chimpanzees drum with rhythm when they bang on tree trunks and share similarities with humans in their ability to hold a beat. The discovery, in one of the closest relatives to modern humans, sheds light on the evolutionary building blocks of music.

The behavior is believed to be a form of long-distance communication and suggests the chimps employ different sequences depending on the social situation. Researchers who analyzed 11 communities of chimps across six populations and two subspecies found groups from separate regions of Africa produced different rhythms for the same context, suggesting the mammals independently developed their own methods of communication.

The study also hints at a longstanding anthropological question—despite being a common human experience, how and why humans produce music remains unclear.

The study comes on the heels of a separate observation of an individual Californian seal—named Ronan—that can keep time via rhythmic beats.

Eurovision's 69th Contest

Eurovision Song Contest begins tomorrow in Basel, Switzerland—the first time the country is hosting since 1989, one year after Celine Dion's win for the country. The competition is the world's largest annual televised music event, reaching an audience of roughly 160 million people. Thirty-seven acts are slated to perform, with several from beyond the European Union, such as Australia, Israel, and Ukraine.

The format includes two semifinals followed by the grand final. Twenty-six finalists, selected through a combination of a public voting and expert picks, include 10 winners from each semifinal, the previous year's winner, and five prequalified countries known as the "Big Five": France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK. The winner will be selected Saturday.

This year, as with last year, there have been protests over Israel's participation amid the ongoing war in Gaza. Israel has warned tourists not to wear Israeli or Jewish symbols in public places amid concern over potential attacks.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Mr. Bates vs the Post Office" and "Mr. Loverman" are top winners at 2025 BAFTAs, or British Academy Television Awards.

Pro wrestling legend Terry "Sabu" Brunk dies at age 60.

Johnny Rodriguez, pioneering Mexican American country artist, dies at age 73.

Sean "Diddy" Combs' trial on charges of sex trafficking and racketeering conspiracy continues today after delays in jury selection.

Science & Technology

Archaeologists uncover trapped family who died in Pompeii during the first-century eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Soviet-era spacecraft, Kosmos 482, falls back to Earth after five decades in space, splashes down in the Indian Ocean.

Engineers develop AI-powered headphones capable of translating multiple speakers in different languages at once, recreating conversations while retaining qualities of speakers' voices.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed Friday (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow -0.3%, Nasdaq +0.0%) as investors wait for news of US-China tariff negotiations.

OpenAI is reportedly working to renegotiate terms of its partnership with Microsoft, potentially paving the way for OpenAI to launch an initial public offering.

Saudi Arabia's Aramco reports \$26B in first-quarter net profit, beating estimates but down 4.6% from last year.

Politics & World Affairs

US Treasury Secretary touts progress after two days of negotiations with China to end tit-for-tat tariffs; details of talks to be announced this morning.

Hamas says it will release last living American hostage in Gaza within the next 48 hours as group pursues ceasefire, resumption of aid.

President Donald Trump says he will sign an executive order today ordering the Department of Health and Human Services to tie what Medicare pays for drugs to the lowest price paid in other countries.

The Trump administration is reportedly set to accept luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet from Qatar known as the 'palace in the sky'.

Newark, New Jersey, Mayor Ras Baraka (D) arrested for federal trespassing outside an immigration detention facility Friday while visiting with Democratic lawmakers amid a protest.

US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy to reduce flights to Newark Liberty International Airport amid power outages, staffing shortages.

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National poppy day is May 23!!

The Groton American Legion Auxiliary will have poppies out at these establishments May 19-23:

Ken's, Lori's Pharmacy, City Hall and the Legion.

The money we get from poppies go to help our veterans and their families.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

With the NFL draft behind us, and teams gearing up for mini-camps, there hasn't been a ton of Minnesota Vikings news to pass along. The Vikings have signed nearly their entire draft class already. And there are some great videos the team posted featuring their new draft picks – from when they got the call that would change their life, to their first time experiencing the Vikings' world-class facilities. That's about it for Vikings-related news. So this week, let's turn our attention to the other teams in the NFC North and see how they fared in the NFL draft.

The Chicago Bears had eight picks in the draft. With their first pick, the 10th overall, the Bears drafted Colston Loveland, a tight end from Michigan. It's rare that a tight end is taken so highly, especially considering Loveland was widely viewed as the 2nd best TE in the draft. New Bears' head coach Ben Johnson was with Detroit when they drafted Sam LaPorta, who has become one of the better young TEs in the league, but using a top-10 pick at the position was an... interesting move.

The Bears had three 2nd-round picks. They used the first on Luther Burden III, a wide receiver from Missouri, then they drafted Ozzy Trapilo, an offensive tackle from Boston College later in the round. With their final pick of the second round, the Bears brought in Shemar Turner, a defensive tackle from Texas A&M.

The rest of their draft: Ruben Hyppolite II, linebacker, Maryland (4th round) – Zah Frazier, cornerback, UTSA (5th round) – Luke Newman, offensive tackle, Michigan State (6th round) – Kyle Monangai, running back, Rutgers (7th round).

The Detroit Lions, unfamiliar with picking so late in the first round, had perhaps the biggest head-scratching pick on day one when they took Tyleik Williams, a defensive tackle from Ohio State. Most draft analysts had Williams as a day-two pick, so the Lions taking him in the first was questionable. Williams is a true nose tackle (6'3" 334lbs), and the Lions are hoping he can hold down the middle of their defensive line for many years to come.

On day two, the Lions continued to fortify their trenches, taking Tate Ratledge, an offensive guard from Georgia, with their 2nd round pick. In the third round, the Lions selected Isaac TeSlaa, a wide receiver from Arkansas.

The rest of their draft: Miles Frazier, offensive guard, LSU (5th round) – Ahmed Hassanein, edge rusher, Boise State (6th round) – Dan Jackson, safety, Georgia (7th round) – Dominic Lovett, wide receiver, Georgia (7th round).

The Green Bay Packers, who famously haven't taken a wide receiver in the first round since 2002 (even though their Hall of Fame quarterbacks begged them to do so), surprised many when they took Matthew Golden, a WR from Texas. Golden is on the smaller side (5'11", 191lbs), but he is fast – posting the highest 40-yard dash time at the combine (4.29 seconds).

On the second day, the Packers drafted Anthony Belton, an offensive tackle from NC State in the second round. In the third round, the Packers double-dipped at receiver when they took Savion Williams from TCU.

The rest of their draft: Barryn Sorrell, edge rusher, Texas (4th round) – Collin Oliver, linebacker, Oklahoma State (5th round) – Warren Brinson, defensive tackle, Georgia (6th round) – Micah Robinson, cornerback, Tulane (7th round) – John Williams, offensive tackle, Cincinnati (7th round).

Looking ahead, the NFL will be releasing the schedule soon. Skol!

Names Released in Butte County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: Beet Road and Reid Road, five miles north of Nisland, SD

When: 5:56 p.m. Wednesday, May 7, 2025

Driver 1: Darin Michael Hanson, 22-year-old male from Nisland, SD, Serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2000 Chevrolet S10

Seat belt Used: No

Driver 2: Joseph Lane Hanson, 24-year-old male from Nisland, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 1994 Dodge Dakota

Seat belt Used: No

Butte County, S.D.- One man died and another was seriously injured in a two-vehicle crash Wednesday evening, five miles north of Nisland, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Darin Michael Hanson, the driver of a Chevrolet S10, was traveling south on Beet Road near its intersection with Reid Road. A Dodge Dakota, driven by Joseph Lane Hanson, was traveling east on Reid Road, approaching Beet Road. The driver of the Dakota failed to yield, entering the intersection and was struck by the S10. Both vehicles came to rest in a drainage ditch.

Darin Hanson was ejected from his vehicle and flown to a Rapid City hospital with serious, non-life-threatening injuries. Joseph Hanson sustained fatal injuries.

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

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

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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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"Have you pre-habilitated today?"

On a recent morning, the first story I heard on the radio was about Pre-habilitation prior to surgery. We have all heard of rehabilitation, but have you considered pre-habilitation, or increasing your exercise before surgery?

Recent studies by Durrand, Singh and Danjoux of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have documented what was inherently known- that building up a reserve of strength before surgery pays off. Makes sense, right!



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Joanie Holm, RN, CNP

The physiological challenge of a major surgery has been linked to running a marathon. In both cases, preparation is critical. Surgery involving a major body cavity has an estimated mortality of 4%. Post-operative complications of a major surgery affect 15-40% and may increase the hospital length 2-4 fold as well as increasing readmissions.

The NIH study demonstrated that increasing preoperative functional capacity promotes recovery, reduces complications and reduces healthcare cost.

Later in the day, as I walked the track, my brain took a leap. Isn't life our chance to pre-habilitate? Wouldn't pre-habilitation help us if we caught COVID or Influenza? What if you or I suddenly need to have our appendix or gallbladder removed? What if we are in a car crash and have broken bones? What if we have a stroke or heart attack? Pre-habilitation through daily exercise, eating a balanced diet and moderate intake of harmful substances would increase our chances of survival and recovery without complications.

Today and all of the tomorrows are our chance to prepare for the possibility of poor health. We are the key member of the prehab team. Take advantage of your health today to prepare for unexpected complications. Get up and get moving!

Joanie Holm, RN is a one of the original founders of Healing Words Foundation/Prairie Doc Programming and is the current Board President. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairedoc.org, and on social media. Watch On Call with the Prairie Doc, most Thursday's at 7PM on SDPB and streaming on Facebook. Listen to Prairie Doc Radio Sunday's at 6am and 1pm.

Alex Abeln Leads Groton Area Tigers JV Past Sisseton-Britton-Webster JV Baseball

By GameChanger Media

Alex Abeln struck out 12 batters as the righty led Groton Area Tigers JV past SBW JV Baseball 7-0 on Sunday. Abeln allowed one hit and zero runs over five innings while walking three.

Groton Area Tigers JV got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Jordan Schwan tripled to center field, and Isaiah Scepaniak singled down the left field line, each scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers JV added one run in the second after John Bisbee doubled down the left field line.

Groton Area Tigers JV extended their early lead with three runs in the bottom of the third thanks to RBI singles by Schwan, Zach Fliehs, and Kason Oswald.

Bryson Hanson took the loss for SBW JV Baseball. The starter went two innings, giving up two runs (three earned) on three hits, striking out one and walking two.

Schwan drove the middle of the lineup, leading Groton Area Tigers JV with two runs batted in. The 3-hole hitter went 2-for-2 on the day. Bisbee and Schwan each collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers JV. Groton Area Tigers JV were sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Oswald had the most chances in the field with 12.

JJ Hamm led SBW JV Baseball with one hit in two at bats. SBW JV Baseball turned one double play in the game.

Groton Area Tigers JV will travel to Redfield Area JV for their next game on Wednesday.

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Karsten Fliehs's Clutch Hitting Propels Groton Area Tigers Varsity To Victory Over Sisseton-Britton-Webster Baseball

By GameChanger Media

Karsten Fliehs drove in four runs on two hits to lead Groton Area Tigers Varsity past SBW Baseball 16-5 on Sunday. In the fourth inning, Fliehs hit a grand slam to left field.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored 11 runs in the fourth inning on the way to victory. TC Schuster doubled, scoring one run, Brevin Fliehs doubled, scoring one run, Gavin Englund singled, scoring one run, Fliehs hit a grand slam to left field, an error scored one run, Fliehs tripled, scoring two runs, and a wild pitch scored one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Carter Simon doubled, scoring two runs, Nicholas Morris singled, scoring one run, and Nick Groeblichhoff drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity added one run in the third after Jarrett Erdmann grounded into a fielder's choice.

Morris earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The hurler surrendered three hits and five runs (zero earned) over five innings, striking out four and walking four. Ben Suther took the loss for SBW Baseball. The pitcher went three innings, surrendering 11 runs (six earned) on 10 hits, striking out four and walking one.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity piled up 13 hits in the game. Fliehs, Schuster, Fliehs, Morris, and Simon each collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity.

Max Dahlen, Levi Nelson, and Suther each collected one hit for SBW Baseball. Dahlen and Suther were tough to handle back-to-back in the lineup, as each drove in one run for SBW Baseball.

Next up for Groton Area Tigers Varsity is a game at Redfield Area Muskrats on Wednesday.

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Groton Area Tigers Varsity Stymied By Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers Varsity couldn't keep up with Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks and fell 13-5 on Sunday. Groton Area Tigers Varsity jumped out to the lead in the bottom of the second inning after Lincoln Krause singled, scoring two runs, and an error scored one run.

Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks flipped the game on its head in the top of the fourth, scoring six runs on four hits to take the lead, 6-3. The biggest blow in the inning was a single by Kellon Tucker that drove in two.

Kade Hauck earned the win for Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks. The righty gave up one hit and zero runs over one inning, striking out none and walking one. Nick Groebelinghoff pitched three and two-thirds innings in relief for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The hurler surrendered six hits and seven runs (four earned) while, striking out two and walking three. Brevin Fliehs took the loss for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The hurler went three and one-third innings, giving up six runs on four hits, striking out six and walking three. Kameron Hauck opened the game for Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks. The pitcher gave up one hit and three runs (two earned) over three innings, striking out four and walking four.

Krause and Nicholas Morris were a one-two punch in the lineup, as each drove in two runs for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Number eight hitter, Jarrett Erdmann, showed the depth of Groton Area Tigers Varsity's lineup, by leading them with two hits in three at bats. Groton Area Tigers Varsity had a strong eye at the plate, accumulating seven walks for the game. Fliehs and Carter Simon led the team with two bases on balls each.

Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks accumulated 10 hits in the game. Tucker, Broden Teske, Isaac Skovlund, and Damon Uecker each collected two hits for Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks. Tucker and Teske were tough to handle back-to-back in the lineup, as each drove in two runs for Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks. Marcus Olson led Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting six walks for the game. Ethan Axtell stole two bases.

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SBW Baseball 5 - 16 Groton Area Tigers Varsity

📍 Home 📅 Sunday May 11, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
SBWB	0	0	3	0	2	5	3	4
GRTN	4	0	1	11	X	16	13	5

BATTING

SBW Baseball	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Nelson #8 (SS)	3	1	1	0	0	1
C Stickland #2 (3B)	3	1	0	0	0	0
B Suther #44 (P)	3	1	1	1	0	0
M Dahlen #3 (2B)	1	0	1	1	2	0
L Crooks #5 (RF)	2	0	0	0	1	0
R Anderson #10 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	1
K Mills #31	1	0	0	0	0	1
M Burger #9 (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
C Vietor #23 (1B)	1	1	0	0	0	0
N Schul... #19 (1B)	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Grobe #00 (LF)	1	1	0	0	1	0
Totals	20	5	3	2	4	4

TB: B Suther, M Dahlen, L Nelson, **CS:** M Dahlen, **HBP:** N Schuller, **SB:** B Suther, C Stickland, L Crooks, **LOB:** 5

PITCHING

SBW Baseball	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Suther #44	3.0	10	11	6	1	4	0
C Stickland #2	1.0	3	5	1	2	1	1
Totals	4.0	13	16	7	3	5	1

L: B Suther, **P-S:** B Suther 92-58, C Stickland 37-18, **WP:** B Suther 3, C Stickland, **HBP:** B Suther 5, **BF:** B Suther 26, C Stickland 9

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (LF)	4	3	1	1	0	1
T Schuster #21	4	2	2	1	0	0
B Fliehs #6 (CF)	3	2	2	3	0	1
C Simon #4 (1B)	2	2	2	2	1	0
G Englund #18 (3B)	4	1	1	1	0	1
N Morris #17 (P)	2	3	2	1	0	0
K Fliehs #10 (C)	2	1	2	4	0	0
N Groeb... #13 (DH)	2	1	1	0	1	0
J Erdma... #00 (RF)	1	0	0	1	1	0
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
J Schwan #11	1	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	27	16	13	14	3	5

2B: C Simon 2, L Krause, B Fliehs, T Schuster, **3B:** B Fliehs, **HR:** K Fliehs, **TB:** G Englund, K Fliehs 5, C Simon 4, N Groeb... #13, L Krause 2, B Fliehs 5, T Schuster 3, N Morris 2, **HBP:** K Fliehs, C Simon, J Erdmann, B Fliehs, N Morris, **SB:** J Schwan, C Simon, L Krause, **LOB:** 7

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	IP	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Morris #17	5.0	3	5	0	4	0
Totals	5.0	3	5	0	4	0

W: N Morris, **P-S:** N Morris 84-46, **HBP:** N Morris, **BF:** N Morris 25

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Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks 13 - 5 Groton Area Tigers Varsity

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
SXVL	0	0	0	6	0	4	3	13	10	1
GRTN	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	5	7	7

BATTING

Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks			H	RBI	BB	SO
K Hauck #35 (P)	3	0	0	0	0	1
K Hauck #52 (P)	1	0	0	0	0	1
A Gunde... #20 (P)	0	0	0	0	1	0
D Uecker #8 (SS)	4	1	2	0	0	0
L Loban #9 (DH)	3	1	0	0	1	1
B Danzeis... #1 (CF)	2	1	1	0	0	1
I Skovlund #7 (CF)	2	2	2	1	0	0
E Axtell #30 (LF)	3	3	1	0	1	1
K Tucker #11 (2B)	3	3	2	2	1	1
B Teske #16 (3B)	4	1	2	2	0	1
M Olson #3	2	0	0	1	2	1
H Steinh... #19 (RF)	4	0	0	1	0	0
B Moe #6 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	0
CR: C Teske #2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	33	13	10	7	6	8

2B: B Teske, **HR:** I Skovlund, **TB:** K Tucker 2, I Skovlund 5, E Axtell, D Uecker 2, B Danzeisen, B Teske 3, **CS:** D Uecker, **SB:** I Skovlund, E Axtell 2, **LOB:** 5

PITCHING

Sioux Valley Varsity Cossacks			ER	BB	SO	HR	
K Hauck #35	3.0	1	3	2	4	4	0
K Hauck #52	1.0	1	0	0	1	0	0
A Gunderson #200	5	2	2	2	4	4	0
Totals	7.0	7	5	4	7	8	0

W: K Hauck, **P-S:** K Hauck 19-10, A Gunderson 57-35, K Hauck 73-38, **WP:** A Gunderson, K Hauck, **HBP:** A Gunderson, K Hauck 2, **BF:** K Hauck 5, A Gunderson 17, K Hauck 18

Groton Area Tigers Varsity	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
L Krause #2 (LF)	5	1	1	2	0	1
N Morris #17 (SS)	5	0	1	2	0	1
B Fliehs #6 (P)	2	0	1	0	2	0
C Simon #4 (1B)	3	0	1	0	2	0
G Englund #18 (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
N Groebl... #13 (RF)	3	1	1	0	1	0
K Fliehs #10 (C)	2	0	0	0	1	1
J Erdma... #00 (CF)	3	2	2	1	1	1
K Antonsen #7 (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
T Schu... #21 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Schwan #11	1	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	29	5	7	5	7	8

2B: N Morris, **3B:** B Fliehs, **TB:** C Simon, N Groeblinghoff, L Krause, B Fliehs 3, N Morris 2, J Erdmann 2, **SAC:** K Antonsen, **HBP:** G Englund, K Fliehs, B Fliehs, **SB:** N Groeblinghoff, B Fliehs, J Erdmann, **LOB:** 14

Groton Area Tigers Varsity			R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Fliehs #6	3.1	4	6	6	3	6	0
N Groe... #13	3.2	6	7	4	3	2	1
Totals	7.0	10	13	10	6	8	1

L: B Fliehs, **P-S:** N Groeblinghoff 80-48, B Fliehs 66-40, **WP:** N Groeblinghoff 2, **BF:** N Groeblinghoff 21, B Fliehs 18

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SBW JV Baseball 0 - 7 Groton Area Tigers JV

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	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
SBWJ	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
GRTN	2	1	3	1	X	7	9	0

BATTING

SBW JV Baseball	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
J Hamm #11 (LF)	2	0	1	0	0	0
L Nielsen #22 (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
T Acre #7 (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
J Muehler #50 (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Chaz #23 (P)	2	0	0	0	0	1
L Kilker #6 (SS)	1	0	0	0	1	1
E Symens #14 (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
B Hanson #17 (P)	0	0	0	0	1	0
K Deutsch #20	1	0	0	0	0	1
P Sichmiller #4	0	0	0	0	1	0
N Schuller #19 (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
C Grobe #00	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	16	0	1	0	3	12

TB: J Hamm, **SB:** J Hamm, **LOB:** 4

PITCHING

SBW JV Baseball	P	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Hanson #17	2.0	3	2	3	2	1	0
Chaz #23	1.2	6	4	0	1	2	0
Totals	3.2	9	7	4	3	3	0

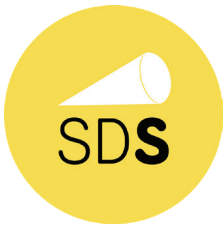
L: B Hanson, **P-S:** Chaz 42-28, B Hanson 46-25, **HBP:** B Hanson, **BF:** Chaz 13, B Hanson 11

Groton Area Tigers JVB	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
A Abeln #5 (P)	3	1	0	0	0	0
T Schust... #21 (SS)	1	1	0	0	0	1
W Borg #12 (SS)	1	0	0	0	0	0
J Schwan #11 (CF)	2	2	2	2	0	0
X Ellenb... #8 (CF)	1	1	0	0	0	1
I Scean... #25 (3B)	1	0	1	1	0	0
S Crank #20 (3B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Z Fliehs #23 (2B)	2	1	1	1	0	0
L Shilha... #22 (RF)	0	0	0	0	1	0
N Scea... #1 (RF)	1	0	1	0	0	0
B Fliehs #19 (1B)	1	0	0	0	1	0
K Oswald #24 (C)	2	0	1	1	1	0
J Bisbee #15 (LF)	2	1	2	1	0	0
G Kroll #14 (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
K Antonsen #3	1	0	1	0	0	0
Totals	20	7	9	6	3	3

2B: J Bisbee, **3B:** J Schwan, **TB:** Z Fliehs, N Scepianiak, J Schwan 4, J Bisbee 3, K Oswald, K Antonsen, I Scepianiak, **HBP:** T Schuster, **SB:** Z Fliehs, A Abeln, T Schuster, N Scepianiak, J Schwan, **LOB:** 3

Groton Area Tigers JVB	P	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Abeln #5	5.0	1	0	0	3	12	0
Totals	5.0	1	0	0	3	12	0

W: A Abeln, **P-S:** A Abeln 83-55, **BF:** A Abeln 19



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Labor and delivery closures drive South Dakota to a maternal care 'precipice'

In rural areas where pregnancy requires 'a lot of praying,' providers fear further damage from potential Medicaid cuts

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 11, 2025 8:43 AM

Shelsey Klein was 33 weeks pregnant and crying when she stormed into the Winner Regional Health CEO's office.

She found out through social media in December that the hospital planned to close its labor and delivery unit in February, a week before she was due to deliver her baby. She and her husband lectured the CEO about the stress the announcement put on their family and asked him what families like theirs were expected to do.

"You don't tell a very heavy, pregnant woman who is emotional that all of a sudden her plans of where she's having the baby will change," Klein said.

She lives on a ranch outside of White River, a half hour's drive away from the Winner hospital, and delivered her three other children there. She wanted the same experience for her fourth.

Would she be delivering her baby in the emergency room with a doctor who wasn't trained in obstetrics?

Would they have the tools to ensure her comfort and safety in case things went awry?

Or would she establish care with a new obstetrician at a hospital more than a two-hour round trip away, taking time off from her teaching job to make appointments and juggling her children's care and her husband's work on the ranch?

That stress of making those choices is the reality for mothers across South Dakota as more rural hospitals close their labor and delivery units, creating maternal care deserts. Some providers worry proposed cuts to Medicaid will exacerbate the issue, forcing more rural hospitals to close their labor and delivery units or close entirely.

Winner Regional Hospital delayed its closure from Feb. 1 to the beginning of March, after receiving pushback from community members and patients like Klein. The 39-year-old delivered her baby girl at the hospital on Feb. 2.

Making the choice: Driving the distance

South Dakota reports the second highest infant mortality rate in the country, according to the latest data from the National Center for Health Statistics. It also reports the second highest percentage of counties identified as maternal care deserts, according to March of Dimes. Pregnancy-associated deaths in the state increased 146% in the last decade, according to the state Health Department.

Some providers identify lack of maternal care access as drivers of the state's elevated maternal and infant risk. About 58% of South Dakota counties don't have birthing facilities, according to March of Dimes, and most of those counties overlap with tribal communities. The state's infant death rate in 2022 was 7.78 per 1,000 live births, and 20.5 per 1,000 births among Native Americans.

More than a hundred rural hospitals in the U.S. have stopped delivering babies since 2021, according to the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform, often due to physician shortages or finances. Seventeen of South Dakota's 49 rural hospitals still provide labor and delivery services, according to the

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report. One unit is at risk of closing.

South Dakota hasn't experienced a decline in its birth rate like other states, seeing an increase around 2% between 2023 and 2024. But fewer providers are trained in obstetrics, said Emma Bye, an obstetrician-gynecologist at Yankton Medical Clinic in southeastern South Dakota.

"It's terrifying what we have going on in our state," Bye said. "We're at a precipice. It's scary to be a provider."

Winner is the only rural hospital in South Dakota to close its delivery ward so far this year. Sisseton's Coteau des Prairies Health Care System in northeastern South Dakota, in a town of about 2,400 and caring for patients on the Lake Traverse Reservation and surrounding rural areas, stopped deliveries last year.

The Philip hospital in central South Dakota hasn't delivered babies for over two decades. Most women in the area plan to deliver their children nearly an hour and a half drive away in Rapid City or Pierre, said Lacey Hamill, a stay-at-home mother of 3-year-old and 20-month-old girls.

Hamill's family lives on a ranch about 35 miles north of Philip. She made her prenatal care appointments in Philip, but had to drive to Rapid City for ultrasound appointments since the local hospital doesn't have the equipment. Once patients near their 36th week of gestation, they're referred to an obstetrician in Rapid City or Pierre to develop a relationship before delivery.

The former nurse drove with her toddler to the first few appointments in her third trimester. But it was too much of a hassle.

"I asked, 'Are you just going to check my blood pressure and tell me I'm doing fine? I can do that at home,'" Hamill said. "I have a fetal monitor checking device at home. I kept a log book. Driving four hours round trip with a toddler wasn't in the books for me."

Her second daughter was born hours before Hamill was scheduled to be induced. She and her husband had booked a hotel room 10 minutes from the Rapid City hospital. The baby was born within an hour of their arrival.

"Had we been home, I would have had her on the interstate," Hamill said, adding that for rural South Dakotans pregnancy is "a lot of praying that you make it to where you need to be."

Since the Winner hospital stopped delivering babies, average daily deliveries at the rural Cherry County Hospital in Valentine, Nebraska, doubled from 0.6 to 1.4, said Jesse Wint, chief nursing officer. The hospital is 10 miles from the South Dakota border and 74 miles from Winner.

For South Dakotans in counties west of Winner, it's one of the closest options. Pierre is the next closest, and the Indian Health Service on the Pine Ridge Reservation has a delivery ward for tribal members. It is the only IHS facility in the state with an obstetrics ward, said Meghan Curry O'Connell, chief public health officer at the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board.

A lack of choice: Delivering in the ER

For people who lack transportation, the distance from a hospital that delivers babies increases the likelihood of high risk pregnancies, Curry O'Connell said. People might be forced to deliver in an ambulance, in their car or in a hospital emergency room.

Winner Regional Health has delivered two babies in its emergency room since it closed its labor and delivery ward, said CEO Brian Williams. Before Hamill left her nursing job in Philip, she helped deliver twins in the emergency room.

The Wagner Community Hospital, amid the lands of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, delivers about six babies a year in its emergency room, said TiAnna Smith, an ER physician and chief medical officer at the hospital.

Each time a pregnant patient enters the ER, Smith said, nurses and doctors are "scared." Obstetrics aren't emphasized in their training, patients can't get an epidural, and the facility lacks surgeons or anesthesia if a cesarean section is needed or if there are severe complications.

Bye often tries to coach staff over the phone, since she is one of the closest obstetricians in the area and holds a clinic each week at the Wagner IHS facility.

"It's really difficult to streamline care when you have a lot of midlevel providers terrified of these situa-

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tions coming to their doorstep," Bye said.

About half of Wagner's emergency deliveries involve active substance use, Smith said, which can lead to premature deliveries. Many patients deal with other complications that increase the risk, such as diabetes and hypertension. And many emergency deliveries occur among women who don't have reliable transportation or haven't regularly attended prenatal visits.

If they haven't gone to prenatal care appointments, the doctors don't have records of how far along they are or what complications they may have.

"Usually, as soon as mom hits the ER door we're calling for a flight team," Smith said.

Charles Mix County, which includes Wagner, is not considered a maternal care desert according to the March of Dimes or the state Department of Health. But a facility in Platte closed its labor and delivery ward about a decade ago. There's a midwife in Platte who's 50 miles away from Wagner and can't intervene if surgery is needed.

"If we're considered 'full access,' then that paints a lot of concern for areas that have even less access," Smith said.

Talk of Medicaid cuts threaten maternal health, rural vitality

President Donald Trump and Republican members of Congress are considering major cuts to Medicaid funding. Bye expects South Dakota mothers and babies would feel the consequences within six months. Medicaid is a federal-state health insurance program for people with low income.

"You're looking at a mom who is already poor and doesn't have health insurance coverage from any other source, who lives in a rural setting and has to drive two and a half hours for an appointment that won't be covered, who has to spend time away from her family or miss work. That's an insurmountable barrier," Bye said. "You're not going to get those moms to come to their appointments."

Rural hospitals will start closing within a year or two of the decision, Bye expects, harming not just Medicaid patients but anyone living in a rural community.

Nearly a quarter of people in rural communities are covered by Medicaid, including 47% of all births, making the program a significant source of income for OB-GYNs. They would see their budgets decreased if patients lose access to the program. Rural hospitals that are able to stay open might have to cut some services they offer — like labor and delivery — to keep their accounts from going too far into the red.

"You have hospitals across the state that you may not know about, that haven't been published about, but they're operating in the red already," Bye said. "If you add Medicaid cuts, it could be catastrophic."

In addition to asking South Dakota's congressional delegates to refrain from cutting Medicaid when she visited their offices in March, Bye advocated for the Rural Obstetrics Readiness Act. The bill, first introduced in 2024, would establish new federal grants for rural health care systems to purchase equipment for obstetrics and create a telecommunications pilot program.

The Wagner hospital relies heavily on telemedicine to supplement its care, including emergency and neonatal intensive care. Expanding that to obstetric telemedicine would improve the care they provide for ER deliveries, instead of relying on phone calls to OBs more than an hour away.

Williams, with Winner Regional Health, hopes to recruit OB-GYNs to reopen the labor and delivery ward, but cutting Medicaid would make that harder. About 80% of babies delivered at the hospital last year were on Medicaid.

The hospital is seeing more and more "government payers" in the health care system, Williams said, adding that he understands the cost of the federal government covering an increasing number of patients.

"If they were to disappear it'd make it difficult for us," Williams said. He's concerned about how Medicaid cuts will "affect us and our viability."

The Winner hospital is the largest employer in Tripp County, Williams said. If it's forced to close, that'll impact surrounding counties. And once a main industry is lost, it'll be hard to build it back.

"We talk about wanting a stronger economic powerhouse in the U.S.," Williams said. "You can't do that if you don't have healthy people."

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

Rural patients face tough choices when their hospitals stop delivering babies

More than 100 rural hospitals have ended deliveries since 2021

BY: ARIELLE ZIONTS, KFF HEALTH NEWS - MAY 11, 2025 8:41 AM

WINNER — Sophie Hofeldt planned to receive prenatal care and give birth at her local hospital, 10 minutes from her house. Instead, she's driving more than three hours round trip for her appointments.

The hospital, Winner Regional Health, recently joined the increasing number of rural hospitals shuttering their birthing units.

"It's going to be a lot more of a stress and a hassle for women to get the health care that they need because they have to go so much further," said Hofeldt, who has a June 10 due date for her first child.

Hofeldt said longer drives mean spending more on gas — and a higher risk of not making it to the hospital in time. "My main concern is having to give birth in a car," she said.

More than a hundred rural hospitals have stopped delivering babies since 2021, according to the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform, a nonprofit organization. Such closures are often blamed on shortages of staff and money.

About 58% of South Dakota counties have no birthing facilities, the second-highest rate among states, after North Dakota, according to March of Dimes. And the South Dakota health department says pregnant women and infants in the state, especially those who are Black or Native American, experience high rates of complications and death.

Winner Regional Health serves rural communities, including parts of the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation, in South Dakota and Nebraska. It delivered 107 babies last year, down from 158 in 2021, said CEO Brian Williams.

The nearest birthing hospitals are in rural towns an hour or more from Winner. But several women said driving to those facilities would take them through areas without reliable cellphone service, which could be a problem if they have an emergency along the way.

KFF Health News spoke with five patients from the Winner area who planned to deliver at Avera St. Mary's Hospital in Pierre, about 90 miles from Winner, or at one of the large medical centers in Sioux Falls, 170 miles away.

Hofeldt and her boyfriend drive every three weeks to her prenatal appointments at the Pierre hospital, which serves the small capital city and vast surrounding rural area. She'll have to make weekly trips closer to her due date. Neither of their jobs provides paid time off for such appointments.

"When you have to go to Pierre, you have to take almost the whole day off," said Hofeldt, who was born at the Winner hospital.

That means forfeiting pay while spending extra money on travel. Not everyone has gas money, let alone access to a car, and bus services are scarce in rural America. Some women also need to pay for child care during their appointments. And when the baby comes, family members may need to pay for a hotel.

Amy Lueking, Hofeldt's doctor in Pierre, said when patients can't overcome these barriers, obstetricians can give them home monitoring devices and offer phone- or video-based care. Patients can also receive prenatal care at a local hospital or clinic before connecting with a doctor at a birthing hospital, Lueking said.

However, some rural areas don't have access to telehealth. And some patients, such as Hofeldt, don't want to split up their care, form relationships with two doctors, and deal with logistics like transferring

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medical records.

During a recent appointment, Lueking glided an ultrasound device over Hofeldt's uterus. The "woosh-woosh" rhythm of the fetal heartbeat thumped over the monitor.

"I think it's the best sound in the whole wide world," Lueking said.

Hofeldt told Lueking she wanted her first delivery to be "as natural as possible."

But ensuring a birth goes according to plan can be difficult for rural patients. To guarantee they make it to the hospital on time, some schedule an induction, in which doctors use medicine or procedures to stimulate labor.

Katie Larson lives on a ranch near Winner in the town of Hamill, population 14. She had hoped to avoid having her labor induced.

Larson wanted to wait until her contractions began naturally, then drive to Avera St. Mary's in Pierre. But she scheduled an induction in case she didn't go into labor by April 13, her due date.

Larson ended up having to reschedule for April 8 to avoid a conflict with an important cattle sale she and her husband were preparing for.

"People are going to be either forced to pick an induction date when it wasn't going to be their first choice or they're going to run the risk of having a baby on the side of the road," she said.

Lueking said it's very rare for people to give birth while heading to the hospital in a car or ambulance. But last year, she said, five women who planned to deliver in Pierre ended up delivering in other hospitals' emergency rooms after rapidly progressing labor or weather made it too risky to drive long distances.

Nanette Eagle Star's plan was to deliver at the Winner hospital, five minutes from home, until the hospital announced it would be closing its labor and delivery unit. She then decided to give birth in Sioux Falls, because her family could save money by staying with relatives there.

Eagle Star's plan changed again when she went into early labor and the weather was too dangerous to drive or take a medical helicopter to Sioux Falls.

"It happened so fast, in the middle of a snowstorm," she said.

Eagle Star delivered at the Winner hospital after all, but in the ER, without an epidural pain blocker since no anesthesiologist was available. It was just three days after the birthing unit closed.

The end of labor and delivery services at Winner Regional Health isn't just a health issue, local women said. It also has emotional and financial impacts on the community.

Eagle Star fondly recalls going to doctor appointments with her sisters when she was a child. As soon as they arrived, they'd head to a hallway with baby photos taped to the wall and begin "a scavenger hunt" for Polaroids of themselves and their relatives.

"On both sides it was just filled with babies' pictures," Eagle Star said. She remembers thinking, "look at all these cute babies that were born here in Winner."

Hofeldt said many locals are sad their babies won't be born in the same hospital they were.

Anora Henderson, a family physician, said a lack of maternity care can lead to poor outcomes for infants. Those babies may develop health problems that will require lifelong, often expensive care and other public support.

"There is a community effect," she said. "It's just not as visible and it's farther down the road."

Henderson resigned in May from Winner Regional Health, where she delivered vaginal births and assisted on cesarean sections. The last baby she delivered was Eagle Star's.

To be designated a birthing hospital, facilities must be able to conduct C-sections and provide anesthesia 24/7, Henderson explained.

Williams, the hospital's CEO, said Winner Regional Health hasn't been able to recruit enough medical professionals trained in those skills.

For the last several years, the hospital was only able to offer birthing services by spending about \$1.2 million a year on temporary physicians, he said, and it could no longer afford to do that.

Another financial challenge is that many births at rural hospitals are covered by Medicaid, the federal and state program serving people with low incomes or disabilities. The program typically pays about half of what private insurers do for childbirth services, according to a 2022 report by the U.S. Government

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Accountability Office.

Williams said about 80% of deliveries at Winner Regional Health were covered by Medicaid.

Obstetric units are often the biggest financial drain on rural hospitals, and therefore they're frequently the first to close when a hospital is struggling, the GAO report said.

Williams said the hospital still provides prenatal care and that he'd love to restart deliveries if he could hire enough staff.

Henderson, the physician who resigned from the Winner hospital, has witnessed the decline in rural maternity care over decades.

She remembers tagging along with her mother for appointments before her sister was born. Her mother traveled about 100 miles each way after the hospital in the town of Kadoka shuttered in 1979.

Henderson practiced for nearly 22 years at Winner Regional Health, sparing women from having to travel to give birth like her mother did.

Over the years, she took in new patients as a nearby rural hospital and then an Indian Health Service facility closed their birthing units. Then, Henderson's own hospital stopped deliveries.

"What's really frustrating me now is I thought I was going to go into family medicine and work in a rural area and that's how we were going to fix this, so people didn't have to drive 100 miles to have a baby," she said.

Arielle Zions, rural health care correspondent for KFF Health News, is based in South Dakota. She primarily covers South Dakota and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, where she reported on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at the Nogales International, on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Arielle lives in Rapid City with her cat, Sully.

OPENING MAY 2ND
CLOSING JUNE 2ND

WEBER LANDSCAPING GREENHOUSE

620 WEST THIRD AVENUE

GROTON

HOURS OF OPERATION

M-F 10-6

SAT 10-4

SUN 12-4



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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: How is air quality across the U.S. these days? -- Paul Jackson, Washington, DC

Air quality is defined as the degree to which the air of a set place is pollutant-free. In the United States, air quality is measured through the Air Quality Index (AQI) created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The AQI uses six categorizations of air quality, from Green (0-50) to Maroon (301<); the higher the index, the greater the pollution and health concern. To the EPA, air values below 100 are adequate, while above 100 means unhealthy air, especially affecting minority and low-income groups who, according to the American Lung Association, are disproportionately affected by air pollutants.



Air quality has never been better across the United States, but some communities still struggle with bad air days. Credit: Daniil Vishnevskiy, Pexels.com.

In 1970, President Nixon passed the Clean Air Act, creating federal and state regulations on emissions from both industrial and mobile sources. This regulation drastically improved American air quality. Since the 1970s, the emissions from key pollutants like carbon monoxide, lead and sulfur dioxide have decreased by 78 percent. EPA data shows that even through prioritizing public health and regulating contamination, "the U.S. economy remained strong, growing 272 percent over the same time."

U.S. air has improved in recent decades, but it must still address concerns. In 2023, some 140 million Americans lived in areas below AQI standards. Moreover, with recent wildfires and extreme heat waves, this number will increase by 50 percent in coming decades. Despite federal regulations, air pollution grew between the years 2010 and 2016, and because the EPA recognizes wildfires as "exceptional events" that are not counted against quality, the AQI may not be a completely accurate measure of air quality.

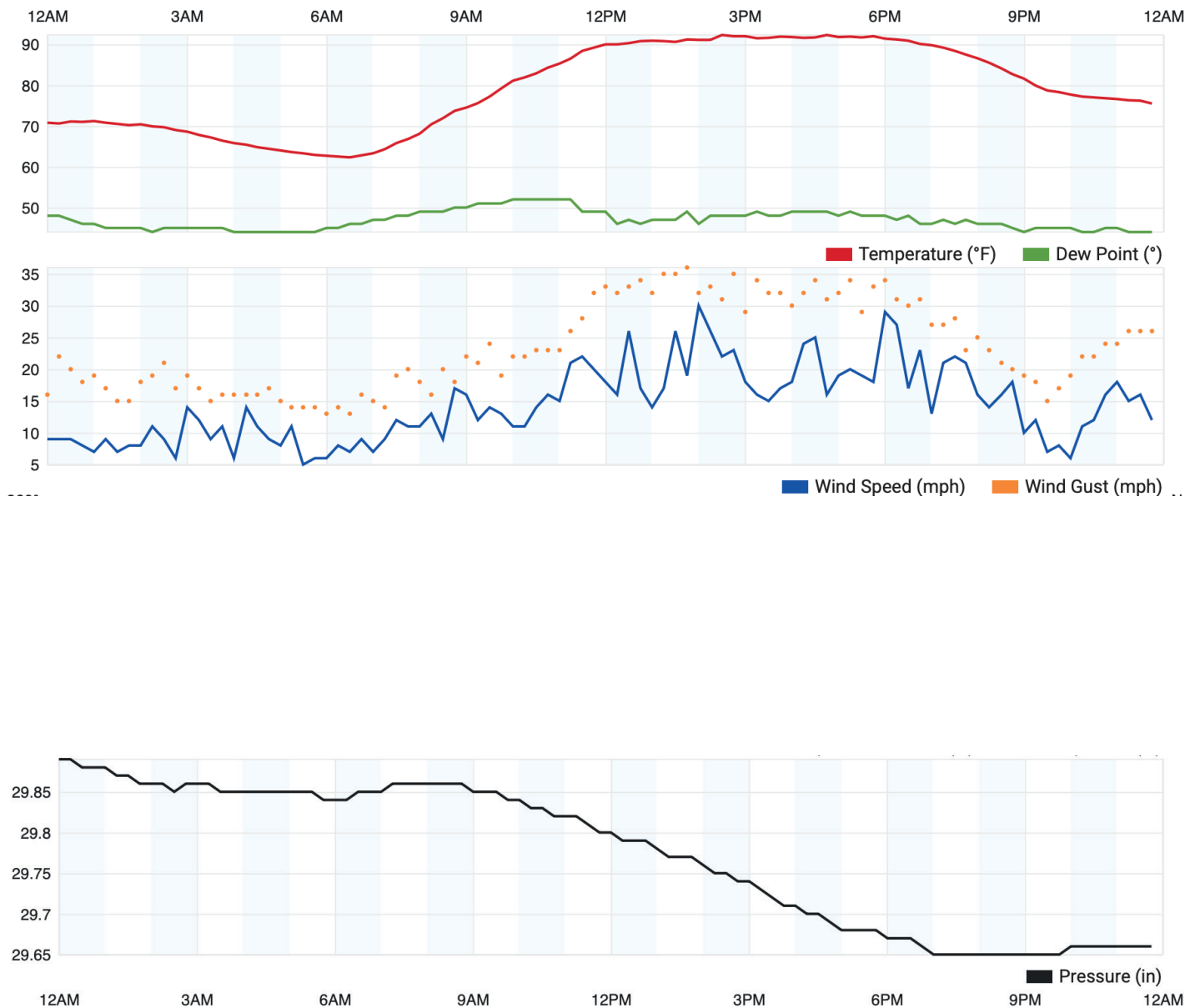
"If we're going to start thinking about solutions, we have to start combating the origin of the air pollutants, which are wildfires and extreme heat," Jeremy Porter, head of climate implications at First Street, a research company focused on climate risk financial modeling, told The Guardian.

To help improve air quality in individual spheres, citizens should strive for sustainable and climate-conscious practices in their everyday lives. This can mean investing in electric lawn mowers, using water-based cleaners to avoid harsh chemicals, carpooling to work, using less gas and turning off idling car engines. We can also improve air in our communities by starting recycling programs, setting community-wide emission goals and creating local low-emission zones. National organizing is also a great way to advocate for sustainable environmental practices. This can be done through taking the American Lung Stand Up for Clean Air Pledge, raising awareness on social media, researching local air policy, and urging state representatives to pass conservation-focused bills.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Red Flag Warning				
Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
High: 93 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 92 °F	Low: 63 °F	High: 88 °F
Hot and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy	Hot and Breezy	Mostly Clear then Slight Chance Showers	Breezy. Mostly Sunny then Chance T-storms



Red Flag Warning Through Monday

May 11, 2025
10:07 PM

Key Messages

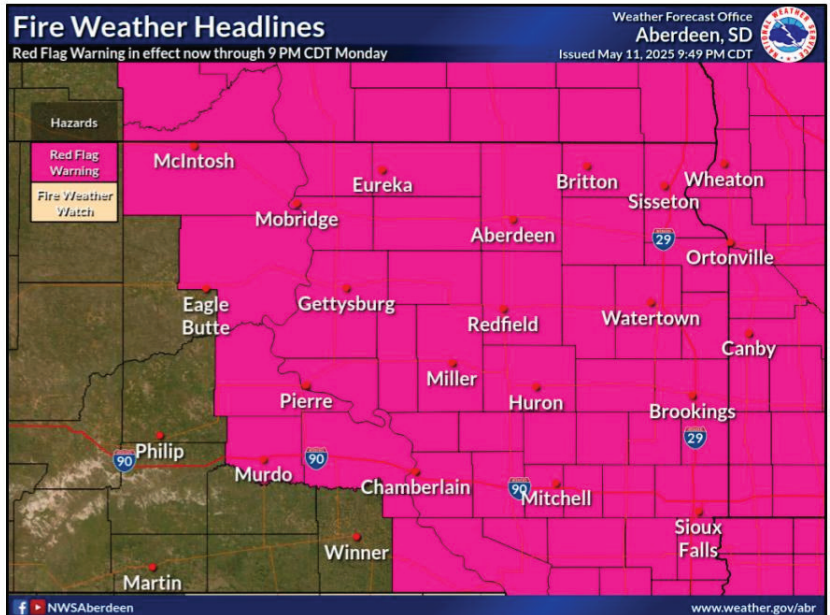
- Strong wind and low humidity combine to create the potential for fire weather concerns **through at least Monday.**
 - ◆ Any fires that ignite will spread rapidly and become difficult to control or suppress.
- Blowing dust may reduce visibility in some areas on Monday.
 - ◆ Use caution while traveling around the area.

NEW Important Updates

- The Red Flag warning continues through Monday afternoon/evening.

Next Scheduled Briefing

- Monday morning.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Hot temperatures, very dry air, and windy conditions will continue into Monday, with critical fire weather conditions.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89.3 °F at 2:50 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:20 AM

Wind: 39 mph at 4:33 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 51 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1900

Record Low: 17 in 1946

Average High: 69

Average Low: 43

Average Precip in May.: 1.32

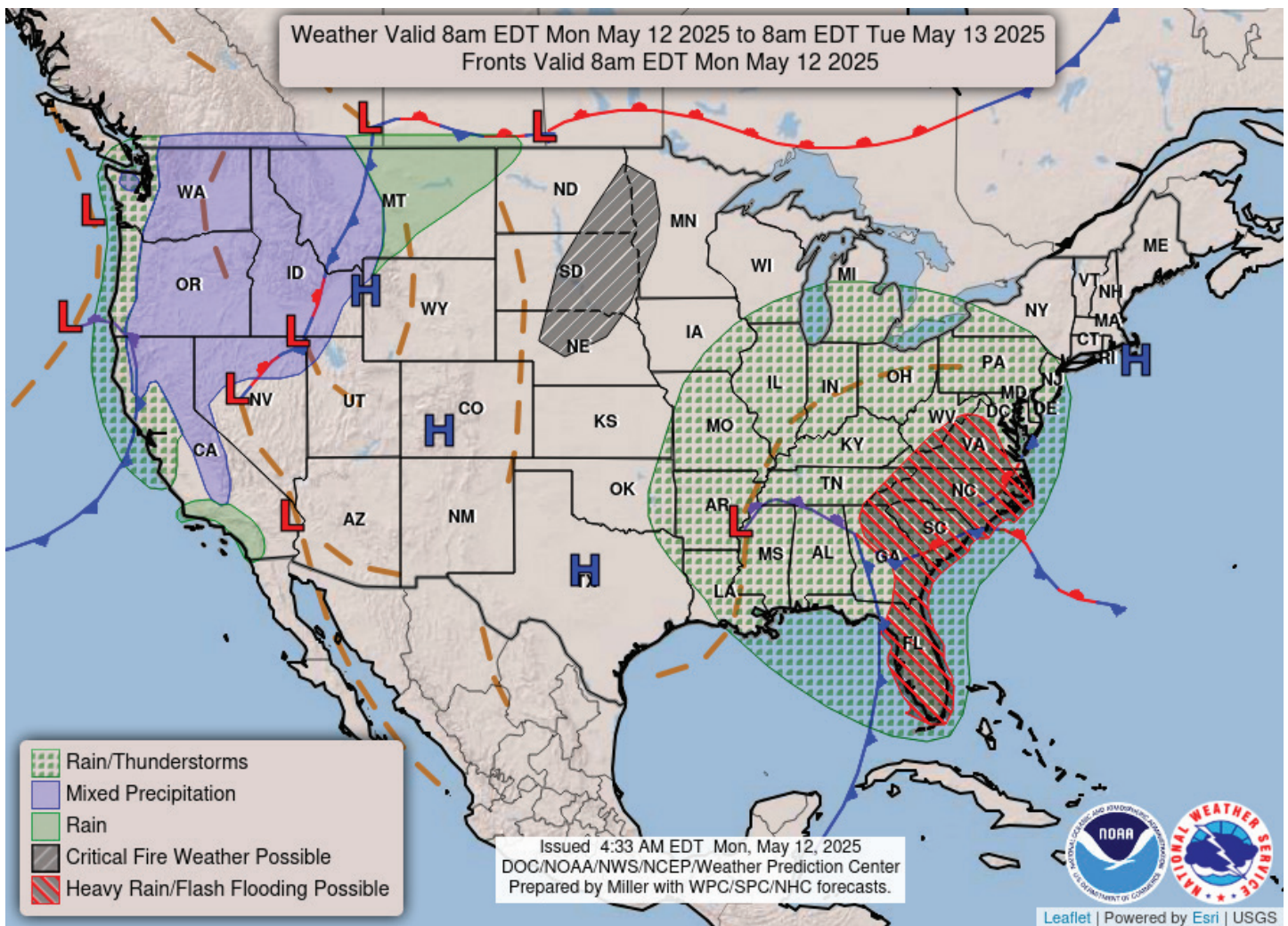
Precip to date in May.: 0.30

Average Precip to date: 5.29

Precip Year to Date: 2.93

Sunset Tonight: 8:54:29 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:01:48 am



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Today in Weather History

May 12th, 1984: An F3 tornado wiped out seven farms, crippled fifteen others, killed livestock and scattered several cars and machinery in its path. The tornado first touched down seven miles north and one mile east of Clark and moved southeast through the southwestern sections of Henry until it dissipated at Grover in Codrington County. The path of destruction began on a farm where two barns, a steel grain bin, and a pole barn were demolished, and machinery was damaged. As the tornado moved further southeast, it struck the southwest sections of Henry and split into two tornadoes that moved in two different directions. One went to the northeast, inflicted no damage, and dissipated, while the other went southeast and continued its destruction path to Grover. Small hail, accumulation to fifteen inches deep, was experienced at Henry, and tornado damage included broken windows, numerous homes, and three trailer homes were demolished. Eighty power poles and several miles of power lines were lost along the path, affecting power to over 1,000 people. A small plane, southwest of Garden City, was wrapped around a pole.

1934 - A dust storm darkened skies from Oklahoma to the Atlantic coast. (David Ludlum)

1971 - Duststorms suddenly reduced visibilities to near zero on Interstate Highway 10 near Casa Grande AZ. Chain reaction accidents involving cars and trucks resulted, killing seven persons. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - In Texas, A cloudburst dumped sixteen inches of rain north of New Braunfels sending a thirty foot wall of water down Bluders Creek into the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers washing away people, houses and automobiles. The flood claimed 18 lives and caused more than twenty million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - A late season snowstorm struck the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies. The storm produced 46 inches of snow at Coal Creek Canyon, located near Boulder. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A heat wave persisted in central California. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Fresno CA and 102 degrees at Sacramento CA were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the western U.S. Eight cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Pendleton OR with a high of 92 degrees and Phoenix AZ with a reading of 106 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms associated with a low pressure system stalled over New York State drenched Portland ME with 4.50 inches of rain in 24 hours. Rains of 5 to 7 inches soaked the state of Maine over a four day period causing 1.3 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Texas and the Central Gulf Coast States into Missouri and Illinois. Thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes, including one which injured four persons at Doloroso MS. Thunderstorms also produced hail three inches in diameter west of Vicksburg MS, and wind gusts to 83 mph in southern Illinois, north of Vevay Park and at the Coles County Airport. High winds and heavy rain caused 1.6 million dollars crop damage in Calhoun County IL, and in southeastern Louisiana, Saint Joseph was deluged with eight inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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"Pay attention to what I say...listen closely to my words and do not let them out of your sight...and keep them within your heart," wrote Solomon.

Most of us grow up hearing the command: "Pay attention!"

It is a normal part of everyone's vocabulary — especially parents and teachers.

And there are times when we do "pay attention" and accept the "command" and times when we do not. "Paying attention" is a choice, and we all have memories of when we wish we had chosen to do what we were asked to "pay attention to...." And, there are times when we did pay "attention," and it made no difference.

"Sight" and "heart," however, when attached to "pay attention" elevate its significance.

We have talked about the word "heart." It refers to our "emotions and wills," our "attitudes and values."

In other words, our heart is the "real me," our "true self" or the "sum total" of all I am: word, thought, and deed.

It's who I am when I think no one is watching me.

Planting "wisdom" within our hearts is a very important responsibility.

There is an obvious cycle that flows from the head to the heart and from the heart to the hand — or, our behavior.

So, in essence, we can actually "see" what comes from our hearts and the hearts of others.

We may never see anyone's "heart," but we can certainly "see" what they have "planted" in their hearts.

The same is true of us. Others who watch us — our families and friends, our associates at work, and anyone anywhere — will know eventually what's "in" our hearts by what we do and say.

"Out of the depth of the heart" come words and deeds that are the real "me!"

Prayer:

Lord, we can never fool You, and we only fool others briefly.

We only fool ourselves if we think we are more than we are.

Forgive our folly and cleanse us!

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture:

"My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart." — Proverbs 4:20-21

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: 05.09.25

9 10 12 48 60 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$110,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 29 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.10.25

10 12 27 45 51 1

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$33,780,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 44 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.11.25

16 26 30 34 43 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 59 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.10.25

11 22 24 26 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 59 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.10.25

24 36 43 47 69 22

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 3 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 05.10.25

5 20 28 39 42 13

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$93,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 28 Mins 3 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

US and China take a step back from sky-high tariffs, agree to pause for 90 days

By JAMEY KEATEN and DAVID McHUGH undefined

GENEVA (AP) — U.S. and Chinese officials said Monday they had reached a deal to roll back most of their recent tariffs and call a 90-day truce in their trade war for more talks on resolving their trade disputes.

Stock markets rose sharply as the globe's two major economic powers took a step back from a clash that has unsettled the global economy.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the U.S. agreed to drop its 145% tariff rate on Chinese goods by 115 percentage points to 30%, while China agreed to lower its rate on U.S. goods by the same amount to 10%.

Greer and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the tariff reductions at a news conference in Geneva.

The two officials struck a positive tone as they said the two sides had set up consultations to continue discussing their trade issues.

Bessent said at the news briefing after two days of talks that the high tariff levels would have amounted to a complete blockage of each sides goods, an outcome neither side wants.

"The consensus from both delegations this weekend is neither side wants a decoupling," Bessent said. "And what had occurred with these very high tariff ... was an embargo, the equivalent of an embargo. And neither side wants that. We do want trade. We want more balanced trade. And I think that both sides are committed to achieving that."

Trump last month raised U.S. tariffs on China to a combined 145% and China retaliated by hitting American imports with a 125% levy. Tariffs that high essentially amount to the two countries boycotting each other's products, disrupting trade that last year topped \$660 billion.

The announcement by the U.S. and China sent shares surging, with U.S. futures jumping more than 2%. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index surged nearly 3% and benchmarks in Germany and France were both up 0.7%.

The Trump administration has imposed tariffs on countries worldwide, but its fight with China has been the most intense. Trump's import taxes on goods from China include a 20% charge meant to pressure Beijing into doing more to stop the flow of the synthetic opioid fentanyl into the United States.

The remaining 125% involve a dispute dating back to Trump's first term and comes atop tariffs he levied on China then, which means the total tariffs on some Chinese goods can exceed 145%.

Hamas says it will release American-Israeli hostage Edan Alexander on Monday

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An American-Israeli soldier taken captive and held for more than 19 months in the Gaza Strip is expected to be released on Monday, Hamas said, as part of a good will gesture for the Trump administration that could lay the groundwork for a new ceasefire between the warring sides.

Edan Alexander was snatched from his military base in southern Israel during Hamas' cross-border attack on Oct. 7, 2023, which set off the war in Gaza. His expected release would be the first since Israel shattered an 8-week ceasefire with Hamas in March when it unleashed fierce strikes on Gaza which have killed hundreds.

Israel has also promised to intensify its offensive, including by seizing the territory and displacing much of its population again. Before the ceasefire's demise, Israel blocked all imports from entering the war-ravaged Palestinian enclave, deepening a humanitarian crisis there. Israel says the steps are meant to

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pressure Hamas to accept a ceasefire agreement on Israel's terms.

Israel says that, including Alexander, 59 hostages remain in captivity, about 24 who are said to be alive and the remaining are deceased. Many of the 250 hostages taken by Hamas-led militants in the 2023 attack were freed in ceasefire deals.

Trump says the expected release is 'hopefully' a step toward ending the war

After announcing on Sunday its intention to release Alexander, Hamas said in a statement on Monday that the handover would occur later in the day. Israeli authorities did not respond to requests for comment on the timing of the release.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who is set to arrive in the Middle East on Tuesday on his first official foreign trip, said Sunday that the planned release is "a step taken in good faith towards the United States and the efforts of the mediators — Qatar and Egypt — to put an end to this very brutal war and return ALL living hostages and remains to their loved ones."

"Hopefully this is the first of those final steps necessary to end this brutal conflict. I look very much forward to that day of celebration!" Trump said on his social media platform Truth Social.

Trump, who is travelling to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, is not scheduled to stop in Israel.

An Israeli official said that Trump envoy Steve Witkoff was expected in Israel on Monday and would meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security Cabinet to discuss nuclear talks with Iran and efforts to free more hostages. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Alexander's family, which is based in the U.S., was on route to Israel, according to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, a group representing the captives' families.

Israel says it still plans to escalate its offensive in Gaza

On Monday, a statement from Netanyahu's office said Alexander's release was expected, without indicating timing, and that Israel was not granting any concessions for it.

The statement said Israel did not commit to a ceasefire or to free Palestinian prisoners as part of the release and that it had only agreed to create a "safe corridor" to allow for Alexander to be returned.

The statement said Israel would still carry on with its plans to ramp up its offensive in Gaza despite the expected hostage release. Israel says it won't launch that plan until after Trump's visit to the Middle East this week, to allow for a potential new ceasefire deal to emerge.

A statement by the office on Sunday said the U.S. had told Israel that Alexander's release could lead to a new deal with Hamas to free more hostages.

Netanyahu faces criticism for not freeing all the hostages

Israel's exact involvement in getting the release off the ground wasn't immediately clear. But it created a backlash against Netanyahu, with critics accusing him of having to rely on a foreign leader to help free the remaining hostages.

At the opening of his trial for alleged corruption, where he is giving testimony, a woman in the courtroom asked whether he was "ashamed that the president of the United States is saving his citizens and he is leaving them to die there in captivity?"

Critics accuse Netanyahu of not doing enough to free the hostages, saying his insistence on keeping up the war in Gaza is politically motivated. Netanyahu says he aims to achieve Israel's twin war goals, freeing the hostages and dismantling

Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people and took 250 captive in the 2023 attack.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 52,800 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants or civilians. It obliterated vast swaths of Gaza's urban landscape and displaced 90% of the population, often multiple times.

The PKK Kurdish militant group will disband and disarm as part of a peace initiative with Turkey

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — The PKK Kurdish militant group announced Monday that it will disband and disarm as part of a new peace initiative with Turkey, ending four decades of armed conflict.

The decision by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which promises to put an end to one of the longest insurgencies in the Middle East and could have significant impact in Turkey, Syria and Iraq, was announced by the Firat News Agency, a media outlet close to the group. It comes days after the PKK convened a party congress in northern Iraq.

In February, PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, who has been imprisoned on an island near Istanbul since 1999, urged his group to convene a congress and formally decide to disband.

The call by Ocalan, 76, who continues to wield significant influence in the Kurdish movement despite his 25-year imprisonment, marked a pivotal step toward ending the decadeslong conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives since the 1980s.

Building on the momentum, the PKK announced a unilateral ceasefire on March 1, but attached conditions, including the creation of a legal framework for peace negotiations.

The conflict between Turkey and the PKK has spilled over into northern Iraq and northern Syria, with Turkey carrying out numerous incursions into the neighboring regions. The PKK is listed as a terror group by Turkey and its Western allies.

PKK says group has completed its 'historical mission'

In a statement carried by Firat news, the PKK announced its decision to end its "organizational structure," suggesting that its armed struggle has successfully challenged policies that sought to suppress Kurdish rights.

The congress assessed that the PKK's struggle had "brought the Kurdish issue to the point of resolution through democratic politics, thus completing its historical mission," according to the statement.

"As a result, activities carried out under the name 'PKK' were formally terminated," the statement said.

Turkey's governing party welcomed the announcement "as a significant step toward the goal of a terror-free Turkey."

"If terrorism is completely eradicated, it will open the door to a new era," Omer Celik, spokesman for President Recep Erdogan's party, wrote on the X social media platform.

Turkey says decision should apply to all PKK affiliates

Celik, however, said the decision must apply to all "PKK branches, affiliates and illegal structures." He did not elaborate but the statement appeared to be in reference to Kurdish fighters in Syria, who have ties to the PKK and have been involved in intense fighting with Turkish-backed forces on the ground there.

The leader of the U.S.-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces had previously stated that Ocalan's call for a ceasefire does not apply to his group in Syria.

Details of the peace initiative have not been made public and it was not clear how the process would proceed, including how weapons would be disposed of and who would monitor the procedures.

The future of PKK fighters remains uncertain, including whether they may be relocated to third countries. Any concessions the PKK might obtain in exchange for its decision to disband have not been disclosed.

Previous peace efforts between Turkey and the group — most recently in 2015 — ended in failure.

Dozens of people gathered Monday outside a mosque in the mainly-Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, celebrating the announcement with a traditional Kurdish dance.

Why is the peace initiative happening now?

In recent years, the PKK has been limited to isolated attacks inside Turkey as the Turkish military, backed by armed drones, has pushed PKK insurgents increasingly across the mountainous border into Iraq.

The latest peace initiative was launched in October by Erdogan's coalition partner, Devlet Bahceli, a far-right politician who suggested that Ocalan could be granted parole if his group renounces violence and disbands.

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Some believe the main aim of the reconciliation effort is for Erdogan's government to garner Kurdish support for a new constitution that would allow him to remain in power beyond 2028, when his term ends.

Bahceli has openly called for a new constitution, saying it is essential for Turkey's future that Erdogan remain in power. Erdogan and Bahceli are reportedly seeking parliamentary support from the pro-Kurdish People's Equality and Democracy Party, or DEM.

The PKK's announcement could mark a major gain for Erdogan, whose government is grappling with political tensions following the arrest of Istanbul's Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu on corruption charges. Many see the imprisonment of the mayor, who is the opposition's strongest challenger to Erdogan's more than two-decade rule, as politically motivated. The government insists Turkey's judiciary operates independently.

World shares and US futures advance after China-US trade pact

By JIANG JUNZHE and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — World shares and U.S. futures surged Monday after the U.S. and China announced they were suspending for 90 days most of the sharp tariff hikes each has imposed since U.S. President Donald Trump began escalating his trade war.

A joint statement said that for a 90-day period, the U.S. will cut tariffs on Chinese goods to 30% from as high as 145%. China said its tariffs on U.S. goods will fall to 10% from 125%.

The agreement to allow time for more talks followed weekend negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, that the U.S. side said had made "substantial progress."

The full impact on the complicated tariffs and other trade penalties enacted by Washington and Beijing remains unclear. And much depends on whether they will find ways to bridge longstanding differences during the 90-day suspension.

But as trade envoys from the world's two biggest economies blinked, finding ways to pull back from potentially massive disruptions to world trade and their own markets, investors rejoiced.

The future for the S&P 500 jumped 2.6% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 2%.

Oil prices rallied, with U.S. benchmark crude oil gaining \$1.66 to \$62.68 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, added \$1.63 to \$65.55 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar surged against the Japanese yen, trading at 148.18 Japanese yen, up from 146.17 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1107 from \$1.1209.

In other stock trading, Tokyo's market closed before the joint statement was issued, gaining less than 0.1% to 37,644.26. But Hong Kong's, which closes later, jumped 3% to 23,558.11.

Germany's DAX gained 1% to 23,723.55 and the CAC 40 in Paris added 0.8% to 7,805.62. Britain's FTSE 100 edged 0.1% higher, to 8,560.42.

Investors were also watching for developments in other flashpoints including clashes between India and Pakistan, the war in Ukraine and conflict in the Middle East.

The Sensex in Mumbai shot up 3.2% after India and Pakistan agreed to a truce after talks to defuse their most serious military confrontation in decades. The two armies have exchanged gunfire, artillery strikes, missiles and drones that killed dozens of people.

Pakistan's KSE 100 surged more than 9% and trading was halted for one hour following a spike driven by the ceasefire and an International Monetary Fund decision Friday to disburse about \$1 billion of a bailout package for its battered economy.

The Shanghai Composite Index picked up 0.8% to 3,369.24.

Chinese EV battery maker CATL, or Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Ltd., said in a prospectus filed with the Hong Kong Stock Exchange that it plans to raise nearly \$4 billion in a share listing.

Elsewhere in Asia, the Kospi in Seoul gained 1.2% to 2,607.33.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed less than 0.1% to 8,233.50.

Taiwan's Taiex gained 1%.

On Friday, U.S. stocks drifted, with the S&P 500 edging 0.1% lower. Last week was the first in seven where the index at the heart of many 401(k) accounts moved by less than 1.5%, after careening on fears

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about President Donald Trump's trade war and hopes that he'll relent on some of his tariffs.

The Dow dipped 0.3%, while the Nasdaq composite edged up by less than 0.1%.

Apart from trade talks and other geopolitical factors, the flow of earnings reports for the start of the year from companies is slowing but still moving markets.

After days of heavy firefights, calm reported along Indian and Pakistan borders

By RAJESH ROY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian and Pakistani authorities said Monday there was no firing reported overnight along the heavily militarized region between their countries, the first time in recent days the two nations were not shooting at each other.

India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all military actions on land, in the air and at the sea Saturday in a U.S.-brokered ceasefire to stop the escalating hostilities between the two nuclear-armed rivals that threatened regional peace.

"The night remained largely peaceful across Jammu and Kashmir, and other areas along the international border," the Indian army said in a statement, adding that no incidents had been reported.

Senior military officials from India and Pakistan are scheduled to speak later Monday to assess if ceasefire was holding. There were fears it would not hold after they accused each other of violations just hours after it was announced.

Local government officials in Pakistan-administered Kashmir reported no incidents of cross-border firing along the Line of Control and said that civilians displaced by recent skirmishes between Pakistani and Indian forces were returning to their homes.

Pakistan's military spokesperson, Lt. Gen. Ahmad Sharif, said late Sunday that Pakistan remains committed to upholding the ceasefire and will not be the first to violate it.

He also confirmed that senior military officials from both nations would speak on by phone on Monday.

Soon after the ceasefire announcement on Saturday, Pakistan reopened all of its airports and restored flight operations. India followed up Monday with reopening of all the 32 airports that were shut temporarily across northern and western regions amid the flare up in tensions.

"It's informed that these airports are now available for civil aircraft operations with immediate effect," the Airports Authority of India said in a statement.

The militaries of the two countries have been engaged in one of their most serious confrontations in decades since last Wednesday, when India struck targets inside Pakistan it said were affiliated with militants responsible for the massacre of 26 tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir. The tourists, mostly Indian Hindu men, were brutally killed in front of their families in the meadow town of Pahalgam last month.

India accused Pakistan of backing the militants who carried out the massacre, a charge Islamabad denied. The incident first led to a spat of tit-for-tat diplomatic measures by both the nations, sending their bilateral ties to a near historic low.

The two expelled each other's diplomats, shut their airspace, land borders, and suspended a crucial water treaty.

After Wednesday's strikes in Pakistan, both sides exchanged heavy fires along their de facto border in the restive Kashmir region followed by missile and drone strikes into each other's territories, mainly targeting military installations and airbases. Dozens of civilians were killed on both the sides in heavy shelling, the two countries said.

The Indian military on Sunday for the first time claimed its strikes into Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and Pakistan last week killed more than 100 militants, including prominent leaders.

Lt. Gen. Rajiv Ghai, the director general of India's military operations, who will be talking to his Pakistani counterpart on Monday, said India's armed forces struck nine militant infrastructure and training facilities, including sites of the Lashkar-e-Taiba group that India blames for carrying out major militant strikes in

India and the disputed region of Kashmir.

Ghai said at least 35 to 40 Pakistani soldiers were killed in clashes along the Line of Control, the de facto border that divides the disputed Kashmir region between India and Pakistan. Five Indian soldiers were also killed, he said.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Thursday said his country's armed forces had killed 40 to 50 Indian soldiers along the Line of Control. Pakistani military also claimed to have shot down five Indian fighter jets and inflicted heavy losses on Indian military installations by targeting 26 locations in India.

The Associated Press couldn't independently verify the claims made by India and Pakistan.

Associated Press writer Munir Ahmed in Islamabad contributed to this report.

A timeline of the rise and fall of French movie star Gérard Depardieu

By The Associated Press undefined

For over half a century, Gérard Depardieu stood as a towering figure in French cinema, a titan known for his commanding physical presence, instinct, sensibility and remarkable versatility.

A bon vivant who overcame a speech impediment and a turbulent youth, Depardieu rose to prominence in the 1970s and became one of France's most prolific and acclaimed actors, portraying a vast array of characters, from volatile outsiders to deeply introspective figures.

In recent years, however, Depardieu's illustrious career has been overshadowed by multiple allegations of misconduct. He has been accused publicly or in formal complaints by more than 20 women, but so far only a sexual assault case has proceeded to court. Some others were dropped because of a lack of evidence or the statute of limitations.

In March, the Paris public prosecutor requested an 18-month suspended prison sentence over accusations that he sexually assaulted two women on a film set. A decision is expected on Tuesday.

Here is a timeline of key moments in Depardieu's rise and fall:

Dec. 27, 1948: Born in Châteauroux, in a modest family of six children. His youth is tumultuous. Depardieu lives close to an American military base and rubs shoulders with small-time hoodlums, smuggling all kinds of goods.

1960s: Depardieu arrives in Paris. He takes acting classes and discovers all the great classics of literature while undergoing therapy to correct his speech difficulties.

1967: Depardieu makes his screen debut in the short film "Le Beatnik et le Minet" and appears in his first stage play.

1972: Features in "Nathalie Granger," directed by Marguerite Duras.

1974: First big hit in France with "Les Valseuses," ("Going Places"), Bertrand Blier's classic farce about two wandering thugs.

1980s: Depardieu becomes the most sought-after French actor. Maurice Pialat casts him in "Loulou," the highly acclaimed "Police," for which he won an acting prize at the 1985 Venice Film Festival, and "Under Satan's Sun," a provocative tale about a monk's encounter with the devil which won Cannes' Palme d'Or in 1987. Depardieu stars in many hits: "The Woman Next Door," "Jean de Florette," "The Last Metro," "Danton," "The Return of Martin Guerre."

1991: Depardieu receives a nomination for the best actor Oscar for his performance in "Cyrano de Bergerac." But controversy ensues after Time magazine carries an affirmation by Depardieu that he took part in a rape as a 9-year-old. The movie suffers a bloody nose at the Oscars. Depardieu categorically denies saying he took part in rape. "It's outrageous at 9 years old or at any age," he told the French newspaper Le Monde. "Yes, one can say I had sexual experiences when I was very young, but a rape, never. I respect women too much."

1990s: Depardieu's career is unaffected in France. He stars in Jean-Luc Godard's "Hélas pour moi." Meanwhile, Depardieu reinforces his popularity with mass audiences with the Astérix & Obélix film series.

1998: Depardieu crashes his motorcycle. His blood-alcohol limit is five times the legal level. He escapes

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with leg and face injuries. The incident was one of several encounters with the law for Depardieu, who also grabbed headlines when he urinated in the aisle of a plane before takeoff on a Paris to Dublin flight, and when he was detained for allegedly driving drunk on his scooter.

1999: Depardieu returns to the French stage for the first time in 13 years as a guilt-ravaged emperor in a murder-mystery.

2000: Depardieu undergoes successful coronary bypass surgery.

Oct. 13, 2008: Death of his son Guillaume Depardieu.

2013: After sparring with his native country over taxes, Depardieu is granted Russian citizenship by Vladimir Putin.

2014: Depardieu plays the leading role in "Welcome to New York," the film inspired by the life of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the former director of the International Monetary Fund who was accused in 2011 of sexually assaulting a hotel maid.

2018: Prosecutors in Paris open a preliminary investigation after actor Charlotte Arnould accused Depardieu of raping her at his home. That case is still active, and in August 2024 prosecutors requested that it go to trial.

2023: His wax figure is removed from Paris' most famous wax museum following negative reactions from visitors over allegations about his conduct with women. The decision to remove the figure from the Grevin Museum followed a TV documentary showing him repeatedly making obscene remarks and gestures during a 2018 trip to North Korea.

2025: Depardieu goes on trial in Paris on charges of sexually assaulting two women on a movie set. He is accused of having groped a 54-year-old set dresser and a 34-year-old assistant during filming in 2021 of "Les Volets Verts."

Trump visiting Gulf Arab states while crises flare in Gaza and Iran

By JON GAMBRELL and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — On his trip this week to the Middle East, U.S. President Donald Trump will visit Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, though his most pressing regional challenges concern two other countries: Israel and Iran.

After ending a ceasefire two months ago, Israel is intensifying the war in the Gaza Strip, where a blockade on food, medicine and other supplies is worsening a humanitarian crisis. And Iran, an enemy of Israel and a rival of Saudi Arabia, stands on the cusp of being able to develop nuclear weapons.

Yet Trump will focus his attention on three energy-rich nations home to existing or planned Trump-branded real estate projects — places where he aims to leverage American economic interests to do what he personally revels in: making business deals.

"This is his happy place," said Jon B. Alterman, a senior vice president at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. "His hosts will be generous and hospitable. They'll be keen to make deals. They'll flatter him and not criticize him. And they'll treat his family members as past and future business partners."

But Trump won't be able to avoid altogether diplomacy on Gaza or Iran: The Gulf countries hosting him are also interested in easing the regional tensions that emanate from these two places.

"Trump can easily score a win by reassuring them of America's strategic commitment to the region, demonstrating consistent messaging and generally rising above the fray," analysts Elizabeth Dent and Simon Henderson of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote Friday.

Trump doesn't plan to visit Israel

By not scheduling a trip to Israel during his first trip to the region during his second term as president, Trump is reinforcing a feeling in Israel that its interests may not be top of mind for him.

That sense intensified last week, when Trump announced that the U.S. would halt its strikes on the Houthis, an Iran-backed rebel group in Yemen that agreed to stop its attacks on American vessels in the Red Sea.

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The Houthis' attacks on Israel did not appear to be covered by that deal, which came as a surprise to Israel, according to an Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive diplomatic issue. Days after the deal between the U.S. and the Houthis — and despite a two-day Israeli assault on Houthi targets — a missile from Yemen again set off air raid sirens in Israel. Then Israel's military warned Sunday that Houthi-controlled ports in Yemen could be targeted again.

Trump's move to launch negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program also jarred Israel, which fears a deal that would not be strict enough to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon or rein in its support for regional militant groups.

Israel had hoped that Trump might provide military assistance in any strike it carried out on the country's nuclear facilities — an action that is unrealistic so long as there are negotiations, or if they reach a deal.

That has raised questions in Israel over Trump's reliability on other major issues, like a long-sought normalization deal with Saudi Arabia as part of any defense pact the administration may reach with the kingdom. Saudi Arabia has said it would only normalize ties with Israel in exchange for significant concessions for the Palestinians toward statehood, something the current Israeli government is unlikely to agree to.

Israel has said it will hold off on expanding the war in Gaza until after Trump's visit, leaving the window open for a new ceasefire deal to materialize. And while Hamas and Trump announced that the last living American hostage in Gaza, Edan Alexander, will be freed as part of efforts to establish a ceasefire, it is not clear what involvement Israel had in that deal.

Still, Trump has given Israel free rein in Gaza and, like Israel, blames Hamas for any civilian casualties.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee played down any significance to Trump's decision not to visit the country, saying in interviews with Israeli media that his visit to the region was focused on economic issues.

No major breakthrough in Iran nuclear talks

For Iran, much depends on the talks it is having with the U.S. over its rapidly advancing nuclear program. A reported two-month deadline to reach a deal likely has passed as U.S. officials signal America may push for Iran to give up enrichment entirely — something Tehran has insisted is a red line.

Although four rounds of talks mediated by Oman have not led to a major breakthrough, they have gone into the so-called "expert level" — meaning specifics about any possible accord likely have been discussed.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi traveled over the weekend to both Saudi Arabia and Qatar ahead of Trump's trip. Iran likely is trying to pass messages to the U.S. while signaling its interest in continuing the talks. Iranian officials increasingly threaten to pursue a nuclear weapon, while Trump and Israel have both threatened to strike Iranian nuclear sites if a deal isn't reached.

The Islamic Republic is running out of options. Its economy has cratered since Trump in 2018 unilaterally pulled America out of their initial nuclear deal with world powers. And Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" — a group of aligned nations and militant groups, including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon — has been mauled since the Israel-Hamas war began.

Iran also faces internal political pressure, including from women increasingly refusing to wear the state-mandated headscarf, or hijab.

There is one thing that unites most Iranians, however — pride over the Persian Gulf. Trump's consideration of having America uniformly call the body of water the "Arabian Gulf" instead drew fierce criticism from across the country.

"This gulf has always been the Persian Gulf — and it will forever remain the Persian Gulf," Tehran's Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami said

Trump's 2017 trip still haunts the Gulf

After starting his trip in Saudi Arabia, Trump will then go to Qatar, which recently announced plans for a Trump-branded development there.

This tight embrace of the president comes after his first trip to the Middle East — in 2017 — apparently sparked what became known as the Qatar crisis. That is when Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE boycotted Qatar over its support of Islamists in the region and its ties to Iran, with which it shares a massive offshore natural gas field.

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The dispute grew so serious that Kuwait's ruling emir at the time, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, suggested on a visit to the White House there could have been "military action."

Trump initially criticized Qatar as having "historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level" at the start of the boycott. Less than a year later, he praised Qatar and rolled that back. The four nations ended their boycott just before Biden took office.

Then on Sunday, President Donald Trump said he was ready to accept a luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet as a gift from the ruling family of Qatar during his trip to the Middle East. U.S. officials say it could be converted into a potential presidential aircraft — which would amount to the president accepting an astonishingly valuable gift from a foreign government.

With crude oil prices trading just over \$60 a barrel — lows not seen since 2021 — one major criticism Trump has for the Gulf states isn't there. The question is how Trump will deal with the region's multitude of crises and still-tender wounds.

To avoid a repeat of the 2017 diplomatic crisis, Trump "should reemphasize efforts to unite the Gulf" said Dent and Henderson, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

House Republicans unveil Medicaid cuts that Democrats warn will leave millions without care

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans unveiled the cost-saving centerpiece of President Donald Trump's "big, beautiful bill" late Sunday, at least \$880 billion in cuts largely to Medicaid to help cover the cost of \$4.5 trillion in tax breaks.

Tallying hundreds of pages, the legislation is touching off the biggest political fight over health care since Republicans tried to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, during Trump's first term in 2017 — which ended in failure.

While Republicans insist they are simply rooting out "waste, fraud and abuse" to generate savings with new work and eligibility requirements, Democrats warn that millions of Americans will lose coverage. A preliminary estimate from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the proposals would reduce the number of people with health care by 8.6 million over the decade.

"Savings like these allow us to use this bill to renew the Trump tax cuts and keep Republicans' promise to hardworking middle-class families," said Rep. Brett Guthrie of Kentucky, the GOP chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which handles health care spending.

But Democrats said the cuts are "shameful" and essentially amount to another attempt to repeal Obamacare.

"In no uncertain terms, millions of Americans will lose their health care coverage," said Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the panel. He said "hospitals will close, seniors will not be able to access the care they need, and premiums will rise for millions of people if this bill passes."

As Republicans race toward House Speaker Mike Johnson's Memorial Day deadline to pass Trump's big bill of tax breaks and spending cuts, they are preparing to flood the zone with round-the-clock public hearings this week on various sections before they are stitched together in what will become a massive package.

The politics ahead are uncertain. More than a dozen House Republicans have told Johnson and GOP leaders they will not support cuts to the health care safety net programs that residents back home depend on. Trump himself has shied away from a repeat of his first term, vowing there will be no cuts to Medicaid.

All told, 11 committees in the House have been compiling their sections of the package as Republicans seek at least \$1.5 trillion in savings to help cover the cost of preserving the 2017 tax breaks, which were approved during Trump's first term and are expiring at the end of the year.

But the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee has been among the most watched. The committee was instructed to come up with \$880 billion in savings and reached that goal, primarily with the health care cuts, but also by rolling back Biden-era green energy programs. The preliminary CBO analysis said

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the committee's proposals would reduce the deficit by \$912 billion over the decade — with at least \$715 billion coming from the health provisions.

Central to the savings are changes to Medicaid, which provides almost free health care to more than 70 million Americans, and the Affordable Care Act, which has expanded in the 15 years since it was first approved to cover millions more.

To be eligible for Medicaid, there would be new "community engagement requirements" of at least 80 hours per month of work, education or service for able-bodied adults without dependents. People would also have to verify their eligibility to be in the program twice a year, rather than just once.

This is likely to lead to more churn in the program and present hurdles for people to stay covered, especially if they have to drive far to a local benefits office to verify their income in person. But Republicans say it'll ensure that the program is administered to those who qualify for it.

Many states have expanded their Medicaid rosters thanks to federal incentives, but the legislation would cut a 5% boost that was put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal funding to the states for immigrants who have not shown proof of citizenship would be prohibited.

There would be a freeze on the so-called provider tax that some states use to help pay for large portions of their Medicaid programs. The extra tax often leads to higher payments from the federal government, which critics say is a loophole that creates abuse in the system.

The energy portions of the legislation run far fewer pages, but include rollbacks of climate-change strategies President Joe Biden signed into law in the Inflation Reduction Act.

It proposes rescinding funds for a range of energy loans and investment programs while providing expedited permitting for natural gas development and oil pipelines.

Burkina Faso forces killed at least 100 civilians in a March attack, Human Rights Watch says

By WILSON McMAKIN Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — At least 100 civilians were killed by Burkina Faso government forces in March near the western town of Solenzo, Human Rights Watch said Monday.

According to victim testimony and videos shared on social media gathered by the rights group, the attackers were Burkina Faso special forces and members of a pro-government militia, the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland. The victims were all ethnic Fulani, a pastoralist community that is widespread across the region, which the government has long accused of supporting Muslim militants.

An earlier report from Human Rights Watch stated that the government's involvement was likely, because of video evidence on social media, although the findings were not definitive. The government issued a sharp denial when first reports surfaced, saying in a statement it "condemned the propagation, on social media, of images inducing hate and community violence, and fake information aimed at undermining social cohesion" in the country.

"The viral videos of the atrocities by pro-government militias near Solenzo sent shock waves through Africa's Sahel region, but they told only part of the story," said Ilaria Allegrozzi, senior Sahel researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Further research uncovered that Burkina Faso's military was responsible for these mass killings of Fulani civilians, which were followed by deadly reprisals by an Islamist armed group. The government needs to impartially investigate these deaths and prosecute all those responsible."

Burkina Faso authorities did not immediately reply to a request for comment on the group's new report.

The landlocked nation of 23 million people has symbolized the security crisis in the arid Sahel region south of the Sahara in recent years. It has been shaken by violence from extremist groups linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group, and the governments fighting them.

The military junta, which took power in 2022, failed to provide the stability it promised. According to conservative estimates, more than 60% of the country is now outside of government control, more than 2.1 million people have lost their homes and almost 6.5 million need humanitarian aid to survive.

The attack in the western Boucle du Mouhoun region, including Solenzo and other towns, began on Feb.

27 and lasted until April 2, involving hundreds of government troops and drones, according to eyewitnesses quoted in the report.

"The VDPs shot at us like animals, while drones were flying over our heads. Many women and children died because they could not run," said a Fulani herder, 44, from Solenzo, referring to the pro-government militias.

After the attack, hundreds of Fulani residents fled across the border into neighboring Mali, the report said.

"Today, in the whole province, there are no more Fulani — they all fled or were killed or taken hostage," said a 53-year-old man from Solenzo. "But the other (ethnic) communities remain."

After the government forces left, the report said that jihadist fighters from a group known as JNIM reentered the towns and carried out reprisal killings against residents, targeting the men whom it considered to be military collaborators.

"All the men had been executed in front of the health center," said a 60-year-old woman who witnessed JNIM abuses in Tiao village, a town to the northeast of Solenzo on April 5. "I counted up to 70 bodies."

According to analysts, the junta's strategy of military escalation, including mass recruitment of civilians for poorly trained militia units, has exacerbated tensions between ethnic groups.

It is impossible to get an accurate picture of the situation in the country since the military leadership has installed a system of de facto censorship, rights groups said, and those daring to speak up can be openly abducted, imprisoned or forcefully drafted into the army.

Trump's reshaping of higher education tests America's appeal for international students

By ANNIE MA, MAKIYA SEMINERA and JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

As he finishes college in China, computer science student Ma Tianyu has set his sights on graduate school in the United States. No country offers better programs for the career he wants as a game developer, he said.

He applied only to U.S. schools and was accepted by some. But after the initial excitement, he began seeing reasons for doubt.

First, there was President Donald Trump's trade war with China. Then, China's Ministry of Education issued a warning about studying in America. When he saw the wave of legal status terminations for international students in the U.S., he realized he needed to consider how American politics could affect him.

The recent developments soured some of his classmates on studying in the U.S., but he plans to come anyway. He is ready "to adapt to whatever changes may come," he said.

American universities, home to many programs at the top of their fields, have long appealed to students around the world hoping to pursue research and get a foothold in the U.S. job market. The durability of that demand faces a test under the Trump administration, which has taken actions that have left international students feeling vulnerable and considering alternate places to study.

"All of the Trump administration's activities have been sending a message that international students are not welcome in the U.S.," said Clay Harmon, executive director of AIRC, a professional association for international enrollment managers at colleges.

Competitors see an opening to carve into US dominance

Around 1.1 million international students were in the U.S. last year. A large decline in their ranks could cripple school budgets that rely on tuition from foreign students, who are ineligible for federal student aid and often pay full price to attend.

It's too early to quantify any impact from the administration's crackdown, which has included new scrutiny of student visas and efforts to deport foreign students for involvement in pro-Palestinian activism. But many fear the worst.

"Students and their families expect and need certainty," said Fanta Aw, executive director and CEO of NAFSA, an association of international educators. "And they do not function well in a volatile environment

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like the one we have currently.”

The U.S. has been rebounding from a decline in international enrollment that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As top competitors such as Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom rolled back recruiting efforts and made immigration policies less welcoming, the U.S. appeared ready to bring in far more students.

Now, a few months into the Trump administration, industry experts say it’s unlikely the U.S. will be able to capitalize.

“The U.S. was so perfectly positioned to become the far and away, clear first-choice destination for international students,” said Mike Henniger, CEO of Illume Student Advisory Services. His company works with colleges in the U.S., Canada and Europe to recruit international students. “Then it just went out the door.”

In Canada, where colleges saw enrollment increases during the first Trump administration, they are hoping for another bounce. In a letter following the recent election, a member organization for Canadian universities urged the new Liberal government to address immigration policies that have affected recruitment of foreign students.

“This is a moment of real opportunity for the country to attract international talent,” said Gabriel Miller, president of Universities Canada.

America’s appeal as a place to start a career remains resilient

The U.S. holds strong appeal for students prioritizing career outcomes, in part because of the “optional practical training” program, which allows foreign students to stay on their student visas and work for up to three years, said Lindsey López of ApplyBoard, an application platform for students seeking to study abroad.

Graduates earning this post-college work experience were among the foreigners whose legal status or visas were terminated this spring.

Still, the diversity and size of the U.S. job market could help American schools stay ahead of the competition, López said.

“The U.S. is the largest economy in the world,” she said. “It’s just the vastness and also the economic diversity that we have in the U.S., with a whole variety of different industries, both public and private, for students to choose from.”

William Paterson University, a public institution of 10,000 students in New Jersey, typically has around 250 international students. It expects an increase in foreign students in the fall, according to George Kacenga, vice president for enrollment management. The school has focused on designing programs around STEM majors, which appeal to international students because they open access to OPT programs.

Students have expressed concern about securing visas, but most of the school’s international students are from India and report they are getting appointments, he said.

In Shanghai, many students in Austin Ward’s 12th grade class have either committed to attending U.S. colleges or are considering it. Ward teaches literature in a high school program offering an American Common Core curriculum for Chinese students.

Ward said he avoids discussing politics with his students, but some have asked him about the U.S. government’s termination of students’ legal statuses, signaling their concern about going to the U.S.

To Ward’s knowledge, the students who planned to attend American colleges have not changed their minds. Frustrated with the stress the situation has caused, Ward said he wrote a letter to his U.S. representative on the need to protect international students.

His students are coming to America to “expand their horizons,” he said, not threaten the country.

“If my students have to worry about that, and if students are losing their visas, then America is not going to have that strength of being an academic center,” he said.

USAID is all but gone. For one family, 3 generations of service were defined by it

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — He was special, Albert Votaw's daughter remembers all these decades later.

Cathy Votaw is 70 now, more than a dozen years older than her father lived to be. She describes a man with a larger-than-life personality and a love of fun — as if you couldn't tell that from the photos, which show an outrageous handlebar mustache and a penchant for bowties sewn by his wife.

Each year on April 18, the anniversary of the 1983 bombing at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut that took the lives of her father and 62 others, a persistent sense of loss awakens in Cathy. Some years, she writes an email to her family, telling them about Albert, a public-housing expert for the U.S. Agency for International Development.

He was, she writes, dedicated to public service — and to USAID. And she is so sorry, she tells Albert Votaw's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, that his death at the hands of an anti-American attacker driving a truck packed with explosives means they never got to meet him.

Yet Albert Votaw's influence echoes down across the generations. Four decades later, as the agency that worked to promote American security through international development and humanitarian work disappears at the hands of Donald Trump and Elon Musk, two things are abundantly clear:

Service to USAID shattered the Votaw family. And service to USAID reshaped it as well.

A death that echoed and inspired

In a way, the requiem of the now-dismantled agency can be told through its people — including some entire families, like the Votaws. Albert's work for USAID, and his death while on the job, steered the work of two generations of his family after him.

It led his daughter, Cathy, to dedicate part of her life to working on behalf of the families of Americans killed by extremist attacks.

It led his granddaughter, Anna, to work as a contractor for USAID, with a willingness to take on dangerous assignments — a proclivity that she ties directly to his death.

"When my father talked about his work, he talked about ... how he was proud of the fact that he was an American, coming over here to help people," Cathy Votaw says.

Her father's time at USAID began in the first years after the aid and development agency's 1960s founding by Congress and President John F. Kennedy. Cathy and her sisters as children followed Votaw on his initial postings in a career that took him to countries including Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Thailand and, finally, Lebanon.

Back then, "you feel like you were recognized as a country for trying to do the right thing and trying to help, and in fact, contributing lives and resources to help people overseas," Cathy says.

After the 1983 bombing, President Ronald Reagan eulogized Albert and the 16 other Americans killed.

"The best way for us to show our love and respect for our fellow countrymen who died in Beirut this week is to carry on with their task," Reagan said.

Over the years, the names of 98 USAID and other foreign assistance colleagues were placed on a memorial wall inside USAID headquarters.

One of those names was Albert Votaw.

A legacy that transcended generations

After her father died, Cathy Votaw switched from private legal practice to working as a federal prosecutor. It paid tribute, she felt, to his government service. She also became an advocate for better treatment for federal workers and other American victims of extremist attacks and their families.

The embassy suicide bombing that killed her father was one of the first of its kind. The Votaws and others lobbied the State Department to beef up efforts to work with families in future attacks. They won a victory in federal court designating Iran responsible as a sponsor of militants involved.

And in the biggest achievement of all, survivors of attacks and relatives of victims, including Cathy, successfully pushed Congress to set up a fund for them and future victims, using billions of dollars in fines

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paid by entities that did business with countries the U.S. deems state sponsors of terror.

Somehow, Albert's death in the Beirut bombing gave one of his granddaughters, Anna Eisenberg, a deep sense that because the worst had already happened to her family, it wouldn't happen to her.

After growing up hearing of her grandfather's life and death in public service, she started work as a contractor for USAID almost as soon as she got out of college.

Teaching communication skills to communities in war zones and telling the story of USAID, her assignments took her to Nigeria, where she profiled teachers as they schooled young children orphaned in attacks. And she worked in Afghanistan, coaching female government communication workers to speak up.

In northern Nigeria, "they were like, 'Are you sure you want to do this? ... You're not in an armored car. You don't have any weapons,'" Anna, now 37, recounted of her trips through militants' territory. "I just felt like I was able to go places ... because nothing bad would happen: 'Yeah, my grandfather got blown up — we're good.'"

In some ways, Anna was looking forward to Trump's second term. She believed that Trump, in his first term, had done a better job than most presidents at promoting how USAID built jobs at home.

As it turned out, her job ended when USAID's life as a functioning independent agency did — in form-letter terminations.

The last moments of Albert Votaw

Albert had been jittery about his assignment to Beirut in a way he'd never been before. Still, he reassured his family, the U.S. government knew what it was doing.

Eleven days after Albert arrived, the truck bomb exploded at the front of the U.S. embassy there. Many of those killed, including Albert, were in the embassy cafeteria.

This year's anniversary of his death was nothing like the ones before. This year, USAID itself sat in ruins.

Trump and Musk, whose Department of Government Efficiency crews are slashing staffing and programs across federal government, made USAID an early target. They shut USAID headquarters, terminated the majority of its development and humanitarian programs abroad and fired most staff and contractors.

A few weeks ago, at the now-closed and barricaded USAID headquarters in Washington, a crew pried off the memorial to those who died in Beirut, including the name of a gregarious public-housing expert who had a handlebar mustache and lived for, and died for, his work.

The State Department said it would find a permanent home for the memorial.

Zelenskyy hopes for ceasefire with Russia and challenges Putin to meet him in Turkey 'personally'

By SAMYA KULLAB and DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday challenged Russia's President Vladimir Putin to meet him personally in Turkey on Thursday, the latest move in a weekend-long exchange of proposals from both sides on the next steps in the U.S.-led peace effort.

Zelenskyy said that he still hopes for a ceasefire with Russia starting Monday, and that he will "be waiting for Putin" in Turkey "personally" after U.S. President Donald Trump insisted Ukraine accept Russia's latest offer — to hold direct talks in Turkey on Thursday. Ukraine, along with European allies, had demanded Russia accept an unconditional 30-day ceasefire starting Monday before holding talks, but Moscow effectively rejected the proposal and called for direct negotiations instead.

It was not clear if Zelenskyy was conditioning his presence in Turkey on the Monday ceasefire holding, and there was no immediate comment from the Kremlin on whether Putin would go. In 2022, the war's early months, Zelenskyy repeatedly called for a personal meeting with the Russian president but was rebuffed, and eventually enacted a decree declaring that holding negotiations with Putin had become impossible.

"We await a full and lasting ceasefire, starting from tomorrow, to provide the necessary basis for diplomacy. There is no point in prolonging the killings. And I will be waiting for Putin in (Turkey) on Thursday. Personally. I hope that this time the Russians will not look for excuses," Zelenskyy wrote on X on Sunday.

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Trump said in a social media post earlier Sunday that Ukraine should agree to Putin's peace talks proposal "IMMEDIATELY."

"At least they will be able to determine whether or not a deal is possible, and if it is not, European leaders, and the U.S., will know where everything stands, and can proceed accordingly!" Trump wrote, adding: "HAVE THE MEETING, NOW!!!"

Ukraine, allies insist on a ceasefire

French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk met with Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Saturday and issued a coordinated call for a 30-day truce starting Monday. The plan has received backing from both the European Union and Trump.

The leaders pledged tougher sanctions on Russia if Putin did not accept the proposal.

Putin in remarks to the media overnight effectively rejected the offer and proposed restarting direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul on Thursday instead "without preconditions." He did not specify whether the talks on Thursday would involve Zelenskyy and himself personally.

He said a ceasefire might be agreed on during the negotiations — but stressed that the Kremlin needs a truce that would lead to a "lasting peace" instead of one that would allow Ukraine to rearm and mobilize more men into its armed forces.

Zelenskyy said on X on Sunday morning that it was a "positive sign that the Russians have finally begun to consider ending the war," but insisted on a ceasefire first.

Putin and Zelenskyy have only met once — in 2019. After repeated unsuccessful calls for a personal meeting with the Russian leader early on in the war, and following the Kremlin's decision in September 2022 to illegally annex four regions of Ukraine, Zelenskyy enacted a decree declaring that holding negotiations with Putin had become impossible.

Macron said Sunday that Putin's offer of direct negotiations with Ukraine is "a first step, but not enough," signaling continued Western skepticism toward Moscow's intentions.

"An unconditional ceasefire is not preceded by negotiations," Macron told reporters at the Polish-Ukrainian border, according to French media, adding that Putin is "looking for a way out, but he still wants to buy time."

Moscow presses on with peace talks offer. Turkey says it's ready to host

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, in comments aired by Russian state TV on Sunday, called Putin's proposal "very serious," aimed at eliminating "the root causes of the conflict," and said it "confirms a real intention to find a peaceful solution."

Without directly mentioning Moscow's proposal, Trump said in a social media post several hours after Putin's overnight remarks that it was "a potentially great day for Russia and Ukraine!"

"Think of the hundreds of thousands of lives that will be saved as this never ending 'bloodbath' hopefully comes to an end," Trump wrote. "I will continue to work with both sides to make sure that it happens. The USA wants to focus, instead, on Rebuilding and Trade. A BIG week upcoming!" he added.

In another post on Sunday, the U.S. president said Ukraine should accept Putin's offer "to meet on Thursday, in Turkey, to negotiate a possible end to the BLOODBATH." He added, however, that he was "starting to doubt that Ukraine will make a deal with Putin."

Putin spoke Sunday to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who expressed readiness to host the talks, the Kremlin said.

According to the Kremlin's readout of the phone call, Erdogan "fully supported the Russian proposal" and was ready to provide a platform for the talks and assistance in organizing them.

In a separate phone call to Macron on Sunday, Erdogan said that a "historic turning point" had been reached in efforts to end the war, according to a statement from the Turkish presidential communications office.

Questions over next steps persist as attacks continue

Zelenskyy in his nightly video address on Sunday said he still expected a ceasefire to take hold on Monday, and that he was still waiting for a "clear answer" from Russia about it.

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Zelenskyy said he was also waiting to see reaction from Western allies who on Saturday promised robust sanctions against Russia if Putin did not abide by the Monday truce.

"We have repeatedly heard from partners that they are ready to strengthen sanctions against Russia if Putin refuses a ceasefire. We will see," he said.

He reiterated he would be present in Turkey on Thursday. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not immediately respond to a message from The Associated Press asking for a comment.

Meanwhile, Russia resumed mass drone attacks in Ukraine early on Sunday, after its self-declared three-day pause expired.

Russia launched 108 attack drones and simulator drones from six different directions, Ukraine's air force said. It said 60 drones were shot down and another 41 simulator drones failed to reach targets due to Ukrainian countermeasures.

The Russian Defense Ministry on Sunday accused Ukraine of "violating" Moscow's three-day ceasefire more than 14,000 times. Ukraine, which did not agree to the May 8-10 ceasefire, has also accused Russia of violating its own truce, with the Ukrainian foreign minister calling it a farce.

A Russian official on Sunday evening also accused Ukrainian forces of a missile strike on a town in Russia's Kursk region that borders Ukraine. Acting Gov. Alexander Khinshtein said on Telegram that the strike "seriously damaged" a hotel in Rylsk, a town east of the Ukrainian border, and wounded three people.

Trump envoy confirms that Hamas has agreed to release the last living US hostage in Gaza

By WAFAA SHURAF, ZEKE MILLER and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Hamas said Sunday that the last living American hostage in Gaza, Edan Alexander, will be released as part of efforts to establish a ceasefire, reopen crossings into the Israeli-blockaded territory and resume the delivery of aid. Two Hamas officials told The Associated Press they expect the release in the next 48 hours.

U.S. President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff confirmed late Sunday in a message to AP that Hamas had agreed to release Alexander as a good will gesture toward Trump.

The announcement of the first hostage release since Israel shattered a ceasefire in March comes shortly before Trump visits the Middle East this week. It highlighted the willingness of Israel's closest ally to inject momentum into ceasefire talks for the 19-month war as desperation grows among hostages' families and Gaza's over 2 million people under the new Israeli blockade.

"This was a step taken in good faith towards the United States and the efforts of the mediators — Qatar and Egypt — to put an end to this very brutal war and return ALL living hostages and remains to their loved ones," Trump said on his social media platform Truth Social on Sunday evening. "Hopefully this is the first of those final steps necessary to end this brutal conflict. I look very much forward to that day of celebration!"

Alexander is an Israeli-American soldier who grew up in New Jersey. He was abducted from his base during the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack that ignited the war in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the U.S. informed it of Hamas' intent to release Alexander "without compensation or conditions" and that the step is expected to lead to negotiations on a truce. Netanyahu's government was angered by U.S. direct talks with Hamas earlier this year — which led to a Hamas offer to release Alexander and the bodies of four other hostages if Israel recommitted to a stalled ceasefire deal. Days later, however, Israel resumed the war.

Witkoff told the AP that Hamas' goal in releasing Alexander was to restart talks on a ceasefire, the release of additional hostages and a surge of humanitarian aid into Gaza before Israel carries out a threatened total takeover of the territory.

Khalil al-Hayyah, a Hamas leader in Gaza, said the group has been in contact with the U.S. administration over the past few days.

Al-Hayyah said in a statement Hamas is ready to "immediately start intensive negotiations" to reach a

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final deal for a long-term truce, which includes an end to the war, the exchange of Palestinian prisoners and hostages in Gaza and the handing over of power in Gaza to an independent body of technocrats.

Indirect talks between Hamas and the U.S. began five days ago, an Egyptian official and a senior Hamas official told the AP, with both describing the release of Alexander as a gesture of goodwill.

The senior Hamas official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said Alexander is expected to be released on Monday. Hamas was advised to "give a gift to President Trump and in return he will give back a better one," the official said.

Another Hamas official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss negotiations, said Alexander's release is expected in the next 48 hours, adding that it requires Israel to pause fighting for a couple of hours.

The Egyptian official involved in ceasefire negotiations, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss talks, said Hamas received assurances from the Trump administration through Egyptian and Qatari mediators that Alexander's release "will put all files on the negotiating table" including an end to the war.

Alexander's parents did not immediately return requests for comment.

Trump and Witkoff have frequently mentioned Alexander, now 21, by name in the past few months. Witkoff was traveling to the region on Monday ahead of Alexander's expected release.

"Every time they say Edan's name, it's like they didn't forget. They didn't forget he's American, and they're working on it," Edan's mother, Yael Alexander, told The Associated Press earlier this year.

Hamas released a video of Alexander in November during the Thanksgiving weekend, his mother said. The video was difficult to watch as he cried and pleaded for help, but it was a relief to see the latest sign that he was alive, she said.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostage.

Israel's offensive has killed over 52,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants or civilians. The offensive has destroyed vast areas of the territory and displaced some 90% of its population.

Fifty-nine hostages are still in Gaza, around a third of them believed to be alive. Most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. The Hostages Families Forum, the grassroots forum representing most hostage families, said Alexander's release "must mark the beginning of a comprehensive agreement" that will free everyone.

Trump, whose administration has voiced full support for Israel's actions, is set to visit Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates this week in a regional tour.

Bombardment continues

Israeli strikes overnight and into Sunday killed 15 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to local health officials.

Two strikes hit tents in the southern city of Khan Younis, each killing two children and their parents, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies. Another seven people were killed in strikes elsewhere, including a man and his child in a Gaza City neighborhood, according to hospitals and Gaza's Health Ministry.

The Israeli military says it only targets militants and tries to avoid harming civilians. It blames Hamas for civilian deaths in the 19-month-old war because the militants are embedded in densely populated areas.

Israel has sealed Gaza off from all imports, including food, medicine and emergency shelter, for over 10 weeks in what it says is a pressure tactic aimed at forcing Hamas to release hostages. Israel in March shattered the ceasefire that had facilitated the release of more than 30 hostages.

Aid groups say the humanitarian crisis is worse than at any time in the war, with food running low.

Israel recovers remains of soldier killed in Lebanon in 1982

In a separate development, Israel said it retrieved the remains of a soldier killed in a 1982 battle in southern Lebanon after he had been classified as missing for more than four decades.

The Israeli military said Sgt. 1st Class Tzvi Feldman's remains were recovered from deep inside Syria, without providing further details.

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Netanyahu visited Feldman's surviving siblings and told them that the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar Assad late last year led to an "opportunity" that allowed the military and the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, to gather additional intelligence and locate and retrieve the body, according to video released by his office.

Feldman went missing, along with five other Israeli soldiers, in a battle with Syrian forces in the Lebanese town of Sultan Yaaqoub.

At least 10 people sickened in US listeria outbreak linked to prepared foods

SAN FERNANDO, Calif. (AP) — At least 10 people in the U.S. have been sickened in a listeria outbreak linked to ready-to-eat food products, and a producer is voluntarily recalling several products, federal officials said.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said Saturday that federal, state and local officials are investigating the outbreak linked to foods produced by Fresh & Ready Foods LLC of San Fernando, California. The FDA says the 10 people who fell ill were in California and Nevada, and required hospitalization.

The agency said the products were sold in Arizona, California, Nevada and Washington at locations including retailers and food service points of sale, including hospitals, hotels, convenience stores, airports and by airlines.

Listeria symptoms usually start within two weeks of eating contaminated food. Mild cases can include fever, muscle aches, nausea, tiredness, vomiting and diarrhea, while more severe symptoms may include headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance and convulsions.

Federal officials said they started investigating the recent outbreak last year but didn't have enough evidence to identify a source of the infections. They said the investigation was reopened in April when FDA investigators found listeria in samples collected from Fresh & Ready Foods that matched the strain from the outbreak.

Fresh & Ready Foods said in a news release that it took immediate corrective actions including removing equipment to address the issue.

The FDA found that six of the 10 people who got sick had been hospitalized before becoming ill with listeria. The FDA found that items made by Fresh & Ready Foods had been served in at least three of the health care facilities where the patients had been previously treated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that the test samples from sick patients were collected from December 2023 to September 2024.

Fresh & Ready voluntarily recalled several products, which can be identified by "use by" dates ranging from April 22 to May 19 of this year under the brand names Fresh & Ready Foods, City Point Market Fresh Food to Go and Fresh Take Crave Away.

India claims its strikes inside Pakistan territory last week killed over 100 militants

By MUNIR AHMED, AIJAZ HUSSAIN and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — India's military strikes into Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and Pakistan earlier this week killed more than 100 militants including prominent leaders, the head of India's military operations claimed Sunday.

Lt. Gen. Rajiv Ghai, the director general of military operations, said India's armed forces struck nine militant infrastructure and training facilities, including sites of the Lashkar-e-Taiba group that India blames for carrying out major militant strikes in India and the disputed region of Kashmir.

"We achieved total surprise," Ghai said at a news conference in New Delhi, adding Pakistan's response was "erratic and rattled."

The two countries agreed to a truce a day earlier after talks to defuse their most serious military con-

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frontation in decades. The two armies exchanged gunfire, artillery strikes, missiles and drones that killed dozens of people.

As part of the ceasefire, the nuclear-armed neighbors agreed to immediately stop all military action on land, in the air and at sea. On Sunday, Pakistan's military said it did not ask for ceasefire, as claimed by India, but rather it was India that had sought the ceasefire.

At a televised news conference, Lt. Gen. Ahmad Sharif said Pakistan's armed forces targeted a total of 26 Indian military installations in response to India's missile strikes which were launched before dawn Wednesday.

He said the military had vowed it would respond to the Indian aggression, and it has fulfilled its commitment to the nation. Sharif warned that any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty or territorial integrity would be met with a "comprehensive, retributive, and decisive" response.

He said Pakistan exercised "maximum restraint" during the counterstrike, employing medium-range missiles and other munitions, and that no civilian areas were targeted inside India.

Competing claims of how many killed

The escalation in violence began last week after a gun massacre of tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir on April 22. India blamed the attack on Pakistan, which denied any involvement.

Ghai said at least 35 to 40 Pakistani soldiers were killed in clashes along the Line of Control, the de facto border that divides the disputed Kashmir region between India and Pakistan. Five Indian soldiers were also killed, he said.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Thursday said his country's armed forces had killed 40 to 50 Indian soldiers along the Line of Control.

Following India's Wednesday strikes, Pakistan sent drones multiple times in many locations in Kashmir and Indian cities that were neutralized, said Air Marshal A.K. Bharti, the operations head of the Indian air force. He said India responded with "significant and game-changing strikes" Saturday, hitting Pakistan's air bases.

Bharti refused to comment on Pakistani claims of shooting down five Indian fighter jets, but said "we are in a combat scenario and losses are a part of combat." He claimed India also "downed (a) few planes" but did not offer any evidence.

The Associated Press could not independently verify all the actions attributed to India or Pakistan.

Saturday's ceasefire was shaken just hours later by overnight fighting in disputed Kashmir, as each side accused each other of repeatedly violating the deal. Drones were also spotted Saturday night over Indian-controlled Kashmir and the western state of Gujarat, according to Indian officials.

People on both sides of the Line of Control reported heavy exchanges of fire between Indian and Pakistani troops. The fighting subsided by Sunday morning.

In the Poonch area of Indian-controlled Kashmir, people said the intense shelling from the past few days had traumatized them.

"Most people ran as shells were being fired," said college student Sosan Zehra, who returned home Sunday. "It was completely chaotic."

In Pakistan-controlled Kashmir's Neelum Valley, which is 3 kilometers (2 miles) from the Line of Control, residents said there were exchanges of fire and heavy shelling after the ceasefire began.

"We were happy about the announcement but, once again, the situation feels uncertain," said Mohammad Zahid.

Indian and Pakistan officials to speak Monday

U.S. President Donald Trump was the first to post about the ceasefire deal, announcing it on his Truth Social platform. Indian and Pakistani officials confirmed the news shortly after.

Pakistan has thanked the U.S., and especially Trump, several times for facilitating the ceasefire.

India has not said anything about Trump or the U.S. since the deal was announced. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting on Sunday with top government and military officials.

A U.N. spokesperson, Stephane Dujarric, said on Sunday that Secretary General Antonio Guterres welcomed the deal as a positive step toward easing tensions. "He hopes the agreement will contribute to

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lasting peace and foster an environment conducive to addressing broader, longstanding issues between the two countries," Dujarric said.

India and Pakistan's top military officials are scheduled to speak on Monday.

India and Pakistan have fought daily since Wednesday along the rugged and mountainous Line of Control, which is marked by razor wire coils, watchtowers and bunkers that snake across foothills populated by villages, tangled bushes and forests.

They have routinely blamed the other for starting the skirmishes, while insisting they themselves were only retaliating.

Kashmir is split between the two countries and claimed by both in its entirety.

They have fought two of their three wars over the region and their ties have been shaped by conflict, aggressive diplomacy and mutual suspicion, mostly due to their competing claims.

Trump defends the prospect of Qatar gifting him a plane to use as Air Force One

By ZEKE MILLER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is ready to accept a luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet as a gift from the ruling family of Qatar during his trip to the Middle East this coming week, and U.S. officials say it could be converted into a potential presidential aircraft.

The Qatari government said a final decision hadn't been made. Still, Trump defended the idea — what would amount to a president accepting an astonishingly valuable gift from a foreign government — as a fiscally smart move for the country.

"So the fact that the Defense Department is getting a GIFT, FREE OF CHARGE, of a 747 aircraft to replace the 40 year old Air Force One, temporarily, in a very public and transparent transaction, so bothers the Crooked Democrats that they insist we pay, TOP DOLLAR, for the plane," Trump posted on his social media site on Sunday night. "Anybody can do that!"

ABC News reported that Trump will use the aircraft as his presidential plane until shortly before he leaves office in January 2029, when ownership will be transferred to the foundation overseeing his yet-to-be-built presidential library.

The gift was expected to be announced when Trump visits Qatar, according to ABC's report, as part of a trip that also includes stops in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the first extended foreign travel of his second term.

Before Trump's post trumpeting the idea, Ali Al-Ansari, Qatar's media attaché, said in a statement that the "possible transfer of an aircraft for temporary use as Air Force One is currently under consideration between Qatar's Ministry of Defense and the US Department of Defense."

"But the matter remains under review by the respective legal departments, and no decision has been made," the statement added.

Meanwhile, administration officials, anticipating ethics concerns, have prepared an analysis arguing that accepting the plane would be legal, according to ABC. The Constitution's Emoluments Clause bars anyone holding government office from accepting any present, emolument, office or title from any "King, Prince, or foreign State," without congressional consent.

One expert on government ethics, Kathleen Clark of the Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, accused Trump of being "committed to exploiting the federal government's power, not on behalf of policy goals, but for amassing personal wealth."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer poked fun at Trump's "America first" political slogan.

"Nothing says 'America First' like Air Force One, brought to you by Qatar," the New York Democrat said in a statement. "It's not just bribery, it's premium foreign influence with extra legroom."

Even some conservatives expressed dismay online, noting that an aircraft being offered by a foreign government could present security risks if used by a U.S. president.

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Air Force One is a modified Boeing 747. Two exist, and the president flies on both, which are more than 30 years old. Boeing Inc. has the contract to produce updated versions, but delivery has been delayed while the company has lost billions of dollars on the project.

Trump intends to convert the Qatari aircraft into a plane he can fly on as president, with the Air Force planning to add secure communications and other classified elements to it. But it will still have more limited capabilities than the existing planes that were built to serve as Air Force One, as well as two other aircraft currently under construction, according to a former U.S. official.

The official was briefed about the plane and spoke Sunday on the condition of anonymity to discuss plans that have not yet been made public.

The existing planes used as Air Force One are heavily modified with survivability capabilities for the president for a range of contingencies, including radiation shielding and antimissile technology. They also include a variety of communications systems to allow the president to remain in contact with the military and issue orders from anywhere in the world.

The official told The Associated Press that it would be possible to quickly add some countermeasures and communications systems to the Qatari plane, but that it would be less capable than the existing Air Force One aircraft or long-delayed replacements.

Neither the Qatari plane nor the upcoming VC-25B aircraft will have the air-to-air refueling capabilities of the current VC-25A aircraft, which is the one the president currently flies on, the official said.

Jordan Libowitz, communications director for the advocacy group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, called such a gift "unprecedented."

"The totality of gifts given to a president over their term doesn't get close to this level," Libowitz said, adding, "You have to ask, if he makes foreign policy — especially in regards to the Middle East — how much is he being influenced by his gifts and his business deals."

ABC said the new plane is similar to a 13-year-old Boeing aircraft Trump toured in February, while it was parked at Palm Beach International Airport and he was spending the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago club.

Trump faced lawsuits for violating the Emoluments Clause during his first term, but those were ended by the Supreme Court in 2021, which found the cases moot because the Republican had left office.

Trump's family business, the Trump Organization, which is now largely run by his sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, has vast and growing interests in the Middle East. That includes a new deal to build a luxury golf resort in Qatar, partnering with Qatari Diar, a real estate company backed by that country's sovereign wealth fund.

Qatar, which is ruled by the Al Thani family, is home to the state-owned airline Qatar Airways. The country also has worked to have a close relationship to Trump after he apparently backed a boycott of Doha by four Arab nations in his first term. Trump later in his term applauded Qatar.

Administration officials have brushed off concerns about the president's policy interests blurring with family's business profits. They note that Trump's assets are in a trust managed by his children and that a voluntary ethics agreement released by the Trump Organization in January bars the company from striking deals directly with foreign governments.

But that same agreement allows deals with private companies abroad. That is a departure from Trump's first term, when the organization released an ethics pact prohibiting both foreign government and foreign company deals.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, when asked Friday if the president might meet with people who have ties to his family's business, said it was "ridiculous" to suggest Trump "is doing anything for his own benefit."

Another Newark airport disruption as Trump's transportation secretary talks of reducing flights

By The Associated Press undefined

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy says he plans to reduce the number of flights in and out of Newark's airport for the "next several weeks" as it struggles with radar outages and other issues, including another Sunday that again slowed air traffic.

Speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press" that aired Sunday, Duffy said he will meet this week with all major carriers flying through Newark Liberty International, New Jersey's largest airport. He said the number of flight cutbacks would fluctuate by time of day with most targeting afternoon hours when international arrivals make the airport busier.

In addition to equipment outages, the airport has been beset by flight delays and cancellations brought on by a shortage of air traffic controllers.

"We want to have a number of flights that if you book your flight, you know it's going to fly, right?" he said. "That is the priority. So you don't get to the airport, wait four hours, and then get delayed."

The Federal Aviation Administration reported a "telecommunications issue" as the latest setback Sunday, impacting a facility in Philadelphia that directs planes in and out of Newark airport. An FAA statement said the agency briefly slowed air traffic to and from the airport while ensuring "redundancies were working as designed" before normal operations resumed.

Infrastructure issues are increasingly a key concern at airports around the country.

In an unrelated incident, hundreds of flights were delayed Sunday at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport — one of the world's busiest — because of a runway equipment issue. The FAA said in a statement that it temporarily slowed arrivals into Atlanta while technicians worked to address the problem.

In Newark, Sunday's disruptions came two days after radar at the Philadelphia facility went black for 90 seconds at 3:55 a.m. Friday, an episode that was similar to an incident on April 28.

The Trump administration recently proposed a multibillion-dollar overhaul of the U.S. air traffic control system, envisioning six new air traffic control centers and technology and communications upgrades at all of the nation's air traffic facilities over the next three or four years.

The FAA said last week that it slows the rate of arrivals into Newark to ensure safety whenever staffing or equipment issues arise. The agency also noted that frequent equipment and telecommunications outages can be stressful, prompting some air traffic controllers to take time off "to recover from the stress."

"While we cannot quickly replace them due to this highly specialized profession, we continue to train controllers who will eventually be assigned to this busy airspace," the FAA said in a May 5 statement.

On average, there had been 34 arrival cancellations per day since mid-April at Newark, according to the FAA, with the number of delays increasing throughout the day from an average of five in the mornings to 16 by the evening. The delays tended to last 85 to 137 minutes on average.

Duffy said in his TV appearance Sunday that he wants to raise the mandatory retirement age for air traffic controllers from 56 to 61, as he tries to navigate a shortage of about 3,000 people in that specialized position.

And he also spoke of wanting to give those air traffic controllers a 20% upfront bonus to stay on the job. However, he says many air traffic controllers choose to retire after 25 years of service, which means many retire around the age of 50.

"These are not overnight fixes," Duffy said. "But as we go up — one, two years, older guys on the job, younger guys coming in, men and women — we can make up that 3,000-person difference."

Adding more air traffic controllers is in contrast to a top priority of the Trump administration — slashing jobs in nearly all other federal agencies.

However, United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said on CBS' "Face the Nation" that Duffy deserves credit for putting "caution tape" around FAA safety functions and separating those personnel from cost-cutting by Trump's Department of Government Efficiency — DOGE.

Kirby said United has already reduced its schedule at Newark and will meet with Duffy later this week.

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He expects a deeper cut in capacity to last until June 15 when construction work on one of Newark's runways is expected to be complete, though he thinks some reductions will last throughout the summer.

"We have fewer flights, but we keep everything safe, and we get the airplane safely on the ground," Kirby said. "Safety is number one, and so I'm not worried about safety. I am worried about customer delays and impacts."

Trump promises to order that the US pay only the price other nations do for some drugs

By WILL WEISSERT and AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says he'll sign an executive order on Monday that, if implemented, could bring down the costs of some medications — reviving a failed effort from his first term on an issue he's talked up since even before becoming president.

The order Trump is promising will direct the Department of Health and Human Services to tie what Medicare pays for medications administered in a doctor's office to the lowest price paid by other countries.

"I will be instituting a MOST FAVORED NATION'S POLICY whereby the United States will pay the same price as the Nation that pays the lowest price anywhere in the World," the president posted Sunday on his social media site, pledging to sign the order on Monday morning at the White House.

"Our Country will finally be treated fairly, and our citizens Healthcare Costs will be reduced by numbers never even thought of before," Trump added.

His proposal would likely only impact certain drugs covered by Medicare and given in an office — think infusions that treat cancer, and other injectables. But it could potentially bring significant savings to the government, although the "TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS" Trump boasted about in his post may be an exaggeration.

Medicare provides health insurance for roughly 70 million older Americans. Complaints about U.S. drug prices being notoriously high, even when compared with other large and wealthy countries, have long drawn the ire of both parties, but a lasting fix has never cleared Congress.

Under the planned order, the federal government would tie what it pays pharmaceutical companies for those drugs to the price paid by a group of other, economically advanced countries — the so-called "most favored nation" approach.

The proposal will face fierce opposition from the pharmaceutical industry.

It was a rule that Trump tried to adopt during his first term, but could never get through. He signed a similar executive order in the final weeks of his presidency, but a court order later blocked the rule from going into effect under the Biden administration.

The pharmaceutical industry argued that Trump's 2020 attempt would give foreign governments the "upper hand" in deciding the value of medicines in the U.S.. The industry has long argued that forcing lower prices will hurt profits, and ultimately affect innovation and its efforts to develop new medicines.

Only drugs on Medicare Part B — the insurance for doctor's office visits — are likely to be covered under the plan. Medicare beneficiaries are responsible for picking up some of the costs to get those medications during doctor's visits, and for traditional Medicare enrollees there is no annual out-of-pocket cap on what they pay.

A report by the Trump administration during its first term found that the U.S. spends twice as much as some other countries in covering those drugs. Medicare Part B drug spending topped \$33 billion in 2021.

More common prescription drugs filled at a pharmacy would probably not be covered by the new order.

Trump's post formally previewing the action came after he teased a "very big announcement" last week. He gave no details, except to note that it wasn't related to trade or the tariffs he has announced imposing on much of the world.

"We're going to have a very, very big announcement to make — like as big as it gets," Trump said last week.

He came into his first term accusing pharmaceutical companies of "getting away with murder" and com-

plaining that other countries whose governments set drug prices were taking advantage of Americans.

On Sunday, Trump took aim at the industry again, writing that the "Pharmaceutical/Drug Companies would say, for years, that it was Research and Development Costs, and that all of these costs were, and would be, for no reason whatsoever, borne by the 'suckers' of America, ALONE."

Referring to drug companies' powerful lobbying efforts, he said that campaign contributions "can do wonders, but not with me, and not with the Republican Party."

"We are going to do the right thing," he wrote.

First group of 49 white South Africans leaves for the US after Trump offered them refugee status

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — A group of 49 white South Africans departed their homeland Sunday for the United States on a private charter plane having been offered refugee status by the Trump administration under a new program announced in February.

The group, which included families and small children, was due to arrive at Dulles International Airport outside Washington on Monday morning local time, according to Collen Msibi, a spokesperson for South Africa's transport ministry.

They are the first Afrikaners — a white minority group in South Africa — to be relocated after U.S. President Donald Trump issued an executive order on Feb. 7 accusing South Africa's Black-led government of racial discrimination against them and announcing a program to offer them relocation to America.

The South African government said it is "completely false" that Afrikaners are being persecuted.

The Trump administration has fast-tracked their applications while pausing other refugee programs, halting arrivals from Afghanistan, Iraq, most of sub-Saharan Africa and other countries in a move being challenged in court.

Refugee groups have questioned why the white South Africans are being prioritized ahead of people from countries wracked by war and natural disasters. Vetting for refugee status in the U.S. often takes years.

The Trump administration says the South African government is pursuing racist, anti-white policies through affirmative action laws and a new land expropriation law it says targets Afrikaners' land. The government says those claims are based on misinformation and there is no racism against Afrikaners and no land has been expropriated, although the contentious law has been passed and is the focus of criticism in South Africa.

South Africa also denies U.S. claims that Afrikaners are being targeted in racially motivated attacks in some rural communities. Instead, the South African government said Afrikaners — who are the descendants of Dutch and French colonial settlers — are "amongst the most economically privileged" in the country.

The first Afrikaner refugees were traveling on a flight operated by the Tulsa, Oklahoma-based charter company Omni Air International, Msibi said. They would fly to Dakar, Senegal and stop there to refuel before heading for Dulles.

They departed from OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, where they were accompanied by police officers and airport officials when they checked in. Msibi said they would have to be vetted by police to ensure there were no criminal cases or outstanding warrants against them before being allowed to leave.

The South African government said there was no justification for them being relocated but said it wouldn't stop them and respected their freedom of choice.

They are expected to be greeted at Dulles by a U.S. government delegation, including the deputy secretary of state and officials from the Department of Health and Human Services, whose refugee office has organized their resettlement.

The flight will be the first in a "much larger-scale relocation effort," White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller told reporters on Friday. Miller said that what was happening to Afrikaners in South Africa "fits the textbook definition of why the refugee program was created."

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"This is persecution based on a protected characteristic — in this case, race. This is race-based persecution," he said.

The HHS Office for Refugee Resettlement was ready to offer them support, including with housing, furniture and other household items, and expenses like groceries, clothing, diapers and more, a document obtained by The Associated Press said. The document said the relocation of Afrikaners was "a stated priority of the Administration."

There are around 2.7 million Afrikaners among South Africa's population of 62 million, which is more than 80% Black. They are only one part of the country's white minority.

Many in South Africa are puzzled by claims that Afrikaners are persecuted and meet the requirements to be relocated as refugees.

They are part of South Africa's everyday multi-racial life, with many successful business leaders and some serving in government as Cabinet ministers and deputy ministers. Their language is widely spoken and recognized as an official language, and churches and other institutions reflecting Afrikaner culture hold prominence in almost every city and town.

The Trump administration has criticized South Africa on several fronts. Trump's February executive order cut all U.S. funding to South Africa over what it said was its anti-white stance and also accused it of pursuing an anti-American foreign policy. It cited South Africa's ties with Iran and its move to lodge a genocide case against U.S. ally Israel over the war in Gaza as examples of it taking "aggressive positions towards the United States."

US touts 'substantial progress' in tariff talks with China, but details are still scarce

By JAMEY KEATEN, WILL WEISSERT and CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The lead U.S. negotiator in trade talks with China cheered "a great deal of productivity" in resolving differences between the world's two leading economic powers, after officials wrapped two days of bargaining in Switzerland following President Donald Trump imposing steep tariffs and Beijing retaliating.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Sunday there was "substantial progress" in the weekend sessions but offered scant information on exactly what negotiations entailed. He said more details would come at a briefing Monday.

U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer suggested that an agreement had been reached but provided no details. He and Bessent briefly addressed reporters once talks had wrapped at the stately villa that serves as the residence of the Swiss ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, but did not take questions.

"It's important to understand how quickly we were able to come to agreement, which reflects that perhaps the differences were not so large as far as maybe thought," Greer said. But he also stressed that a top Trump priority means closing the U.S. trade deficit with China, which came to a record \$263 billion last year.

"We're confident that the deal we struck with our Chinese partners will help us to resolve, work towards resolving that national emergency," Greer said.

The White House subsequently issued a statement titled, "U.S. Announces China Trade Deal in Geneva" but offering only the same quotes by Bessent and Greer.

The Chinese delegation held a subsequent news conference where it described what occurred as "candid, in-depth and constructive dialogue." Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng said both sides had agreed to "establishing a consultation mechanism" for further discussions on trade and economic issues.

China's negotiators also said that they and the U.S. team would be releasing a joint statement on Monday — though the timing was still uncertain.

"I think, no matter when this statement is released, it's going to be good news for the world," said Li Chenggang, the Chinese ambassador to the World Trade Organization.

Trump was anxious to declare the sessions a win. Even before the final day of talks opened on Sunday, the president posed on his social media site that "GREAT PROGRESS" was being made toward what he

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suggested could be a "total reset" on the tariffs that have put the global economy on edge.

Beijing, however, appeared largely more measured about the negotiations' overall direction, noting in a Saturday night editorial published before the second day of negotiations kicked off, that it would "firmly reject any proposal that compromises core principles or undermines the broader cause of global equity."

During the Sunday evening news conference, He said "global trade wars that were provoked or initiated by the U.S. have captured global attention" but "China's position towards this trade war has been clear and consistent, and that is: China doesn't want to fight a trade war, because trade wars produce no winners."

"But if the U.S. insists on forcing this war upon us, China will not be afraid of it and will fight to the end," the vice premier said, before adding: "We are ready to work together."

Negotiations could go a long way toward stabilizing world markets roiled by the U.S.-China standoff that has ships in port with goods from China unwilling to unload until they get final word on tariffs.

Trump last month raised U.S. tariffs on China to a combined 145%, and China retaliated by hitting American imports with a 125% levy. Tariffs that high essentially amount to the countries' boycotting each other's products, disrupting trade that last year topped \$660 billion.

Still, top members of the Trump administration were following the president's lead in insisting that a hard reset of U.S.-China trade relations could be in the offing.

"Secretary Bessent has made clear that one of his objectives is to de-escalate," U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, who wasn't in Geneva, said on "Fox News Sunday." He added that the U.S. and China have both imposed tariffs that are "too high to do business, but that's why they are talking right now."

"We are the consumer of the world. Everybody wants to sell their goods here," Lutnick said. So they need to do business with America and we're using the power of our economy to open their economy to our exporters."

Kevin Hassett, director of the White House National Economic Council, told Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" that "what's going to happen in all likelihood is that relationships are going to be rebooted. It looks like the Chinese are very, very eager to play ball and to renormalize things."

"We're essentially starting over, starting from scratch with the Chinese," Hassett said "and they seem to think that they really want to rebuild a relationship that's great for both of us."

The talks mark the first time the sides have met face-to-face to discuss the issues. The prospects for a major breakthrough still appear slight, but even a small drop in tariffs — particularly if taken simultaneously — could help restore some confidence.

"Negotiations to begin de-escalating the growing US-China trade war are badly needed and it's a positive sign that both sides were able to gracefully move beyond their bickering over who had to call first," Jake Werner, director of the East Asia Program at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, said in an email.

The Trump administration has imposed tariffs on countries worldwide, but its fight with China has been the most intense. Trump's import taxes on goods from China include a 20% charge meant to pressure Beijing into doing more to stop the flow of the synthetic opioid fentanyl into the United States.

The remaining 125% involve a dispute that dates back to Trump's first term and comes atop tariffs he levied on China back then, which means the total tariffs on some Chinese goods can exceed 145%.

Zepbound beats Wegovy for weight loss in first head-to-head trial of blockbuster drugs

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

People taking Eli Lilly's obesity drug, Zepbound, lost nearly 50% more weight than those using rival Novo Nordisk's Wegovy in the first head-to-head study of the blockbuster medications.

Clinical trial participants who took tirzepatide, the drug sold as Zepbound, lost an average of 50 pounds (22.8 kilograms) over 72 weeks, while those who took semaglutide, or Wegovy, lost about 33 pounds (15 kilograms). That's according to the study funded by Lilly, which was published Sunday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

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Both drugs are part of a new class of medications that work by mimicking hormones in the gut and brain that regulate appetite and feelings of fullness. But tirzepatide targets two such hormones, known as GLP-1 and GIP, while semaglutide targets GLP-1 alone, said Dr. Louis Aronne, director of the Comprehensive Weight Control Center at Weill Cornell Medicine.

"Two drugs together can produce better weight loss," said Aronne, who led the study and presented the findings Sunday at the European Congress on Obesity in Spain.

While tirzepatide won out in what Aronne said many view as "a drag race of efficacy," both are important tools for treating obesity, which affects about 40% of American adults.

"The point of these medications is to improve health," he said. "The majority of people won't need the most effective medication."

The trial included 751 people from across the U.S. who were overweight or had obesity and at least one other weight-related health problem, but not diabetes. Participants received weekly injections of the highest tolerated doses of Zepbound, either 10 milligrams or 15 milligrams, or Wegovy, 1.7 milligrams or 2.4 milligrams.

By the end of the trial, those who took Zepbound lost about 20% of their body weight on average, compared with a nearly 14% loss for those who took Wegovy. The tirzepatide group trimmed about 7 inches (17.8 centimeters) from their waist circumference, compared to about 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) with semaglutide. In addition, nearly 32% of people taking Zepbound lost at least a quarter of their body weight, compared to about 16% of those taking Wegovy, the study found.

Weight loss was about 6% lower in men than in women in both groups, the authors noted. As participants in both groups lost more weight, they saw improvements in health markers such as blood pressure, blood fat and blood sugar levels.

More than three-quarters of patients taking both drugs reported at least one side effect, mostly mild to moderate gastrointestinal issues such as nausea, constipation, diarrhea and vomiting. About 6% of participants taking Zepbound left the trial because of adverse events, compared with 8% of those taking semaglutide.

The GLP-1 drugs have become increasingly popular, with at least 1 in 8 U.S. adults reporting their use, according to a 2024 survey by KFF, a independent health policy research organization. Zepbound generated \$4.9 billion in global sales last year. Wegovy brought in nearly \$8.8 billion (58.2 billion Danish kroner).

Access and affordability have limited wider use of the drugs. Tirzepatide and semaglutide were removed recently from a list of drug shortages by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Both manufacturers recently released programs that cut costs to about \$500 per month or less, depending on the dose.

Other factors can affect access. This week, CVS Health said Wegovy will become the preferred option on its standard formulary, or list of covered drugs, as of July 1. Zepbound will be excluded.

It's important to have a range of drugs to treat a disease as widespread as obesity in the U.S., said Dr. Angela Fitch, chief medical officer of knownwell, an obesity care company. Wegovy has been found to cut the risk of serious heart problems by 20%, she noted. A drug may work well for one patient, but not for others.

"We're going to need to use them all just because we have so many patients who need treatment," she added.

What to know about the Newark mayor's arrest at an immigration detention center

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — An immigration detention center in New Jersey is at the center of tensions between three congressional Democrats and the Trump administration after the arrest of Newark's mayor set off a scrum outside the complex.

Federal prosecutors charged Newark Mayor Ras Baraka with trespassing after agents arrested him outside the fence of the Delaney Hall detention center on Friday. The interim U.S. attorney for New Jersey says Baraka, a Democrat who is running for governor, ignored warnings to leave while he was there with

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three members of New Jersey's congressional delegation at the 1,000-bed Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility.

The arrest escalated into a brief but tense confrontation in the parking lot that included the members of Congress and federal agents, some of whom wore masks. Department of Homeland spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin has accused Baraka of playing "political games" and said over the weekend that an investigation is ongoing and that more actions could be taken.

The three members of Congress — Reps. LaMonica McIver, Bonnie Watson Coleman and Robert Menendez Jr. — have accused federal agents of escalating the situation by arresting the mayor.

Here's what to know:

Why were members of Congress at the facility?

The representatives have said they went to the facility to inspect it as a matter of congressional oversight. "We were able to get in, speak to detainees, check out the facilities, and make sure everything was OK there," Rep. Watson Coleman told CNN in an interview Sunday that also included her two New Jersey colleagues. "We were there almost two hours before the confrontation took place, but ICE kept giving us the run-around and kept saying that they needed to talk to someone else."

Department of Homeland Security officials have said that lawmakers had not asked for a tour of Delaney Hall and that the agency would have facilitated one. Watson Coleman spokesperson Ned Cooper has said the three lawmakers went there unannounced because they planned to inspect it, not take a scheduled tour.

Why was the mayor of Newark arrested?

Alina Habba, interim U.S. attorney for New Jersey, said on the social media platform X that Baraka was arrested after the mayor allegedly trespassed at the detention facility. She accused him of ignoring warnings to leave the facility, which he has denied.

Baraka was arrested, booked and released the same day. He said he has a court appearance scheduled for Thursday.

In video reviewed by The Associated Press, a federal official in a jacket with the logo of the Homeland Security Investigations can be heard telling Baraka he could not enter the facility because "you are not a congress member." He was arrested after returning to the public side of the gate at the facility where protesters were gathered, video shows.

Baraka, who is running to succeed term-limited Gov. Phil Murphy, has argued against the opening of the center, citing building permit issues. The facility, located along an industrial stretch of Newark Bay, opened on May 1.

What is this Newark detention center, and why has it been in the news?

Delaney Hall is a two-story building next to a county prison in Newark Bay that operated as a halfway house in previous years. In February, Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced that it and the GEO Group reached a \$1 billion, 15-year deal for the detention center. The deal is significant for its size and duration, and GEO officials cited it in messages to investors as a big revenue generator.

The 1,000-bed capacity is also significant in advancing President Donald Trump's goals of expanding detention capacity in the U.S. beyond the previous 41,000 beds, in New Jersey, Michigan, and other states to 100,000 beds.

Democrats, including Baraka, have opposed the opening of the facility. As mayor, Baraka sued to block the opening of the detention center, saying it hadn't completed all building requirements.

DHS has said that the facility has the proper permits and completed the proper inspections.

Albanians vote in election after a campaign dominated by uphill efforts to join the EU

By LLAZAR SEMINI Associated Press

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — Albanians voted Sunday in parliamentary elections after a boisterous campaign dominated by the country's uphill effort to join the European Union and Prime Minister Edi Rama's bid for a fourth term in office.

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Polls closed at 7 p.m. Sunday and vote counting is expected to conclude within 48 hours in an election in which 140 lawmakers will be selected to four-year terms.

Because of mass emigration, the country of 2.8 million people has about 3.7 million eligible voters. For the first time, those in the diaspora — about 191,000 so far this time — could vote, casting their ballots by mail.

Rama's Socialist Party says it can deliver EU membership in five years, sticking to its ambitious pledge while battling conservative opponents with public recriminations and competing promises of pay hikes.

Opening up the election to voters abroad for the first time has added to the volatility, along with the appearance of new parties, a shift in campaigning to social media and a recent TikTok ban.

Voting was largely peaceful, with just a few skirmishes involving candidates and supporters around the country. Officials put preliminary voter turnout at 41.4%, 4% lower than it was in 2021.

"For the most part, excluding some sporadic cases, the process has been in line with the rules and standards," said Ilirjan Celibashi, the head of the Central Election Commission.

Black and blue baseball caps

Rama, 60, who secured the start of EU membership negotiations last October, highlighted achievements in infrastructure and justice reform in his campaign.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas is pressing Albania to continue reforms — particularly in governance and anti-corruption efforts — to stay on track for EU membership.

Rama's main challenger is Sali Berisha, 80, a former president and prime minister, who argues that Albania still isn't ready for EU membership. He started the campaign borrowing from U.S. President Donald Trump's slogan, which he changed to "Make Albania Great Again," but eventually settled on "Grandiose Albania."

Berisha wore a blue baseball cap marked with a No. 1, the party's position on the ballot. Rama sported a black cap emblazoned with the Socialist Party's No. 5.

Berisha claimed they had won in all the traditional center-right areas, adding that counting should not take place under pressure.

"Nothing can change. People have spoken decisively," he said.

Economic and tourism pledges

Economic concerns have been central to the campaign.

The Socialists say they will accelerate a tourism boom, from 10 million arrivals in 2024 to 30 million by 2030, diversifying destinations by expanding infrastructure projects.

The Democrats argue that the government's dismal performance has driven more than 1 million Albanians to leave the country over the past decade.

After casting his ballot, Berisha called on Albanians to vote "for themselves, for their children, their pensions and salaries, employment, business, their farm."

Both parties made similar promises on minimum pensions, an average monthly salary and a minimum wage — all about 20% or higher than current levels.

But analyst Lutfi Dervishi considered that scenario unlikely.

"It's a campaign without debate and results without surprises," he said. "Elections won't shake up the current scene — neither the system nor the main actors."

Corruption and justice

Despite Albania's significant improvement in Transparency International's corruption index — rising from 116th in 2013 to 80th in the ranking in 2024 — corruption remains the country's Achilles' heel and a stumbling block for European integration.

Sweeping judicial reforms launched in 2016 with support from the EU and U.S. led to investigations and prosecutions of senior officials. Several former ministers, mayors and high-ranking officials have been jailed, while others face ongoing investigations.

Despite promises of cleaner governance, both major parties are fielding candidates facing corruption allegations. Berisha himself has been charged with corruption and is awaiting trial.

While Rama's Socialists take credit for the reformed judiciary, Berisha has vowed to dissolve it, describ-

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ing it as a tool of the Rama government's selective justice.

TikTok and the 'swamp owl'

Social media has become a primary vehicle for campaigning. Rama hosted daily Facebook livestreams to engage with voters. Berisha followed suit, though less frequently.

The government has imposed a 12-month ban on TikTok, citing concerns over incitement and online bullying. Opposition parties condemned the move as censorship.

A code of conduct introduced by the Albanian ombudsman to encourage ethical campaigning fell flat as political discourse grew increasingly toxic. Rama described Berisha as a "swamp owl" — a metaphor for graft — while Berisha branded Rama as a "chief gangster."

More than 570 international observers monitored this year's parliamentary election. They have planned a news conference Monday afternoon.

A Republican push to sell public lands in the West is reigniting a political fight

By MATTHEW BROWN, JESSE BEDAYN and MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Congressional Republicans say their plan to sell potentially hundreds of thousands of acres of federal land will generate revenue and ease growth pressures in booming Western cities. Yet without clear details on how it will work, skeptics worry it could be a giveaway for developers and mining companies and do little to ease the region's housing crisis.

Legislation passed by the House Natural Resources Committee last week includes about 460,000 acres (186,155 hectares) in Nevada and Utah to be sold or transferred to local governments or private entities.

The provision is part of a sweeping tax cut package and mirrors the Trump administration's view of most public lands as an asset to be used, not set aside for preservation.

Who should control such sites has long been a burning source of disagreement in the West, where about half the acreage is under federal control and cities that sprawl across open landscapes face rising demand for housing, water and other necessities.

The GOP plan is rekindling the fight and generating strong blowback from Democrats and conservationists. They see the measure as a precedent-setting move that would open the door to sales in other states.

"We have grave concerns that this is the camel's nose under the tent," said Steve Bloch with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. "If it can happen in Utah, if it can happen in Nevada, it's not going to stay here. It's going to spread."

Some Republicans also signaled opposition, setting up a political clash as the budget process moves forward.

'Good news' for fast-growing Nevada city

The majority of land in the House provision is in Nevada, including the counties that encompass Reno, Las Vegas and the fast-growing city of Fernley, according to maps released by the measure's sponsors, Republican Reps. Mark Amodei of Nevada and Celeste Maloy of Utah.

Fernley City Manager Benjamin Marchant said the opportunity to buy 12,000 acres (4850 hectares) of federal land at the edge of the community was "good news." The city size tripled since its incorporation in 2001 and is expected to double again over the next decade, he said.

There is hope to emerge as a technology hub, but Fernley needs space to grow.

"We can't even talk about projects when it's federal land," Marchant said. "We can't sell what we don't own, and this is the first step."

Other parcels to be sold are farther from developed areas. They include sites bordering Zion National Park and tribal lands such as the Paiute Indian Tribe reservation in Utah and the Pyramid Lake Paiute reservation in Nevada.

"That means the tribe can't grow," said Mathilda Miller with Native Voters Alliance Nevada, an advocacy group for the state's tribes that opposes the sales. "They can't reclaim the land that was stolen from their tribe, and it brings development right up to their doorstep."

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Roughly 100,000 acres (40,500 hectares) in western Nevada's rural Pershing County could be sold to private companies with mining claims or mining infrastructure, according to Amodei's office. The legislation also requires federal parcels in that area to be exchanged for an equal amount of nonfederal land.

Landlocked by federal holdings

Many of the communities near sale locations share a common theme: Their expansion is hemmed in by federal property, which makes up 80% of the land in Nevada and 63% in Utah. Some states in the Midwest and East have 1% or less federal land by comparison.

Public parcels often are interspersed with private holdings in a "checkerboard" fashion that further complicates development efforts.

Housing advocates caution that federal land is not universally suitable for affordable housing. Generally, the farther away the land is from cities and towns the more infrastructure is required — roads, sewage, public transportation.

"It's a costly way to go because of the infrastructure needs, because of the time it will take," said Vicki Been of the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy at New York University. "I'm not saying that there's no place on federal lands that would make sense, but one has to really look carefully."

The Republican proposal seeks to identify suitable lands in coordination with local municipalities. That has left some concerned there aren't enough assurances that the land, or enough land, will end up going to affordable housing.

"The devils in the details," said Tara Rollins, executive director of the Utah Housing Coalition. "It could just be a land grab. There just needs to be a lot of checks and balances."

A failed lawsuit to wrest control

The wholesale transfer of federal lands to local or private entities is something many western conservatives have long sought. Republican officials in Utah last year filed a lawsuit last seeking to take over huge swathes of federal land in the state, but they were rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court. Twelve other states backed Utah's bid.

There also are strong voices within the GOP against public land sales, notably Montana lawmakers Rep. Ryan Zinke, who was interior secretary in Trump's first term, and Sen. Steve Daines. Colorado Rep. Jeff Hurd was the lone Republican on the Natural Resources Committee to vote against the lands provision.

The legislation would sell about 10,000 acres (4050 hectares) of land in two Utah counties. Maloy said it avoids areas that should be conserved and would help ease demand for housing and water, by creating space to build new homes and expand reservoir capacity.

Smaller land sales are a common practice for the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management.

"Not all federal lands have the same value," Maloy said. "In both Democratic and Republican administrations, for decades, we've been disposing of appropriate lands in a manner that's consistent with what I propose to do here."

Pope Leo XIV calls for peace in Ukraine and Gaza in symbolically rich blessing on Mother's Day

By NICOLE WINFIELD and GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Leo XIV called for a genuine and just peace in Ukraine and an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, in his first Sunday noon blessing as pontiff that featured some symbolic gestures suggesting a message of unity in a polarized Catholic Church.

"I, too, address the world's great powers by repeating the ever-present call 'never again war,'" Leo said from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica to an estimated 100,000 people below.

It was the first time that Leo had returned to the loggia since he first appeared to the world on Thursday evening following his remarkable election as pope, the first from the United States. Then, too, he delivered a message of peace.

Leo was picking up the papal tradition of offering a Sunday blessing at noon, but with some twists. Whereas his predecessors delivered the greeting from the studio window of the Apostolic Palace, off to

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the side of the piazza, Leo went to the very center of the square and the heart of the church.

Part of that was logistics: He didn't have access to the papal apartments in the palace until later Sunday, when they were unsealed for the first time since Pope Francis' death.

Leo also offered a novelty by singing the Regina Caeli prayer, a Latin prayer said during the Easter season which recent popes would usually just recite and harked back to the old Latin Mass of the past.

Traditionalists and conservatives, many of whom felt alienated by Pope Francis' reforms and loose liturgical style, have been looking for gestures and substance from Leo in hopes he will work to heal the divisions that grew in the church. Some have expressed cautious optimism at the very least with a return to a traditional style that Leo exhibited on Thursday night, when he emerged for the first time wearing the formal red cape of the papacy that Francis had eschewed.

He followed up on Saturday by wearing the brocaded papal stole during a visit to a Marian sanctuary south of Rome. There, he knelt in reverence at the altar and greeted the crowd surrounded by priests in long cassocks usually favored by conservatives.

Aldo Maria Valli, a conservative Italian journalist who writes a popular blog, said he appreciated these gestures and urged traditionalists to give Leo a chance, saying he liked a lot of what he has seen so far. "Don't shoot Leo," he wrote.

On Sunday Leo wore the simple white cassock of the papacy and had reverted back to wearing his silver pectoral cross. He had worn a more ornate one that contains the relics of St. Augustine and his mother, St. Monica, on Thursday night that had been given to him by his Augustinian religious order.

'Beloved Ukrainian people'

Leo quoted Pope Francis in denouncing the number of conflicts ravaging the globe today, saying it was a "third world war in pieces."

"I carry in my heart the sufferings of the beloved Ukrainian people," he said. "Let everything possible be done to achieve genuine, just and lasting peace as soon as possible."

As a bishop in Chiclayo, Peru, at the start of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, then-Bishop Robert Prevost had not minced words in assigning blame to Moscow. According to a clip of a TV interview on the Peruvian show "Weekly Expression," circulating in Italian media Sunday, Prevost said it was an "imperialist invasion in which Russia wants to conquer territory for reasons of power given Ukraine's strategic location."

In his remarks Sunday, Leo also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and for humanitarian relief to be provided to the "exhausted civilian population and all hostages be freed."

Leo also noted that Sunday was Mother's Day in many countries and wished all mothers, "including those in heaven" a Happy Mother's Day.

The crowd, filled with marching bands in town for a special Jubilee weekend, erupted in cheers and music as the bells of St. Peter's Basilica tolled.

Angela Gentile of Bari arrived in the square three hours early to be in place. Nonplussed that cardinals had elected yet another non-Italian pope, she said she was happy Leo came to the central balcony of the basilica, so the crowd could see him face-to-face. "What's good for the Holy Spirit works for me," she said. "I have trust."

More than 50 pilgrims from Houston, Texas, were in the square, too, waving three large American flags. They were in Rome on a pre-planned Holy Year pilgrimage and said they were proud to be part of this historic occasion.

"Words cannot express my admiration and gratitude to God," said the Rev. Dominic Nguyen, who led the Vietnamese American group. He said he hoped the pope would be happy to see the Stars and Stripes but also Peruvian flags and all other countries, showing the universality of the church.

A Mass in the grottoes and unsealing the apartment

Also Sunday, Leo celebrated a private Mass near the tomb of St. Peter and prayed at the tombs of several past popes in the grottoes underneath the basilica. Vatican Media filmed him praying before a mix of progressive and tradition-minded popes: Pope Paul VI, who closed out the modernizing reforms of the

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1960s Second Vatican Council, and Popes Pius XII and Benedict XVI, on the more conservative end of the spectrum.

He celebrated the intimate Mass with the head of his Augustinian order and his brother, John, in the pews. In his homily, he recalled that Sunday was also the day that the Catholic Church celebrates religious vocations, and noted that the issue of declining vocations had been raised by cardinals in their pre-conclave discussions before his election.

Leo said priests can encourage more vocations by offering a good example, "living the joy of the Gospel, not discouraging others, but rather looking for ways to encourage young people to hear the voice of the Lord and to follow it and to serve in the church."

Leo also attended the official unsealing of the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace, which were sealed after Francis' April 21 death. It is unclear if Leo will move into the apartments or just use them for formal audiences as Francis did.

Leo has slept in his old apartment in a Vatican palazzo since his election. Francis decided to live and work at the Domus Santa Marta hotel in the Vatican rather than move into the palace, eventually taking over much of the second floor.

The 69-year-old Chicago-born missionary was elected 267th pope on Thursday. He has a busy week of audiences before his formal installation Mass next Sunday.

Passenger bus skids off a cliff in Sri Lanka, killing 21 people and injuring 35

By BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — A passenger bus skidded off a cliff in Sri Lanka's tea-growing hill country on Sunday, killing 21 people and injuring 35 others, a police spokesman said.

The accident occurred in the early hours of Sunday near the town of Kotmale, about 140 kilometers (86 miles) east of Colombo, the capital, in a mountainous area of central Sri Lanka, police said.

Police spokesman Buddhika Manathunga said 21 people died and another 35 were being treated in hospitals.

Local television showed the bus lying overturned at the bottom of a precipice while workers and others helped remove injured people from the rubble.

The driver was injured and among those admitted to the hospital for treatment. At the time of the accident, nearly 50 people were traveling on the bus.

Manathunga said police launched an investigation to ascertain whether the driver's recklessness or a technical fault of the bus caused the accident.

The bus was operated by a state-run bus company, police said.

Deadly bus accidents are common in Sri Lanka, especially in the mountainous regions, often due to reckless driving and poorly maintained and narrow roads.

Dutch-led Suriname team digitizes 100,000 documents to preserve Jewish history in the Caribbean

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — The fire that caused significant damage in April to historic buildings in Suriname's capital city was not the only threat facing the nearby Neveh Shalom Synagogue.

As firefighters battled to save the historic city center of Paramaribo — a UNESCO World Heritage site — the synagogue's volunteers were busy scanning thousands of archival documents in an effort to preserve the history of the thousands of Jews who have called the Surinamese capital home since the 1700s.

The blaze was contained before reaching the synagogue, but at the mercy of other threats, including the tropical climate, insects and time, it was a reminder of how fragile the 100,000 historic documents,

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kept on pages stored in filing cabinets for decades, were and how vital the preservation project was.

The operation to digitize the birth records, land sales and correspondence has been overseen by Dutch academic Rosa de Jong, who had used the archive as part of a PhD study on how Jewish refugees fled the horrors of World War II to the Caribbean, including the tiny South American country of Suriname.

"I felt that my work comes with an obligation to preserve the past that I'm building my career on," De Jong told The Associated Press.

When she finished her academic research, at the University of Amsterdam, last year, De Jong saw an opportunity to return to Suriname and safeguard the files that had been crucial to her work.

She raised the financing for cameras, hard drives and travel expenses and returned to Suriname with the aim of making high-quality scans of the hundreds of folios held by the synagogue.

The result is more than 600 gigabytes of data stored on multiple hard drives. One will be donated to the National Archives of Suriname to be included in their digital collections.

The archived documents show how Suriname was a hub of Jewish life for the Americas. The British who colonized the region gave Jews political and religious autonomy when they first moved to Suriname in 1639 to manage tobacco and sugar cane plantations.

When the Dutch took control of the colony, they continued this practice. When Jewish people were forced out of other places in the Americas, they often fled to Suriname.

On Christmas Eve in 1942, more than 100 Dutch Jewish refugees, fleeing the horrors of the Holocaust, arrived in Paramaribo.

Liny Pajgin Yollick, then 18, was among them. In an oral history project for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, she described the relief she felt when she arrived in Suriname to the sound of a familiar song.

"I remember it was morning and they played Dutch National Anthem for us when we arrived, and everybody was crying. We were very emotional when we heard that because many of us never thought we would ever hear it again," she said.

When the Netherlands was freed from Nazi German occupation three years later, Teroenga, the magazine published for the Jewish congregations in Suriname, ran with the headline "Bevrijding" ("Liberation"). The archive at Neveh Shalom has a copy of every edition of Teroenga.

Key to De Jong's preservation project has been 78-year-old Lilly Duijm, who was responsible for the archive's folders of documents for more than two decades.

Born in Suriname, when she was 14 she moved to the Netherlands where she eventually became a nurse. But she returned to her homeland in 1973, just before the colony got its independence, and her four children grew up in Paramaribo.

More than anyone, she knows how precious the archive was.

"I told the congregation, as long as the archive is still here, I will not die. Even if I live to be 200 years old," she tearfully told AP. "This is keeping the history of my people."

From the left and right, US Catholics hope new pope fulfills their hopes

By DAVID CRARY and TIFFANY STANLEY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — News that the global Catholic church would get its first-ever U.S.-born pope was welcomed by Catholics across the ideological spectrum in Pope Leo XIV's homeland, raising the question of whether he might be able to ease some of the deep divisions within its ranks.

From U.S. Catholics to the left of the ideological center, there is optimism that Leo will carry on Pope Francis' outreach to poor and marginalized people, including migrants, and provide a counterweight to policies of the Trump administration that distress them. To the right, there is hope the new pope will faithfully uphold Catholic doctrine, including opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage and women's ordination.

One reason for optimism: The new pope has made clear — in his remarks and his choice of a motto — that unity within the global church will be a paramount priority.

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"In these early days, he's still an empty vessel," said Steven Millies, a public theology professor at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. "Until we all get to know him better, we can pour our expectations into him."

Notre Dame Provost John McGreevy, a historian of Catholicism, said he was "completely stunned" after the papal announcement, having shared the conventional wisdom that a pope from the U.S. was a near-impossibility.

But Leo "is a global Catholic citizen," McGreevy said, citing the pontiff's time in Peru, at the Vatican and leading an international religious order.

"Even though he's an American, and we're super proud that he's American, it's hard to think of someone more embedded in a lot of the global church," he said.

What will Pope Leo's relation with U.S. Catholics be?

It's too soon to tell what Leo's relationship will be with his fellow American prelates and the broader U.S. Catholic Church, McGreevy cautioned.

"The early indications are that there'll be some similarities to Pope Francis," he said – suggesting that differences with conservative U.S. bishops could continue.

McGreevy said he expects some tension between the Vatican and the White House over immigration and climate change, two of Francis' key priorities that are likely to be reaffirmed by Leo.

Chad Pecknold, a professor of systematic theology at the Catholic University of America, suggested that Francis either disliked or misunderstood the United States.

"With Leo XIV, it's clear he not only loves America, but he even loves the White Sox," Pecknold said via email. "That can only have a good effect, not only upon American Catholics, but also American bishops, and indeed, everyone. It's good to feel like the pope is on your side."

During the latter years of Francis' papacy, one of the most divisive issues among U.S. bishops was whether Catholic politicians who supported abortion rights — including then-President Joe Biden and then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — should be barred from receiving Communion.

Francis stressed he would not reject politicians who support abortion rights and Biden received Communion during a visit to Rome in 2021.

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, who barred Pelosi from receiving Communion in the archdiocese, described Leo as a "bridge builder."

"He will be a good force for unity in the church," Cordileone told KPIX-TV in San Francisco. "Even with differences of opinion and different ideas of strategy and so forth, we can have unity in the church."

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, a New Jersey Republican and outspoken abortion opponent, took heart from a homily delivered early this year by Leo when he was Cardinal Robert Prevost. The passage cited by Smith: "God's mercy calls us to protect every life, especially those society overlooks — the child yet to be born and the elderly nearing their journey's end — because each bears Christ's face."

Smith depicted this remark as "underscoring the protection of the right to life as first among the many humanitarian responsibilities of the Church."

The interim president of Catholics for Choice, which supports abortion rights, acknowledged that Leo opposes abortion and said the group would send him letters from Catholics who disagree with that stance.

"We are praying that he will be a pope guided by a commitment to peace, justice, and inclusion," said Chris Wimbush. "The future of our church depends on greater inclusion and nuance on reproductive health decisions like abortion, contraception and IVF."

Women and the church

Francis, during his papacy, took major strides to give women more senior leadership positions in the church. But he upheld the ban on female priests and tamped down hopes that women could be ordained as deacons.

Ellie Hidalgo of Discerning Deacons, which advocates for women deacons in the church, said she hopes Leo will support the church's ongoing review of women's participation in ministry. A years-long Vatican process left open the contentious question of whether women should be ordained as deacons.

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Hidalgo, who lives in Miami, heard then-Cardinal Prevost speak in February when she was in Rome for a celebration of deacons.

"He was asking deacons to be humble in their service," Hidalgo said. "I could tell just from meeting him that that's something he really values himself ... that you are to be of service and you're there in a posture of humility."

The U.S.-based Women's Ordination Conference, which advocates for women to be accepted as priests, welcomed the inclusive tone of Leo's initial remarks.

"His clear emphasis on bridge-building and dialogue offer WOC hope that Pope Leo XIV might be a leader who will also build bridges to Catholic women," the group's statement said. It envisioned "a long-overdue day when women are recognized as equals in Christ."

Called on by Pope Francis

Francis, in many ways, saw Robert Prevost as a possible successor, assigning him to positions in Peru that bolstered his global resume and later calling him to the Vatican to oversee the influential office that vets bishop nominations.

"Francis was paying close attention to new U.S. bishops," said Millies, the public theology professor. "Prevost has been Francis' man overseeing the careful selection of a different sort of bishop to fill important posts in the U.S."

Millies said the top leadership of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops — which was sometimes at odds with Francis — remains relatively conservative.

But in the ranks of bishops below them, "the change has already happened," Millies said. "They are men who are more pastoral than focused on doctrine. The election of Leo means we are firmly in a different era."

Traditionally, the taboo against a U.S. pope reflected reluctance to give the world's No. 1 superpower even more influence. That shouldn't be a concern with Leo, according to Austen Ivereigh, a British-based journalist and author of two books on the Francis papacy.

"If anybody thinks he (Leo) is going to take a different line from Francis on migration or climate change, they're in for a surprise," Ivereigh said. "Francis was putting into practice church teaching, and Leo will do the same."

There was muted reaction to Leo's election from Bishop Robert Strickland, who was ousted by Francis in 2023 from leadership of the Diocese of Tyler in Texas. Strickland had been a fierce critic of Francis and came to symbolize the polarization within the U.S. hierarchy.

In social media posts after Leo assumed the papacy, Strickland expressed hope that he would faithfully uphold the sacred Scriptures and traditions known as the Deposit of Faith.

"With the heavy weight of the papacy now on his shoulders he needs our prayers," Strickland added.

Poland once threw its doors open to millions of Ukrainian refugees, but the mood has shifted

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — In the early months of 2022, as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, millions of Ukrainians — mostly women and children — fled to Poland, where they were met with an extraordinary outpouring of sympathy. Ukrainian flags appeared in windows. Polish volunteers rushed to the border with food, diapers, SIM cards. Some opened their homes to complete strangers.

In the face of calamity, Poland became not just a logistical lifeline for Ukraine, but a paragon of human solidarity.

Three years later, Poland remains one of Ukraine's staunchest allies — a hub for Western arms deliveries and a vocal defender of Kyiv's interests. But at home, the tone toward Ukrainians has shifted.

Nearly a million Ukrainian refugees remain in Poland, with roughly 2 million Ukrainian citizens overall in the nation of 38 million people. Many of them arrived before the war as economic migrants.

As Poland heads into a presidential election on May 18, with a second round expected June 1, the growing fatigue with helping Ukrainians has become so noticeable that some of the candidates have judged

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that they can win more votes by vowing less help for Ukrainians.

"The mood of Polish society has changed towards Ukrainian war refugees," said Piotr Długosz, a professor of sociology at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow who has carried out research on the views toward Ukrainians across central Europe.

He cited a survey by the Public Opinion Research Center in Warsaw that showed support for helping Ukrainians falling from 94% at the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 to 57% in December 2024.

"Many other studies confirm the change in mood," he said. "At the same time, it should be remembered that helping refugees after the outbreak of the war was a natural moral reflex, that one should help a neighbor in need. All the more so because Poles remember the crimes committed by Russians against Poles during and after two world wars."

Candidates adjust to anti-Ukrainian sentiment

Among those to transform the shift in mood into campaign politics is conservative candidate Karol Nawrocki, a historian and head of the Institute of National Remembrance who is the Law and Justice party's chosen candidate and one of the frontrunners.

Law and Justice, still in government in 2022, led the humanitarian response to the crisis along with President Andrzej Duda, a conservative backed by the party who traveled to Kyiv during the war.

As Nawrocki seeks to succeed Duda, he is showing ambivalence toward Ukrainians, stressing the need to defend Polish interests above all else.

Duda and Law and Justice have long admired Donald Trump, and Nawrocki — who was welcomed at the White House by Trump on May 1 — has at times used language that echoes the American president's.

"Ukraine does not treat us as a partner. It behaves in an indecent and ungrateful way in many respects," Nawrocki said in January.

After Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's tense visit to the Oval Office in February, Nawrocki declared the Ukrainian leader needed to "rethink" his behavior toward allies.

Last month Nawrocki vowed that if he wins, he will introduce legislation that would prioritize Polish citizens over Ukrainians when there are waits for medical services or schools.

"Polish citizens must have priority," Nawrocki said in a campaign video. "Poland first. Poles first."

Further to the right, candidate Sławomir Mentzen and his Confederation party have gone beyond that. He has blamed Ukrainians for overburdened schools, inflated housing prices, and accused them of taking advantage of Polish generosity.

At an April 30 rally of a far-right candidate, Grzegorz Braun, his supporters climbed up to a balcony on city hall in Biała Podlaska and pulled down a Ukrainian flag that had been hanging there since February 2022 as an expression of solidarity.

The political center is adjusting too.

Rafał Trzaskowski, the liberal-minded mayor of Warsaw from Prime Minister Donald Tusk's centrist party who welcomed Ukrainians to his city in 2022, proposed in January that only Ukrainian refugees who "work, live and pay taxes" in Poland be granted access to the popular "800+" child benefit — 800 zlotys (\$210) per month per child.

The requirements were already tightened recently, and some refugee advocates described it as a concession to far-right narratives.

Ukrainians say they're helping Poland, too

Ukrainian Ambassador to Poland Vasyl Bodnar disputes claims that Ukrainians are taking more than they give. About 35,000 receive support without working, he said, but what they receive is only a fraction of what Ukrainians contribute in taxes. He noted that some 70,000 Ukrainian-run businesses now operate in Poland.

"Ukrainians are helping the Polish economy to develop," he told The Associated Press.

Małgorzata Bonikowska, president of the Center for International Relations, said that it is normal for tensions to emerge when large numbers of people from different cultures suddenly live and work side-by-side. And Poles, she added, often find Ukrainians pushy or entitled, and that rubs them the wrong way.

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"But there is still very stable support for helping Ukraine. We truly believe Ukrainians are Europeans, they are like our brothers."

Rafał Pankowski, a sociologist who heads Never Again, a group that fights xenophobia, has tracked anti-Ukrainian sentiment from the start of the full-scale war. At first, the far right was very isolated in its anti-Ukrainian opinions, he said.

"What is happening this year is harvest time for all those anti-Ukrainian propagandists, and now it goes beyond the far right," he said.

Kateryna, a 33-year-old Ukrainian who has lived in Poland for years, has seen the change up close. In 2022, strangers often greeted her with sympathetic looks and with the words "Slava Ukraini" (Glory to Ukraine).

But then last fall, a man on a tram cursed her for reading a Ukrainian book. This spring, outside a social security office, another man shoved her and screamed, "No one wants you here."

Such incidents remain rare — Poles and Ukrainians co-existing on friendly terms is still the norm. But she feels such incidents were unthinkable three years ago.

She asked that her last name not be used because she works as a manager in a company that would require to have clearance to be identified publicly.

Her parents remain in Ukraine, and her brother serves in the army. Like many in the region, she believes Ukrainian resistance is keeping Poland safe by holding the Russians at bay.

Tensions now, she worries, only serve Moscow. "We must stick together," she said.

How AI helps push Candy Crush players through its most difficult puzzles

By SARAH PARVINI AP Technology Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Players swiping their way through more than 18,700 levels of Candy Crush Saga might be surprised to learn they're solving puzzles designed with an assist from artificial intelligence.

The app that helped make gamers out of anyone with a smartphone uses AI to help developers create levels to serve a captive audience constantly looking for more sweets to squash. King, the Swedish video game developer behind Candy Crush, also uses AI to update older levels to help ensure players don't feel bored, stuck or frustrated as they spend time with the game.

Todd Green, general manager of the Candy Crush franchise, said using AI in that way helps free up developers' time to create new puzzle boards. It would be "extremely difficult," he said, for designers to update and reconfigure more than 18,000 levels without AI taking a first pass.

Within the video game industry, discussions around the use of AI in game development run the gamut. Some game makers see AI as a tool that can assist with menial tasks, allowing designers and artists to focus on bigger projects. AI, they say, can help build richer worlds by creating more interactive non-player characters, for example. But there are also those who strongly oppose the use of AI, or who see the tech as a threat to their livelihoods — be it as video game actors and performers, or as workers who help make games. Concerns over AI led game performers with the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists to go on strike in late July.

"We're not putting chatbots into the game. We're not putting AI-powered design experiences into the game for players directly to play with," Green said, adding that the tech is not being used to replace game workers. "Instead, we're trying to deploy AI on existing problems that we have in order to make the work of the teams faster or more accurate, and more accurate more quickly."

In the United States, consumer spending on video game content increased to \$51.3 billion in 2024, up from \$49.8 billion in 2023, with mobile games accounting for about half of all video game content spending, according to data from the Entertainment Software Association trade group. Mobile is now the leading game platform among players aged 8 and older, the ESA says.

Candy Crush — first launched on Facebook in 2012 — is constantly updating. King recently released its 300th client version of the game. Gaming giant Activision Blizzard acquired King in 2016 for \$5.9 billion.

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The free-to-play game is in a unique position, said Joost Van Dreunen, author of "One Up: Creativity, Competition, and the Global Business of Video Games." Candy Crush is more than a decade old, boasts millions of users and caters to a "ravenous set of players," he said. Demand is so high for new content that it makes sense to use AI to offset the work it takes to create so many levels, Van Dreunen added.

"To supply that at scale, you absolutely can rely on a sort of artificial intelligence or generative AI to create the next set of forms," he said. "The thing about Candy Crush is that every level is technically a single board that you have to solve or clear before you can advance. With AI and the existing library of human-made boards, it makes total sense to then accelerate and expand the efforts to just create more inventory. People play more levels."

King uses AI to target two separate areas: developing new levels and going back to older levels, in some cases, puzzles that are several years old, and reworking them to ensure they're still worth playing. On new levels designed for people who have played the game for a long time, the company wants to ensure the puzzles are fun "on first contact."

"That's hard for us to do, because we don't get the benefit of having many players test or play through the levels and give us feedback. We have to sort of try and pitch it right at first," he said. "There's a really important group for us in between people who maybe played before and perhaps took a break for a while, and then coming back because they saw or heard of or were curious about what might be new."

Green said King uses AI as a behind-the-scenes assistant in the design "loop" of the game, rather than as a tool that immediately puts something new in front of players.

"Doing that for 1,000 levels all at once is very difficult by hand," he said. "So the most important thing to understand here is that we are using AI as like a custom design."

For most players, Green said, the fun in solving the puzzles lies in the "up and down." Levels aren't designed in order of difficulty. An easy level can follow a few difficult levels — or vice versa — to give the game a sense of variety. Leveraging AI means that instead of the team working on several hundred levels each week, they could potentially improve thousands of levels per week because they're able to automate the drafting of the improved levels, he added.

"We talk to players all the time," he said. "We also get the quantitative feedback. We can see how players respond to the levels... How easy are the levels? Do they get sort of stuck, or are they progressing in the way that we hope?"

To determine whether gamers are playing through the way the designers intended, King looks at several factors, including pass rate — how many times a player passes a level out of every 100 attempts — and how often a board is "reshuffled," or refreshed with all candies rearranged. Some metrics are also intangible, like whether a level is simply fun.

"It's also, to some extent, obviously subjective," Green said. "It's different for different people."

Today in History: May 12, tens of thousands die in Sichuan earthquake

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, May 12, the 132nd day of 2025. There are 233 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 12, 2008, a devastating 7.9 magnitude earthquake in China's Sichuan province left more than 87,000 people dead or missing.

Also on this date:

In 1780, the besieged city of Charleston, South Carolina, surrendered to British forces in one of the worst American defeats of the Revolutionary War.

In 1846, the pioneers of the Donner Party left Independence, Missouri, on the Oregon Trail, beginning their ill-fated attempt to migrate to California.

In 1932, the body of Charles Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old kidnapped son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh, was found in a wooded area near Hopewell, New Jersey.

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In 1933, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration established both the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which provided federal funding to states for relief programs, and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which provided economic support to farmers through agricultural surplus reductions.

In 1949, the Soviet Union lifted the Berlin Blockade, which the Western powers had succeeded in circumventing with their Berlin Airlift.

In 1975, members of the new Khmer Rouge-led Cambodian government seized an American merchant ship, the SS Mayaguez, in international waters, sparking a three-day battle that resulted in the deaths of 41 Americans.

In 1982, in Fatima, Portugal, security guards overpowered a Spanish priest armed with a bayonet who attacked Pope John Paul II. (In 2008, the pope's longtime private secretary revealed that the pontiff was slightly wounded in the assault.)

Today's Birthdays: Hockey Hall of Famer Johnny Bucyk is 90. Musician Steve Winwood is 77. Actor Bruce Boxleitner is 75. Actor Gabriel Byrne is 75. Singer Billy Squier is 75. Basketball Hall of Fame coach George Karl is 74. Country musician Kix Brooks is 70. Actor Ving Rhames is 66. Actor-filmmaker Emilio Estevez is 63. Chef/TV personality Carla Hall is 61. Actor Stephen Baldwin is 59. Skateboarder Tony Hawk is 57. Actor Kim Fields is 56. Actor Rhea Seehorn is 53. Actor Malin Akerman is 47. Actor Jason Biggs is 47. Actor Rami Malek is 44.